

## **Journalism and the New World Order**



Vol.1

# **Journalism and the New World Order**

*Gulf War, National News Discourses and Globalization*

**Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen (eds.)**

**NORDICOM**

Vol I  
Journalism and the New World Order  
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## Contents

<i>Stig A. Nobrstedt &amp; Rune Ottosen</i> Foreword	7
<i>Chapter 1</i> <i>Stig A. Nobrstedt &amp; Rune Ottosen</i> Studying the Media Gulf War	11
<i>Chapter 2</i> <i>Heikki Luostarinen &amp; Rune Ottosen</i> The Media Gulf War and its Aftermath	35
<i>Chapter 3</i> <i>Gunnar Garbo</i> UN–US Relations in the Gulf War	57
<i>Chapter 4</i> <i>Laurien Alexandre</i> Voicing the Gulf. The Voice of America Constructs the Gulf War	79
<i>Chapter 5</i> <i>Hanne M. Mathisen</i> Baghdad Observer During the Gulf Crisis	107
<i>Chapter 6</i> <i>Wilhelm Kempf, Michael Reimann &amp; Heikki Luostarinen</i> New World Order Rhetoric in US and European Media	125
<i>Chapter 7</i> <i>Wilhelm Kempf</i> News Media and Conflict Escalation. A Comparative Study of Gulf War Coverage in US and European Media	149

*Chapter 8*

**Stig A. Nabrstedt**

US Dominance in Gulf War News? Propaganda Relations  
Between News Discourses in US and European Media 175

*Chapter 9*

**Oddgeir Tveiten**

A Hard Reign's a Gonna Fall.  
The Media and Gorbachev's Peace Proposal During the Gulf War 217

*Chapter 10*

**Stig A. Nabrstedt & Rune Ottosen**

Summary and Conclusion. Globalization and the Gulf Conflict  
1990–2000: Challenges for War Journalism in the New World Order 241

References 271

About the Authors 281

## Foreword

The project 'Journalism in the New World Order' was inspired by the critical debate to emerge among journalists and media scholars as a reaction to the 1991 Gulf War. We shared the concern expressed by media researchers and critical journalists the world over – that the journalistic performance before, during and after Operation Desert Storm failed to live up to the critical standards of professional journalism. We were also frustrated by some of the literature issued just after the Gulf War because it lacked a solid empirical basis for its conclusions.

Thus it was that we decided to initiate a comparative and empirically based international project, searching for answers to some of the many unanswered questions from the post-Gulf War discussion. How biased was the journalistic approach when it came to angling, the use of sources and perspectives? How unified were the media in the different regions of the world? How was European media coverage compared to that in the USA, in Africa or in the Arab world? What lessons can be drawn from the Pentagon media management, the use of PR firms by parties to the conflict, and the massive use of propaganda in times of war? Has war propaganda become global in today's so-called New World Order? So many questions – and more could be added. What answers can we give, a decade after the initial phase of this conflict?

A study of this size is extremely challenging, time-consuming and expensive. Besides all the mundane and practical complications, a research process of this kind generates a bundle of new questions and reformulations of the old ones. Even simple questions have complex answers – but they in turn are no more and no less than points of departure for a journey with certain risks. Assumptions and perspectives must be tested, new problems and project ideas formulated. The intellectual journey in this project has taken us from a concern about the manipulation of media in the Gulf War to questions about the international communication conditions for global opinion-formation in the post-Cold War era. A new round of conflict escalation between the USA and Iraq early in 1998 has shown that although the conflict will probably still remain into the next millenium, as will the media images of it, its concrete manifestations and political implications are not necessarily the same.

We have also experienced that the best and most enriching travel companions for journey like this one must be a team representing different approaches,

including both quantitative and qualitative research methods and various disciplines. The two of us have a Scandinavian background; we have come to appreciate working within an intercultural and interdisciplinary environment.

This project has indeed been a collective process, and we owe a debt to a great many colleagues around the world. In the planning phase of the project we travelled to the USA, where we met Laurien Alexander, who agreed to undertake the central analysis of Gulf War editorials in the *Voice of America*. At the American University in Washington DC we were well received by Professor Hamid Mowlana, who offered useful suggestions for developing the concept of the project, and recruited research assistance among his students for coding the US material. We thank him and his students who took part in this important work. Our special thanks go to Cynthia Dowdell, for her excellent contribution to the coding process. In all the countries involved in the project we have had the pleasure of working with committed colleagues who made this book possible. Many thanks to Heikki Luostarinen, coordinator of the Finnish part of the project. Heikki joined us at an early stage, and his historical knowledge and fruitful perspectives on international propaganda analyses have been essential to the final outcome. His assistant Risto Suikkanen has, together with Markku Hauhio, handled the coding of the Finnish material. Our German colleague, Wilhelm Kempf, shared with us his knowledge of the latent class analysis method which we adapted as a third way to analyse our data, in addition to the traditional content analysis and the qualitative text analyses. We are most grateful to Wilhelm for contributing his methodological insights as well as knowledge of peace research with us. Research assistants and coders of the German material were Gerhard Meder and Andreas Mattenschlager.

In Norway we had the pleasure of inviting Gunnar Garbo, a veteran in Norwegian journalism and politics, who used his personal experience from the UN to write on the UN–US relationship during and after the Gulf conflict. Oddgeir Tveiten took charge of the qualitative part of the Norwegian material. Hanne Mathisen was responsible for the coding of the Norwegian material, and in addition made a unique analysis of the Iraqi propaganda through an analysis of the *Baghdad Observer*.

Khaled Salih reminded us that we needed a Middle East perspective in our research. He shared with us his understanding of the fears and hopes to which this conflict gave resonance among the peoples in the region. Admassu Tassew contributed to the construction of the coding schedule for the traditional content analysis and was also responsible for some of the data analyses. Erik Flygare did an excellent job in constructing the dataset for the traditional content analysis as in some data processing. Students at the University of Örebro coded the Swedish material, and here we wish to thank Michael Jäderholm, Åsa Kroon and Marko Määttä. We are further grateful to Elias Araya for the coding of the Ethiopian press and to Linda Nohrstedt for coding the *New York Post* material.

Let us also express our gratitude to Johan Galtung and Denis McQuail for encouragement and generosity in sharing with us their extensive knowledge in peace research and media studies. We are further indebted to David Morrison



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The project 'Journalism in the New World Order' could not have been completed without the financial support provided by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation, the Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Science Research Councils (NOS-S), the University of Konstanz, the German Research Foundation (DFG), the Academy of Finland, University of Tampere, University of Jyväskylä and *Helsingin Sanomat*. Our thanks also to the Norwegian Council for Applied Media Research for financial support of project meetings, to the University of Tampere, University of Örebro, University of Konstanz, the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, the University of Bergen and the Oslo University College for hosting our meetings.

Örebro and Oslo, November 2000

*Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen*



# Studying the Media Gulf War

Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen

## Introduction

Mass media researcher Elihu Katz (1992) has raised an important question: is an independent journalism possible in the so-called New World Order? Katz refers primarily to the experiences of the Gulf War and the way media news reporting was restricted, manipulated and managed by the authorities and the military of the Coalition forces. His concern was mainly restricted to the national level – to relations between domestic media and military authorities in this crisis. In this volume we have a wider focus: the international problems for war journalism in conjunction with transnational relations between the media and the military. Most of the empirical studies reported here are comparative content analyses conducted in order to explore various national images of the Gulf War and the interdependencies between these images. Thus this book seeks to assess the problems facing independent journalism in international military conflicts today.

Despite the many studies about the Gulf War since the armistice in March 1991, the full assessment of its historical significance is still to be made. Time is needed for research to grasp the complete picture of such an event. After all, even at the end of the 1990s new and enlightening analyses of the Vietnam War are appearing (e.g. Page, 1996; Patterson, 1995).

In the media and in the general public debate, the Gulf War and its implications were soon relegated to a less prominent position. Other urgent issues and new conflicts such as the conflict in former Yugoslavia have replaced the Gulf War as the focus of political and journalistic attention. However, the legacy of the Gulf War continues to play a significant role in contemporary conflicts, in the UN and all discussions on global issues. In popular culture, for example in films like *Courage under Fire*, *Independence Day* and *Air Force One*, propaganda images from the Gulf War proliferate, creating a collective memory of this conflict. But such important events should not be consigned either to oblivion or to the mere myths of popular culture. Research can serve as a corrective, both to the short attention-span in the news media coverage and to the

glorification of the war in popular culture. The obligations and challenges for media studies should be readily apparent here.

Indeed several media studies have been conducted on the Gulf War. One inventory from 1996 showed the number of such studies in the English language to be 39 books, 89 articles, 22 book reviews and 11 theses and dissertations (Weber, 1996). On the other hand, most of this research reported was conducted shortly after the war, and was usually restricted to media images in a single country. However important these studies are – and we are certainly dependent on them for our own analyses here – there is more to be said about the implications of this conflict as a global media event than ever before.

When it comes to the general understanding of the new global situation after the end of the Cold War, two contrasting perspectives have received considerable attention. The international political situation which US President Bush called the 'New World Order' has encouraged utopian as well as dystopian prognoses. The perspective represented primarily by neo-liberal and idealistic commentators has interpreted the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact as the beginning of a new era in which freedom, rights and morality will prevail in the world. The expansion of the market economy on a global scale, including China, has raised the hopes of democratic reforms. Francis Fukuyama's thesis about the end of history is, of course, the best-known representation of this ideological trend (cf. Kegley, 1995). Without subscribing to Fukuyama's analysis of the global situation after the Cold War, David Held has argued that the time is right to elaborate the principles for a cosmopolitan democracy, i.e. a model for developing democratic elements in the field of international relations (Held, 1995).

As a contrast to these more idealistic views, the realist school in international relations, represented by Samuel Huntington and his prognosis of future clashes of civilizations, provides a far more pessimistic, not to say horrifying, perspective – horrifying, since it may become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Huntington, 1996; cf. also Sørensen & Rose, 1997). In this view, the 'new world order' will be marked not by peace and global understanding, but only by new conflict lines primarily along the cultural and religious fissures or 'fault-lines' of the globe.

With regard to the outcome of the Gulf War, the more pessimistic view of the two perspectives would appear more significant, partly as result of an ideological hangover effect of the propaganda messages accompanying the military mobilization of the Coalition. Slogans about a new world order in which liberty and right should be protected were employed in propaganda and spread widely by the media. In retrospect, it has become clear that some of these expectations have not been fulfilled. Sovereignty was restored in Kuwait, but a proper democracy has not yet been established in that country. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein – the single individual who, according to the propaganda, was the main obstacle to the new order – still heads a terror regime. Despite UN attempts to force him to destroy the Iraqi arsenal of mass destruction weapons, he has managed to stay in power, mainly through constant repression of the Iraqi people and

continuous threats to the neighbouring countries. By and large the outcome of the war has been a blemish on the Allies' triumph chart, easy to forget for those who enthusiastically supported the 'irreconcilable' American line. The Gulf War will therefore remain as a mutilated memory of a 'Nintendo war' (Falk, 1994, p. 543) – as a recollection of a fantastic victory won by the high-tech warfare organized and led by the USA. This is the story told in popular-culture versions of the war in movies, TV series and novels.

Even more frightening is the tendency for the Western media to ignore the realities of the war, not least as understood as arrogance towards the consequences of the war for other parts and peoples of the world. In the Arab world, the Gulf War has probably not gone down in the annals of history as a moment of pride and honour. From an Arab – or a Palestinian – point of view it seems natural to see the war as an experience of broken promises and expectations, perhaps even as a forecast of increased tensions between civilizations.

There are also more directly media-related changes that make it urgent to consider the post-Cold War situation for transnational journalism. What impact has the new media technology on the content and quality of the transnational news flow? The proliferation of new electronic media for news – primarily television channels, satellite distribution systems which connect news-rooms and audiences worldwide, and the 24-hour channels with 'instant coverage' – have dramatically changed the conditions for the journalism of international war and crises. No longer can media influences on opinion formation be comprehended solely within national borders: they need to be understood in a global or at least transnational context. Also public relations and media management now find themselves operating under different conditions. Successful attempts to control the media have given military circles new experience, at the expense of the integrity and independence of the media.

To be able to trace possible influences on media content between and among national media systems we have undertaken comparative analyses of the Gulf War coverage in newspapers and television from seven countries. But the perspective on the Gulf War as a global media event calls for more than a handful of comparative studies. Media content will also be related to the international as well as various national political contexts in the analyses presented in this book. Furthermore, the media images of the 'new world order' and its rhetorical aspects will be seen as important indexes of news media as conveyors of ideological and propagandistic meanings.

The Gulf War will haunt us for decades and perhaps centuries to come. The monocausal propaganda of the intensive phases of the conflict conceived it in simplistic terms. Saddam Hussein was the villain who had violated international laws and human rights; he would have to be stopped before he went on to commit even worse crimes – this was a question of a dictator of the Hitler type vs. the democratic world. But a more sober historical review of all the conflict lines that were to converge in those few weeks in the winter of 1991 should remind us of more complex issues – like the colonial heritage of Western hegemony, unsolved conflicts of borders, oil- and water resources, not to

speak of the religious tensions that permeate all the countries involved (Galtung, 1992). Each of the countries in the Middle East has a historical legacy of myths and traumas linked to religion and convictions of being 'chosen'. During the Gulf War, Arab fought against Arab for the first time. Muslims faced each other in the foxholes. Conventional wisdom in the Western world held that this splintering of the Arab and Muslim world was a part of the victory. At this point, however, we would like to issue a word of warning against a premature harvest of this success story. Acting in the name of the United Nations, the Western world gave a violent and simple answer to what was a highly complex issue. The consequences of this may well be a new round of this spiral of violence and the risk of new conflicts and gaps between North and South (cf. Frank, 1992).

Although the empirical studies reported in this volume are situated at the intersection of these utopian and dystopian interpretations, their results cannot of course tell us whether to be optimistic or pessimistic about future international relations in the Gulf region, or anywhere else. Various and conflicting interpretations will not perish simply because a few research findings are published. However, let us hope that some of these in-depth analyses – of the news coverage and the extent to which it was influenced by war propaganda and orchestrated cross-nationally – may facilitate a better assessment of the present situation with respect to global opinion-building power. In a later volume we intend to follow up such questions also in another and more recent conflict, the wars in former Yugoslavia.

## Points of Departure

International communication research of the past two decades has largely ignored questions of ideology, dominance and propaganda. Instead the focus has been on themes like multiplicity, pluralism and heterogeneity, partly inspired by postmodern tendencies. Paradoxically, this has happened at the same time as the USA has become the sole remaining superpower – or, as President Bill Clinton has phrased it – 'an indispensable country'. Let us, in contrast to these media research tendencies, indicate the theory baselines in this project.

### 1. Media ownership dominated by US interests

In terms of media ownership and control, US interests are undoubtedly significant. Structural changes in the media industry since the early 1980s have been characterized by increased control in the hands of some 50 transnational corporations (TNCs). This trend toward greater market control is paralleled by the increasingly defensive position in which public service broadcasting finds itself. Also other cultural services, such as public libraries and various state-run institutions, are in many countries fighting for their very survival.

Although most of the largest TNCs are based in the USA, we also find huge actors from other countries, such as Sony (Japan), Philips (the Netherlands) and

Seagram (Canada). Still, the overall trend towards the globalization of television means greater US dominance and hegemony (Herman & McChesney, 1997).

Technological developments within the media industry undoubtedly act to create multiplicity and pluralism of media supply. But, at the same time, cooperation within the market is intensified and the transnational exchange of news is flowing at ever-higher speeds. And with this may come totally new possibilities for those actors who can manage to position themselves in the centre of the media stage.

The continuous flow of news – with some of the most spectacular items even delivered in real time – increases the tempo in the news-rooms, thereby reducing the time for in-depth reflection and analysis. This tendency has furthered strengthened the dependency on those sources and news producers that have seized the initiative. The initial images set the premises for the ensuing accounts and reports, which is one reason why CNN has become the major agenda-setter, ‘writing’ (or rather creating) what has been called ‘instant history’. Some fear that this development implies that the political decision-making processes are short-circuited, that international politics itself is becoming increasingly media-driven with less time for reflection and pro-active decision-making.

## 2. Interdependence between politics and journalism

The interactions between politics and journalism are crucial for understanding the role of the media in military conflicts as well as in ‘normal’ circumstances. A considerable degree of reciprocal influence and dependency can be found between the political sphere and the journalistic reporting, whether or not it is officially denied by politicians and journalists alike. For some time now, media researchers have pointed to this interdependence between politics and journalism, although mainly on the national level (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989; Eide, 1992; Hall et al., 1978), and in relation to the Gulf War (see, for example, Katz, 1992, Haines (1995) and O’Heffernan, 1994). In this context – i.e. in connection with a major international conflict such as the Gulf War – this point of departure is at least as valid as for national political processes. Political actions like decisions and proposals create *events* and *statements*, which are the substratum of which journalism is made. Correspondingly, hardly any political move is taken without the publicity and opinion aspects having been considered first. Politics has become *medialized*, to use a new coinage. During the Gulf War, this media orientation of political/military actions was reflected in the widespread ambition to supply journalists with ready-made ‘background’ material. In most cases this material was of a propagandistic nature; at times it was even deliberately incorrect, meant to deceive the enemy and perhaps also the general public. Here PR firms like Hill & Knowlton played a central and much-discussed role in manipulating the news agenda and distributing misinformation in the period before to the US Congress decision in January 1991 to support the President’s request to use military force against Iraq.

Also a sort of medialized diplomacy, so-called ‘public diplomacy’, was pursued when leaders on both sides presented demands, comments and responses to various political initiatives in the media: the targets were other leaders and the domestic general public as well as publics in other countries.

Journalists certainly cultivate a professional ideology, *journalism*, which forbids any other relation to politics than an independent and critical one, in the interests of the people. But even the journalist’s basic informative task – to cover what is happening in politics – means a certain degree of dependency, since having access to sources for authoritative information is a crucial advantage in the competition on the media market. In military conflicts this source-dependency becomes extreme, due to the lethal threat which ultimately sets the limits, also for the journalist. The so-called ‘pools’ of the Gulf War, which meant that a selected group of journalists was given the opportunity to report from the front, protected by military escort, of course also left the journalists at the mercy of the press officers. It was they who determined what areas, what interviewees and what information would be accessible.

It should, also be noted that industrial conglomerates like General Electric operate in the weapons industry as well as the media industry. What are the possibilities for professional and critical journalism within the framework of the market forces? According to conventional wisdom, the ideal of journalism should serve the interest of the ‘man in the street’. In fact, it is debatable whether journalism as such has any power that can be separated from the market. Good and critical journalism is expensive; thus, quality journalism tends to be reserved for the elite groups who consult the media for the information and coverage they need, for example financial news. For media corporations oriented towards the mass audience there is more profit to be gained from light entertainment than from investigative journalism – which might even jeopardize the professional ideology of journalism. It is also an open question whether any media institution in the long run will accept reporting that it regards as contrary to its own interests, such as maintaining harmonic relations with the political leaders in foreign-policy issues.

### 3. The Gulf War as a global media event

A third theoretical point concerns the Gulf War as a global media event. In terms of Anthony Giddens’ globalization dimensions (Giddens, 1990) this conflict involved at least three of the four main institutional dimensions:

- First, from an economic point of view, the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait concerned access to certain oil wells in the border area between the countries, and the world market price for oil.
- Second, Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait was a serious offence against the nation-state system and the rules of collective security that had been established after World War II. Iraq had attacked and annexed a sovereign nation, a member of the UN.



- Third, for the world military order, and the power balance in the region in particular, Iraq's provocative action could have led to dramatic displacements and instability, both in relation to other countries in the region as to the Western powers even beyond the Gulf area itself. (Farouk-Sluglett & Sluglett, 1994; Telhami, 1994).

Thus, seen in the light of the globalizing processes which have come to characterize international development during recent decades, and especially after the end of the Cold War, the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait was truly a global event.

This does not mean that the conflict was interpreted in the same way throughout the world. Certainly, when assessed in relation to the outcomes of the Gulf War for the most affected region, the glorification of the war in the West had no broader resonance elsewhere:

It was becoming readily apparent that in the Middle East this new world order of harmony and peace was only the surface of an order that consecrated the hegemony of the winners of the Cold War. (Ismael & Ismael, 1994, p. 14)

In order to acknowledge experiences of this kind, and also to balance the euphoric connotations linked to the notion of a new world order with some realism, the concept of 'uneven globalization' seems particularly apt. Even if the Gulf War was a global event, there are reasons to expect differing degrees of globalization in the centres and peripheries of the international system (cf. Holm & Sørensen, 1995).

The Gulf War was also a global *media* event, not least because of the enormous media exposition of the war in practically all parts of the world. This is a challenge to media research. It is becoming increasingly obvious that an in-depth understanding of the role of the media cannot be obtained from studies limited to single national media systems. If researchers are not to be overtaken by the development of media technology, studies will have to be directed towards the transnational processes in news journalism. It is also crucial that research keep pace with the growth of knowhow among the public relations strategists operating on the international level. The Gulf War vividly illustrates how the US authorities – civilian as well as military – deftly influenced the global image of the conflict by giving priority to satellite-television channels and US media, elevating them to the status of transnational electronic highways. True, the media in the rest of the world were fed with information – but it was in Washington that the news agenda was defined. More specifically, this strategic role allocated to the US media was shown by the way the CNN was actively used for diffusion of US viewpoints. This became obvious in the way that the daily press conferences in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were organized: the routine was that US press officers always appeared before the officers of the other Coalition members. Likewise, the number of US correspondents in Saudi Arabia and in the pools exceeded by far the number of journalists from other countries (Hachten, 1996; Nohrstedt, 1992).

What does this globalization imply for the media? In the following chapters, this question will be explored with regard to several countries. It seems reasonable to expect that the US war propaganda had great impact on media coverage in almost all corners of the world. At least three conditions indicate the existence of a US dominance in the transnational media discourses. We should examine these in relation to the normal principles for news value, immediacy and use of the US media as sources:

- The dominant political position of the USA on the international level implies that the actions of US leaders and authorities have top priority on the news agenda all over the world.
- In the Gulf War the US authorities controlled the news coverage in the US media by advanced media management strategies applied both domestically and in the conflict area itself.

With their first-hand access to information from the important US actors, the US media provided a framework for coverage in the media of other countries, basically for two reasons. First, the US media would be able to take the initiative in the international news flow in matters involving US actors and authorities are involved. Second, both the CNN and also to some extent other US television companies today spill over national borders and in fact perform a function for the transnational news flow similar to that of traditional news agencies.

We need to take seriously the question of possible US dominance in the transnational news flow. This is an open empirical question because there are also arguments for an opposite view – and that brings us to our fourth theory-point.

#### 4. 'Domestication' of international news

In research about the globalization role of the media, it is acknowledged that coverage of the very same events, as well as interpretations of the images of them, will vary between different national media systems and usually also between different types of media. Although the products of the media have global diffusion, their appropriation or reception is local and characterized by differing cultural, linguistic and ideological preconditions of the audiences in question (e.g. Cohen et al., 1996; Thompson, 1995).

Making a distinction between media content and the decodings of the audience is an important step for research in this field. It has also provided the basis for a well-founded critique of older theories and analytical models, which had held that the effects exercised by the media on the views, attitudes and behaviour of receivers were linear, direct and irresistible. These new insights have in turn brought valuable contributions to media research (e.g. Jensen, 1986; Liebes & Katz, 1993; Radway, 1984). At the same time, however, media research has tended to concentrate more on audience receptions than on content – which is natural as long as the objective is to explore how the media

affects receivers' worldviews, opinions, etc. But, we would argue, news-flow studies and content analyses have more to offer in their own right – as long as one takes care not to draw immediate conclusions about the impact on the audience.

Our content analyses are restricted to journalistic products and comparisons of how the war was depicted in the media of various countries. The design of our research provides opportunities to study how specific global events, for example a declaration made by the President of the United States, has been interpreted and reconstructed by journalists within their national/local settings.<sup>1</sup> Bearing in mind the assumed 'framing' effect of the US media images, we can see the comparative content analyses as a special kind of reception studies: of the journalists' professional reception (and transfer) of images previously exposed in the US media.

What these patterns may mean in terms of impact on opinion has been studied elsewhere (e.g. Iyenger & Simon, 1994; Morrison, 1992; Shaw, 1996). In this volume the focus is on the role of news journalism in relation to the global power structure in the new world order, and what this relation implies for transnational cooperation among and between news media.

We shall be asking how different national journalistic discourses handle a globally distributed and adjusted supply of information in a major international conflict. This means that we study how the media in Europe appropriated and discursively moulded the information which originated from US politicians and the military, first conveyed by the US media and the satellite channels. The national media in Europe will here be regarded as a special type of 'receivers', whose mediated receptions or decodings are examined by study of the content which they, in their turn, relay to their audiences. This approach can facilitate investigation of possible dominance relations in international news journalism, without losing sight of the fact that the interpretation of media content will always be a local and active process on the receiving side.

### **A Multifaceted Approach: Propaganda, Adaptation, Globalization**

In the contemporary vocabulary, the concept of 'propaganda' has a very restricted use, although until the mid-1950s it used to be a leading concept in media studies. Now it is employed mainly in a pejorative sense, in connection with totalitarian communication systems and persuasion against the receiver's own will and interests, as in brainwashing or psychological warfare. Media studies of today tend not to conceptualize the ordinary persuasive mass communication practices of the Western World, like governmental information activities, through the now highly-loaded term 'propaganda'.

Naturally, the phenomenon itself has not simply disappeared. Contemporary media studies focusing on the audience's point of view have tended to underemphasize the propaganda approach. In our view, however, and espe-

cially in times of war, those models and approaches developed in the tradition of propaganda studies are still relevant, although with modifications.

On the other hand, the propaganda approach alone cannot provide a sufficient point of view. This book applies a multi-perspective approach in which propaganda influences on the media are seen in relation both to the role of media in opinion-building processes and to tendencies of globalization in international relations.

### 1. Propaganda approach

We will argue that the implementation of propaganda strategies has long since reached the stage of contingent applications that do not differentiate much between wartime and peacetime. Today's propaganda strategists have integrated experiences from modern public relations and opinion research. Essential to such a strategy is that the mental strength for military actions should be bolstered up and kept prepared also in time of peace. The term for this is 'subpropaganda', an art which employs to the full the various recent communication technologies that make national borders no obstacle for propaganda activities. This in turn means that propaganda analysis is relevant for inquiries about opinion formation also in time of peace, and on the international level.

This volume focuses on the Gulf War as a major military confrontation. That in itself would make a propaganda approach relevant. Moreover, interest in propaganda analysis has been growing gradually in recent years among media researchers, perhaps due to the urgent need to uncover and understand the processes of conflict escalation and to ways of avoiding the spirals of violence (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992; Malesic, 1997; Page, 1996). Nevertheless, mainstream media research still seems hesitant to apply this perspective in studying democratic countries. Conventional thinking seems to hold that propaganda in democracies is of a different nature than propaganda as used by dictatorships – the former being somehow based on rationality and accuracy, and not on manipulation and lies. To what extent this is correct must be a matter for empirical study. With the help of propaganda analysis methods, it is possible to offer an answer.

The integrated propaganda approach proposed in this volume needs some clarifications. As mentioned above, we aim at an integration of analysis of propaganda and globalization theory. What then does this imply? It does not mean simply re-stating the obvious: that modern communication technology has massively increased the reach of propaganda to the extent that its effects are now worldwide. Rather, it means stressing that propaganda activities and their impact should be understood in the context of globalization processes.

Here we will firstly briefly comment on the concept of propaganda and its operational tools. Of course, any modern war is also a propaganda war or a conflict fought on the symbolic level. This is what makes war journalism such a difficult and demanding task – the involved parties have both stakes and strategies in relation to the media coverage, and it usually becomes extremely com-

plicated for journalists to live up to standards of independent and accurate news reporting.

Propaganda is, as social practice, a conscious and systematic symbolic activity aimed at creating and reproducing emotional and cognitive support from the target groups for a certain goal: 'Propaganda is the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.' (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992, p. 4) While 'persuasion' stands for communication which is oriented to the realization of the interests of the involved interlocutors, propaganda is primarily oriented to the realization of the propagandist's interests (*ibid.*, pp. 1, 20, 35). But the means employed in persuasion and in propaganda are the same – symbols with emotional and cognitive content.

The ways in which these symbolic means are applied makes propaganda a more extreme variant of persuasion. From the 'purpose model of propaganda' suggested by Jowett and O'Donnell (*ibid.*, p. 18), we can identify three characteristic features that indicate propagandistic implementation of symbolic persuasive means: the systematic approach with its strict goal orientation; exploitation of highly emotional values, like survival, freedom and justice; and the frequent and paramount exploitation of combinations of threat and support.

Besides this abstract definition of propaganda, we will need a more concrete conceptualization of propaganda as story-telling, for analysis of textual material like news or commentaries. In the model developed by Luostarinen (1986b; 1994), war propaganda narratives have three symptomatic characteristics. Firstly, various referential levels of the narrative are harmonized. For instance, news-stories of specific daily events, descriptions of the context and reasons of the conflict and mythical references and metaphors of the text support reciprocally the arguments and lessons of each other. This practice leads to a narrative which on the surface may appear heterogeneous and varying, even eclectic, but which contains a high frequency of certain argumentative themes and structures chosen by the sender. Absolute coherence, however, is not always to be preferred, because contradictions can be productive – for instance, by strengthening the impartial and spontaneous image of the message.

Secondly, war propaganda narratives are based on motivating logic. Motivation normally contains three dimensions: lessons given by the past, reasons to act now and gains which can be achieved and threats which can be avoided by action. For instance, the official US information before and during the Gulf War referred to the tragic lessons of the pre-WW II appeasement policy, to the right moment to act (end of Communism, victory of democracies), to the threat caused by Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons in hands of Saddam Hussein and to the promise of a new world order in which justice and freedom would rule international relations. War was thus described as a wall to defend freedom against aggression, and a bridge which would lead to a brighter future.

Thirdly, war propaganda narratives are rich in polarized references to positive and negative identification and socialization. Propaganda is quick to utilize the distinction between sacred and profane in the given target group or society

and the feelings of alienation, belonging and solidarity (Durkheim, 1968, p. 208). Sacred things are linked to 'our people'; profane issues are the province of the enemy. These characteristics of war propaganda can be studied by analysing the degree of polarization in the description of norms and values represented by textually generated in-groups and out-groups and the suggested models of identification.

Propaganda analysis has often been associated and indeed identified with older interpretations of media and communication effects (injection theory, mass society and passive receivers). This guilt by association is, in our view, not well-founded. There is no reason why propaganda analysis could not be integrated with more developed approaches to communication effects. As will be brought out in greater detail below, we contend that propaganda activities should be understood from the perspective of adaptation theory and in their institutional contexts. This means that the propaganda approach will not necessarily imply either that the audience is passive in receiving the media messages or that the propaganda messages are directed only to the general public. Quite the contrary: we would argue that, on both these scores, modern propaganda is much more sophisticated, since it is consciously calculated on the premise of active appropriation by the target groups according to their specific political, cultural (etc.) conditions, and furthermore oriented not only towards the general public but – even more probably – towards national and international elites that are important for the success of the promoted policy.

## 2. Adaptation: state and media in opinion formation processes

Above, we have indicated the mutual dependence or mutual exploitation between state and media as a point of departure for analysing the role of journalism in the Gulf War. Two questions which have been discussed extensively in connection with the war: In what ways did the authorities manipulate the media? To what extent have media influenced opinions and politics. We have described the Gulf War as a media war, particularly in two respects: (a) because of the enormous attention in the media, and (b) because of the strategic importance for both sides in the conflict to have support from the public opinion. What importance, then, did news journalism have for the opinion processes and the development of the conflict?

In speaking of the 'role of the media for opinion-building' we are referring mainly to impact of the media on the general public – its conceptions and its views. The average citizen depends on the media for information about foreign policy issues. It is through the media that public opinion receives an image of the situation and the problems involved. In the following we will elaborate a theory perspective which seeks to integrate available research on opinion formation. It will also indicate the main factors and conditions important for understanding the relations between the state and the media in international conflict situations.

This theory perspective does *not* assume that propaganda has an impact irrespective of the receiver's active interpretation and production of meaning. Neither does this approach suggest that propaganda effects can be analysed without proper attention to the historical, political, ideological, etc. context in the situation where the propaganda activities take place. Propaganda cannot simply be conceived of as information injected into the minds of passive receivers. Instead, propaganda messages should be understood as part of the various reality constructions available in the symbolic environment, and thus as a condition for the opinion formation carried by members of the target group.

We term this approach the 'social adaptation theory of opinion-building' because the main explanatory factor in this theory is the opinion-holder's need to adapt his/her views to the dominant opinions in the society.<sup>2</sup> This approach resembles the 'spiral of silence' theory formulated by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, also found in more recent theories about media-text/audience negotiation processes over the meanings of media content (Noelle-Neumann, 1973; 1991). But with our approach the adaption process is conceived as an objective of propaganda, which is not to say that there is no room for resistance or bottom-up opinion building (cf. Simpson, 1996). Why is media content important for opinion formation? Firstly, in many crucial political issues – foreign policy in particular – the media creates the symbolic environment or reality for the general public; secondly, the individual adjusts his or her personal opinion of what is depicted in line with the dominant view provided by the media. The effective mechanism behind this adaptation is presumably the social human being's fear of deviating from the collective and perhaps becoming socially isolated. Empirical support for this theory has been found in various studies of media effects on public opinion, although some tests have failed to confirm it (McQuail, 1994, pp. 331, 361 ff.; cf. Bennett, 1994; McLeod et al., 1991; Rogers & Dearing, 1994).

The adaptation theory further derives backing from the theory of symbolic convergence in small-group communications research and is also supported by application of convergence theory in rhetoric in connection with the notion of 'phantasy theme'. The main point here is that, at a certain moment in a group communication process, an interpretation is articulated around which a common understanding or a shared conception of reality is achieved; further, that this experience stimulates continued and intensified communication within the group (Foss, 1989, pp. 289 ff.). In this way communication and adaptation are mutually related and serve to promote the integration of the individual in the larger social context – whether the group, the family, the local community or the nation. In connection with the Gulf War, this mechanism can be illustrated by the massive media attention and how it consolidated the collective – perhaps global – conception of this being a major international issue, a problem that had to be dealt with by the international community. The impression was spread worldwide that Saddam Hussein is the enemy of all humankind; and increased public attention, political engagement and personal commitment were



stimulated in a process that made the global audience into an 'imagined community' that was to be mobilized against his crimes (cf. Anderson, 1983).

So far we have dealt with only the basic component in adaptation theory. For a more detailed understanding of its implications, some findings in research on opinion-building in the Gulf conflict will be included. Through these findings we will be able to see how the symbolic environment produced by the media serves to condition the views and attitudes of the audience. Studies reveal that media exposure has affected public opinion in terms of *agenda-setting*, *priming* and *framing*. This means that the public's views about the significance of the conflict, the relative weight of various criteria for evaluating political leadership, and the understanding of issues at stake in the conflict and the preferred resolution – all these were affected. For example, television news exposure made the audience more concerned about the war, more inclined to consider the way President Bush handled the conflict when assessing his general political capacity, and more inclined to support a military solution (Iyenger & Simon, 1994). Thus the media coverage in its construction of the symbolic reality in a direct sense provides *the criteria* for the formation of public opinion; only indirectly does it suggest what views should be adopted.

Two central criteria here are the *authority* of the leadership and the *legitimacy* of the policy pursued (cf. Goldman & Robertson, 1990). From this perspective it can be argued that the exact details of the coverage of a conflict or a war are not of major importance for the impact of media content on public opinion. For example, we may assume that it does not matter so much exactly how the media depicted Saddam Hussein – e.g. as a 'new Hitler' or not – as long as the description functioned as a negative enemy-image. Perhaps more important for the effect on audience opinion is what information is given concerning the standpoint of legitimate political leaders: 'In most politically relevant conditions, the "receiver" of persuasive messages is ... a "lazy organism" that will pay little attention to message content and much attention to peripheral attributes of the message, such as who the source is.' (Zaller, 1994, p. 201) To notice, for example, that the source is a political authority, a leader, is relevant for the receiver – because this is an index or 'elite cue' for *what* official policy is, and this in turn is more important for opinion formation than *how* this policy is motivated. In the interpretation process the receiver will, of course, also notice the *how*-aspects – otherwise it would not be possible to talk about a framing effect. This, however, is more the result than the cause of the opinion adopted.

Accordingly, we may conclude that within the general framework of adaptation theory, three types of media effects in the opinion-building process are dealt with. These involve what issues receive attention, which areas and dimensions of political leadership are seen as important, and how the matter of concern is understood. For all these aspects of the media impact on opinion, it is the receiver who in the final resort will be decisive for the strength of any media effects. Different individuals will make different interpretations and therefore react differently to the media contents in many instances. In this respect,



the semiotic power is on the side of the receiver. But it also seems clear, from extensive research on opinion-building, that most people will trust the judgement of legitimate leaders when it comes to urgent foreign-policy issues. It is this general tendency that makes the elite cues in the media particularly important for the formation of public opinion: they have a prescriptive function for their audiences.

Two further points should be noted here. Firstly, the level of elite consensus is crucial to the outcome of any attempt by political leaders to influence public opinion. This has to do with the legitimacy factor mentioned above; when official policy is contested, legitimacy tends to decrease. In democracies and in peacetime the degree of consensus will vary from issue to issue, but generally there is a wide scope of different views and political arguments. By contrast, in war situations or in conflicts with vital implications for the national interests, this is not so (cf. Bennett, 1994). Here there will be a general trend to support the national government, and this will affect the institution of journalism as well (cf. Liebes, 1992; McLeod et al., 1994).

Secondly, in war and conflict situations, the control over the media is usually stepped up – by censorship, restrictions on mobility and intensified public relations activities. The greater the consensus within the elite and the more controlled the media are, the more will media content go hand in hand with official policy and thus contribute to the support from public opinion.<sup>3</sup>

This will generally be the case, even if some contradictory examples could be cited, first and foremost cases where single media have opposed the restrictions placed upon journalists. For such protests to have any significant impact on opinion, they will have to attract a great deal of attention in a great number of media, as well as resonance among groups within the political establishment.

Public opinion in the USA on the Gulf War policy has been shown to be related to the consensus within the political establishment. In issues where there was no conflict between the political parties, for example the decision to send US troops to Saudi Arabia, support for President Bush's policy was positively correlated with political awareness, i.e. the respondents' attention to Gulf War news and Congress negotiations. But in those Gulf War issues where the elite was divided, public opinion was also divided, and more so amongst the more politically interested parts of the population (Zaller, 1994).

In sum, then, according to the adaptation perspective on the role of the media in opinion-building processes, the media have substantial intermediate effects on public opinion because they provide the symbolic reality to which the audience responds and upon which the public forms its opinion. When the national political establishment is united, as can be expected in urgent foreign-policy matters, the media normally follow suit and avoid critical reporting. This serves to convince the audience that an overwhelming majority supports the policy and that this policy is rational and right. If, as an exception, the reverse should occur, and different political elites are in conflict over the policy, the

media will report these opposing views – and thus probably polarize public opinion as well (cf. Hallin, 1986; Shaw & Martin, 1993).<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Globalization

The globalization theme is related to the studies in this volume mainly as a theoretical background against which the results may be productively related. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, it seems that deeper understanding of the Gulf War as a global event is achieved when this perspective is brought in. Secondly, the discussion about globalization among scholars of culture and sociology offers an analytical framework for integrating the approaches of propaganda and opinion research to international conflicts.

Why is 'globalization' such a central theme in current research? The answer clearly has to do with increased emphasis on the general awareness of other parts of the world as a basic feature of today's 'post-modern' society. More and more, the world is being recognized as being 'a single place' (Robertson, 1992, p.6). This cognitive aspect is referred to, at least implicitly, in almost every contribution to the discussion. But some theorists reveal a special interest in exploring the mental and cultural dimensions of globalization. That makes them especially interesting for media studies which are asking: how does transnational news affect international relations when worldviews and self-understandings from different national cultures are circulated globally?

After the end of the Cold War, some immediately envisioned a new world order which they diagnosed as 'the end of history' and characterized as a relatively homogenous global community. Later analysts, however, have noted, not homogeneity but heterogeneity, and the conflicts emerging in this new situation. Mike Featherstone, as one representative of the second orientation, responds in the negative to the question whether there exists a 'global' culture of a nature similar to that of the national cultures. For him globalization consists of transnational cultural processes that need not have homogenization effects on national cultures, not represent any threat to them. Other authors have presented similar arguments for why globalization is not the same as increased cultural homogeneity in the world (e.g. Appadurai, 1990; Robertson, 1990; Smith, 1990). In yet another contribution to the discussion, Marjorie Ferguson argues that the notion of globalization is linked to myths about an irresistible process towards global cultural homogeneity, which becomes 'increasingly problematic' (Ferguson, 1992, p. 82). The French communication theorist, Armand Mattelart, has discussed globalization and culture primarily in terms of the worldwide diffusion of corporate and management ideologies and cultures. He highlights the way in which this variant of globalization dismissed large parts of the world as irrelevant (Mattelart, 1994). With a somewhat similar view of the international communication research field, Hamid Mowlana finds it necessary to avoid some of the reified meanings of the term 'globalization' (Mowlana, 1996, p. 194).

Although we are witnessing a compression of the world, it seems there are good reasons to question overly simplistic assumptions about a historical development towards increased global homogeneity, unification and harmony. Contrary to the exaggerated promises of globalization bringing about the 'global village', we suggest that opposite tendencies should be examined: fragmentation, complexity and differences in the expressions of globalizing processes in various regions and countries, together with increased heterogeneity and contradictions. We suggest that the conflicting interpretations with respect to the globalization tendencies, whether they are homogenizing or heterogenizing, should be settled through empirical studies of specific cases of global events.

For this purpose the Gulf War would seem a good choice. Central in such a study is to what degree and how national foreign- and security policies are affected by globalization during the conflict. Are national policies 'relativized', i.e. reconsidered and reoriented, as a result of what the conflict reveals of the new post-Cold War international situation? 'Relativization' is a notion developed by Roland Robertson in the context of a theory of globalization. Robertson's theory is explicitly introduced as an alternative to economic interpretations of globalization, whether of neo-Liberal or neo-Marxist kinds. Accordingly, globalization is not only an 'objective' development process of economic nature, but also a matter of understanding and conception: 'Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (1992, p. 8). This intensified awareness of the global dimensions initiates relativization processes in the 'global field', with consequences for how we as social and human beings understand ourselves, our national societies, the world system and humankind – and the interrelations among these components of the field. In this context, 'relativization' refers to the challenges to traditional 'worldviews' and patterns of participation in the interactions with other cultures, countries, etc., that are actualized by the processes of globalization (p. 29).

What this means is further developed by Robertson in relation to the mutual relations between tendencies of universalization and particularization in today's historical situation. Universalism and particularism are conceived as something like the two sides of the coin. Robertson aims at a non-reductive understanding of this relation which should '...preserve direct attention to *both* particularity and difference and to universality and homogeneity'. And further: '...we are, in the late twentieth century, witness to – and participants in – a massive, twofold process involving *the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and the particularization of universalism...*' (Robertson, 1992, p. 100; italics in original).

Thus, as we become more and more aware of cultural differences, at the same time we also continuously have to face the fact that some perspectives are promoted with universalist claims – with pretensions to represent a single comprehensive and valid understanding of the world, including how all these cultures and peoples are related to each other globally. Although globalization means increased understanding of the complexity and the relativity of much of

our conceptions, it does not necessarily make cultural and political hegemony a thing of the past.

Robertson's approach is methodologically open and flexible, and it is this that makes it so valuable. For the understanding of war propaganda the globalization theme encourages increased attention to how propaganda intervenes in and stimulates ongoing relativization processes, the ways it influences the conceptions of various national societies and their relations within the wider international system. The level of globalization reached in present historical situation makes it both possible and necessary for actors with international strategic aims to conceive of propaganda in a global context. In our analysis we should do likewise.

## Reconsiderations of National Policies

To fully grasp the propaganda impact on national discourses about foreign and security policies, we will have to understand the performative nature of the Gulf War for the meanings associated with the 'New World Order'. After US President Bush had proclaimed, in connection with the conflict, that human history had reached a new stage, virgin semantic terrain was opened up for conflicting interpretations. The point here is not that varying views were expressed about this new order. But partly as a consequence of this proclamation of a new stage in international relations, political leaders in other countries suddenly felt a heightened need to reconsider previous foreign-policy conceptions – not because anybody had told them to, but simply because the announcement of this new order implicitly contained an appeal to do so. Symbolic demarcations of this kind are rarely without purpose and never without consequences. In this case, the consequences had more to do with Bush's creating the impression that now was the historic moment for decision-makers all over the world to take a stand, rather than that they fully accepted his interpretation of this new world order.

Here that 'new order' will not be characterized as the realization of global right and moral, as Bush described it, or as anything like Fukuyama's 'end of history'. The new world order has not meant that freedom, justice and democracy have emerged victorious throughout the world, nor has the moral crusade advocated by Bush resulted in violations against human rights after the Gulf War being consistently punished by the international community. On the other hand, a real new order *has* come into existence, in terms of new conditions for conflict resolution and collective security. This might seem a trivial observation as such, but it is relevant in connection with the historical interpretation of the Gulf War. This war was what revealed how the international political system was fundamentally changed after the fall of the East European dictatorships, and how the different nation-states had begun turning their foreign policies in new directions.

The USA found itself the sole remaining superpower. It radically reconsidered its UN policy and successfully took the leadership role in the mobilization of a worldwide coalition against Iraq under the formal leadership of UN, but de facto led by the United States. US self-confidence grew rapidly and every trace of the 'Vietnam syndrome' was washed away by national euphoria after the liberation of Kuwait. The current White House tenant would probably not have been able to say in his Inaugural Address, 'America stands alone as the world's indispensable nation', had it not been for the success in the Gulf War.<sup>5</sup>

For the NATO-member Germany, the end of the Cold War and reunification called for reconsideration around the constitutional issue of whether German military forces could participate in NATO and UN operations outside Central Europe. Suggestions in this directions were raised in conjunction with the Gulf War, and the issue was further actualized when German troops took part in the NATO engagement in Somalia. The question was taken up in the constitutional court, which ruled that out-of-area actions of German military in the context of NATO operations were in accordance with the constitution. The court cited Germany's increased responsibility in the new situation as reason for this re-interpretation of the Federal German Constitution.

New challenges now face the small countries that during the Cold War tried to manoeuvre in the tense zone between the two superpowers, regarding the UN as a platform for political initiatives in defence of national sovereignty and human rights under pressure because of the inter-bloc struggle. Today's calls for reconsideration. The USA holds a leading position in the international system, a position unprecedented in modern history. One result of this may be a reduced role for the UN, making it an increasingly uncertain platform for small nations' interests to the extent that these are at variance with the interests of the United States.

The experience to date from the wars in former Yugoslavia appears to be exactly this: No peace initiatives without the trademark 'made in USA' will have any chance of success (cf. Bildt, 1997). On the other hand, for international legitimacy some sign of consent from the Security Council is fundamental, even in the brave new world order.

## National Conflict Policies and Transnational Journalism

What is then the importance of war journalism for the reconsiderations of foreign policy that took place in connection with the Gulf War? Has the globalization of transnational news coverage brought about conditions for the makers of foreign policy that make them dependent on the media, for example because of real-time reporting and the mobilization of global opinions? These questions have been extensively discussed in the Gulf War context, especially concerning the role of CNN. But we do not subscribe to the 'CNNization' thesis, or the CNN effect, as it is usually called. We will return to this in the final chapter. Suffice it here to offer a few comments.

What we noted earlier about the media constructing the symbolic environment for opinion-building also holds for opinions among policy-makers in some instances. But we have also argued above that media will generally have a rather limited effect on opinion *unless* the national leadership is divided on the policy-issue in question. Correspondingly, the media will not have any great impact on the foreign-policy line as long as the leaders are determined and unified. But all the same, it seems reasonable to assume that globalization of news coverage will make national news cultures more sensitive to influences from abroad, for example with respect to priority and framing of news, and that this in its turn will make national policy-makers more receptive to the ways in which international conflicts are constructed symbolically in the transnational news flow. The studies reported in this volume do not intend to explore the impact of news media coverage on policy-making. Our ambitions have been more limited, focused on the content of the media coverage. Nevertheless, the readers of the following chapters should bear in mind these globalization tendencies and the pressure for reconsideration of national policies that the Gulf War accentuated on both sides of the Atlantic.

### Project Design: Media Sample for Quantitative Analysis

The design of the main sample of the project aims at systematic comparisons between four types of news media in five main countries over the time-period from August 1990 till January 1993. These five countries are Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the USA. Within this period, news reports in ten specific time-spots of, on the average, three days each have been selected, which amounts to 31 days of news coverage in each medium. The sample of media from each country comprises one leading quality paper, one provincial paper, one popular or tabloid paper and one major prime-time television news programme. Besides the media from the main countries also one Iraqi paper and two Ethiopian papers have been included in the material, to enable spotwise comparisons with media representing the Iraqi view and the views from a Third World country not involved in the conflict. In total the material amounts to approximately 4,100 news items.

Basically the same sample has been used for various content analysis methods, both quantitative and qualitative, but with respect to the latter type of analysis the material has, of course, been reduced further as clarified in the respective chapters.

The following media are represented in the material for the quantitative analyses (the Iraqi newspaper *the Baghdad Observer* has been excluded because it is not represented for all time-spots):

**Figure 1.** The media sample

	Prestige papers	Popular papers	Local papers	Television
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<i>Addis Zemen</i> <i>Ethiopian Herald</i>	–	–	–
<b>Finland</b>	<i>Helsingin Sanomat</i>	<i>Iltta-Sanomat</i>	<i>Turun Sanomat</i>	YLE 1, 20.30 News
<b>Germany</b>	<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	<i>Bild-Zeitung</i>	<i>Südkurier</i>	Heute
<b>Norway</b>	<i>Aftenposten</i>	<i>Verdens Gang</i>	<i>Bergens Tidende</i>	Dagsrevyen
<b>Sweden</b>	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i>	<i>Expressen</i>	<i>Nerikes-Allehanda</i>	Rapport 19.30
<b>USA</b>	<i>The Washington Post</i>	<i>The New York Post</i>	–	(ABC;CBS;NBC)*

\* Sampled from Sky World News at 23.00 hours to 23.30 hours.

Our ambition to match the samples from each main country has been realized in most cases, but there are unfortunately some imperfections. Practical restrictions made it impossible to include a local US paper. The US television material is limited to the ‘hot’ war period, i.e. to five time-spots (see below) between 12 January 1991 and 28 February 1991. Lacking access to material from a prime-time programme transmitted to the US audience, we decided to use the news items from the major US television channels conveyed to Europe by the late evening news programme ‘Sky World News’.<sup>6</sup>

The ten time-spots have been selected to cover particularly important events before, during and after the war between the Coalition forces and Iraq. Thus the material should be comprehensive enough for comparative and diachronic analyses. The periods covered periods also include the autumn of 1990 and some later war events in the aftermath of the war. The time-spots are as follows:

*Time-point 1: 2–7 August 1990*

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait; President Bush’s declaration that Iraqi aggression ‘will not stand’; UN Security Resolution 661 (mandatory sanctions on Iraq) ; US troops and aircraft sent to Saudi Arabia

*Time-point 2: 28–30 November 1990*

UN Security Council’s decision to sanction the use of every possible means to liberate Kuwait.

*Time-point 3: 12–14 January 1991*

The US Congress vote to support President Bush’s request to use the armed forces; US pressure on Israel not to respond if attacked by Iraq; UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar visit to Baghdad and the failed attempt to persuade Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait.

*Time-point 4: 17–19 January 1991*

‘Operation Desert Storm’, the Coalition air campaign; the first Iraqi Scud missile attack on Israel and the ‘the call for Patriots to defend Israel’.

*Time-point 5: 13–15 February 1991*

The bombing of the Amirya bunker.

*Time-point 6: 21–23 February 1991*

Iraqi acceptance of the Soviet peace plan; President Bush rejects the plan; news about 'death road' to Basra; US and other major Coalition members reject Gorbachev's request to delay ground offensive; Coalition ground offensive begins.

*Time-point 7: 27–28 February 1991*

Liberation of Kuwait City; letter from Raïq Aziz to UN Security Council accepting Resolutions 660, 662 and 674; Security Council permanent members demanding unconditional acceptance of all resolutions relevant to the crisis; temporary ceasefire after Iraqi acceptance of conditions.

*Time-point 8: 26–28 April 1991*

The Kurds and Shias rise up against the Iraqi regime as recommended by President Bush; the USA, the UK and France proclaim that they will protect Kurd territory against attacks from Iraqi airplanes.

*Time-point 9: 25–27 August 1992*

Shias are given the same kind of protection by the Allies as the Kurds, except humanitarian support.

*Time-point 10: 14–15 January 1993*

US forces with assistance from France and Great Britain bomb Baghdad with the aim of forcing Iraq to follow up the UN resolutions and to respect the no-flight zone in the north and south of Iraq.

The design chosen for the quantitative content analyses reported in this volume makes the results strictly comparable and combinable, since the basic sample is the same with respect to media and time-spots irrespective of the method used, whether latent class analysis or traditional content analysis. This enables cross-validity checks and provides a broad foundation for the conclusions reached.

## Content of this Volume

Empirically the news coverage of the Gulf War is in the focus of our analyses in this book. But the findings are analysed with respect to the relations between the news coverage, on the one hand, and the international political changes during the past decade and propaganda activities in the Gulf War, on the other hand. This integrated approach has been implemented in the following way.

First, it should be noted that much of the interpretations have been made possible by other studies of this war – both in the field of international relations and among media researchers. Second, in the project's own design the options



for contextual analyses have been provided by several unique studies. In Chapter 2 *Luostarinen* and *Ottosen* provide an overview of the technological, operational, and ethical conditions surrounding the journalists' effort to cover the war. In their analytical framework, access to the conflict scene, the actual events and the actors is a prime factor of the media management regime established during the Gulf War. All parts of the project have the epochal changes in the international system as their contextual background, but a special analysis of US–UN relations has been conducted in a study by *Garbo* in Chapter 3. With his experience from many years of work within the UN organizations, he contributes a discerning account of the US Gulf War strategy in relation to the UN.

The main focus of the project is the media coverage of the Gulf War. Regarding the content analyses, special attention has been directed towards the US media as reference-point for comparative studies. The way in which the leading position of the United States, internationally and in the Coalition against Iraq, was converted in terms of media constructions of the US engagement, objectives and interests in the conflict is the focus for *Alexandre* in an analysis of the *Voice of America* (VOA) editorials in Chapter 4. These editorials represent authoritative expressions of the US position in foreign policy matters, and Alexandre's findings are of central importance not least when assessing the influence of the US view on the Gulf War media agenda in the other countries.

As a counterpart for comparison, in Chapter 5 *Mathisen* presents a special study of the *Baghdad Observer's* content during the autumn 1990, i.e. that part of the conflict period when the Iraqi paper was being published. It is no surprise that the Iraqi paper conveys an image of the conflict quite different from that in, for example, the VOA, but Mathisen's findings are important because they show in some detail how propaganda from the Iraqi side wanted the conflict to be understood and also how the Baghdad paper related its reports to sources in the Western media.

Systematic comparative content analyses of the Gulf War coverage in US, Finnish, German, Norwegian, Swedish and – on a reduced sample – Ethiopian and Iraqi media have been conducted with the aim of studying the impact of the propaganda and media management activities on news coverage and – but to a minor extent – on the editorial comments in various national media systems. The focuses of these content analysis studies varies, as do the methods applied. In Chapter 6 the new world order rhetoric is the particular focus for *Kempf*, *Reimann* and *Luostarinen* in a study that combines the latent class analysis method with qualitative analysis. From their findings, it is possible to conclude to what degree the central propaganda theme about a 'brighter future' was focused on and also taken over by the media in different countries.

In a second contribution by *Kempf* in Chapter 7, primary attention is on the polarization of the news coverage. In Chapter 8 a study by *Nohrstedt* takes as its point of departure the hypothesis of a globally orchestrated coverage in an analysis of the convergence patterns in the cross-national news coverage. Both the study by *Kempf* and the study by *Nohrstedt* are based on quantitative content analysis of the project's main sample of news items (see above). But

the methods are of different kinds – latent class analysis and traditional quantitative content analysis, respectively.

Purely qualitative content analysis are also represented in this volume. Chapter 9 present an in-depth study of the depiction of a peace initiative by the then Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev in leading Norwegian, Swedish and US newspapers. There *Tveiten* concentrates on the discursive and narrative constructions of this particular theme in the news coverage. Part of the purpose of his study is to come to grips with what he calls the institutional propaganda aspects and the anticipated actor-perspective from which the event is viewed by the various news texts.

In the final chapter the findings are summarized in a comprehensive discussion of the approach applied in the project and its values. We also return to the normative and ethical questions raised earlier. In the echoes from the Gulf War 1991 that we could still hear in connection with the Kosovo war in 1999, our concern for a journalism capable to develop integrity strategies to defend its democratic role as a fourth – and critical – estate remains as strong as ever.

## Notes

1. Cf. Nohrstedt, Kaitazi-Whitlock, Ottosen & Riegert, 2000.
2. Our approach should not be confused with the cross-cultural adaptation theory (see Kim 1995), although these two approaches are affiliated, at least with respect to the psychological explanatory mechanism. However, the approach in this project does not originate from systems theory, with the organism as its root metaphor. In particular, it puts far more emphasis on ideological factors and therefore lacks all assumptions about an irreversible process of growth or development, which makes it open for reverse changes under certain conditions (see Chapter 10).
3. It has been suggested that in the case of the Gulf War the elite consensus in the USA was far more important for the news coverage than all other factors, including media technology, media management, public relations strategies and censorship (Bennett 1994, p. 26). In general it seems not very productive to attempt to estimate the relative weight of different factors in this way, because in the end all these conditions are combined in the concrete situation so that the eventual media coverage will be the result of the mutual interactions between them.
4. It can be added that new media technologies could make a difference in the relation between nation-state policy and media coverage. Bernard Cohen has argued that television's central position in today's media landscape may have reduced the importance of the elite consensus for the policy and opinion formation (Cohen, 1994). This is certainly correct to some extent, but the particular dramaturgical strength of television as a medium is probably only of decisive importance in a special type of conflicts, as will be elaborated in Chapter 10.
5. President William J. Clinton, Inaugural Address, Washington, DC, 20 January 1997.
6. Access to this television material was kindly allowed by Professor David Morrison of the University of Leeds, UK.

## The Media Gulf War and its Aftermath

Heikki Luostarinen & Rune Ottosen

### Introduction

Media performance during the Gulf War has been discussed in a great number of articles and books. The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize some of the analysis from this material, rather than refer to new empirical findings. The latter will be presented elsewhere in this book.

In a statement after the Gulf War, Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams announced that 'The press gave the American people the best war coverage they ever had'. By contrast, a group of Washington bureau chiefs representing the major US news organizations claimed that 'the combination of security review and the use of the pool system as a form of censorship made the Gulf War the most under-covered major conflict in modern American history' (Aukofer & Lawrence, 1995, Internet chap 2 p. 1). How can the experience of some 1,600 correspondents from the press centres in Saudi Arabia be summed up so differently?

Never before in the history of war reporting has the manipulation of the media been subject to so much public criticism, and never before have journalists involved been so open in their self-criticism. Military personnel made great efforts to provide material for the correspondents. However, they also wanted to limit their mobility, control much of the news and promote their own propaganda by means of the media.

The continuous flow of news – with some of the most spectacular items even delivered in real time – increased the tempo in the news-rooms, thereby reducing the time for in-depth reflections and analyses, which led some commentators to talk of an end to journalism (Katz, 1992). This tendency has further strengthened the dependency on those sources and news producers that have the initiative in the process. The initial images set the premises for the following reports, which is the reason why CNN has become an influential agenda setter, 'writing' (or rather creating) what has been called 'instant history' (Gerbner, 1993, p. 195).

The international media structures have changed rapidly, giving the US a central position unheard-of before. In part this is a consequence of the political dominance of the USA – but it is also the result of round-the-clock news reporting launched by CNN. During the Gulf War, even national news agencies found that their communication lines were too slow. Why, subscribers complained, should we wait for over an hour and pay for news telegrams to reach our printer, when we can have the report instantly on CNN? In the course of a few years, CNN had managed to gain the upper hand in the global news flow: today no news editor is completely out of reach of the CNN influence.

Media management strategies have been applied in the recent conflicts to a degree and with a sophistication not seen before. Of course, state authorities and militaries have always censored, restricted and used journalists as part of their war effort. The Gulf War is unique, however, in the efficiency of the propaganda strategies, like the pool system and the carefully tailored image of the war. The involvement of PR consultants was considerable, the most striking example being the activities of Hill & Knowlton in connection with the US Congress decision to allow the President to use military force against Iraq (Ottosen, 1992).

The Gulf War also raises questions about journalists' ethics and about the implementation of their professional norms. Evidence seems to confirm that the leading media – not only in the USA – collaborated extensively with the military, accepting restrictions and censorship in return for favours like first-hand access to the battleground, or the best camera positions. The prime example is once again CNN, which would appear to have joined the military forces in a kind of unholy alliance – if assessed from the viewpoint of the official journalist code that emphasizes independent and critical reporting. True, there were incidents during the war when the channel's coverage annoyed the commanders in Riyadh headquarters as well as the White House and Pentagon, but, by and large, the cooperation between media and military functioned smoothly.

This is not to accuse each and every reporter in the Gulf region or elsewhere of being unaware of the media management strategies employed by the authorities, or to say that journalists were satisfied with the circumstances. Certainly many of them felt uneasy and complained about the restrictions. But in the end they generally chose to accommodate themselves. Simply stated, they thought they had no other alternative – either cooperate, or be left out of what would be regarded as relevant and accurate news by their editors at home. And these editors would have watched CNN reporting and more or less copied the channel's news agenda.

We will, however, warn against two possible traps. Firstly, the risk of exaggerating the importance of new media technologies; secondly, the risk of assuming that US patterns of media coverage will in all future interventions dominate media content all around the globe. The Gulf War was a special case in which historical and practical circumstances were exceptionally favourable for the US dominance.

Why not simply leave discussions about the media–military relationship to the historians of the future? Because previous experience has shown that even archives can be manipulated in ways that can falsify history and give a wrong picture about other cultures and nations.<sup>1</sup>

Since in our view the Gulf War is an event that had and will continue to have a significant effect on intercultural relations between the West and the Arab world, since the political and military situation in the region has remained tense and volatile after the war, and since there are some misgivings that documentation about the war has already been destroyed, we cannot abandon this discussion. One example was offered by *Los Angeles Times* correspondent John Balzar, who chanced to see a video shot with the gun camera of an Apache helicopter during a night raid:

One by one [Iraqi soldiers] were cut down by attackers they could not see or understand. Some were blown to bits by bursts of 30-millimeter exploding cannon shells. One man dropped, writhed on the ground, then struggled to his feet; another burst of fire tore him apart.

This footage was never shown on TV. Balzar believes it has been destroyed, probably because it contradicted the official picture of high-tech warfare and Saddam Hussein's strong forces comparable to Hitler's war machine. That was the version of the war offered to the public by the Pentagon through media at the time. (MacArthur, 1992, p. 163).

## Principal Issues

The experiences from the Gulf War are all different facets of the overarching democratic problem of how citizens' right to information is affected by the development of news journalism today. One urgent issue is to define what this right to information actually means in military conflicts of the type exemplified by the Gulf War. Security reasons will obviously justify some restrictions on this right – but in what matters, and to what extent? Is it, for instance, reasonable to argue that censorship activities are legitimate if public polls show that the majority accept them – as some media commentators during the Gulf War seem to have contended?<sup>2</sup> Or are the democratic principles more demanding than that? Are there situations where it cannot be assumed a priori that the interests of the military and of the people are one and the same – in contrast to the situation when a country is attacked by the military forces of another nation and has to defend its national survival?

Another important issue concerns the news media in countries other than the USA, and their capacity for independent reporting. How should for instance journalists in Norway, Sweden or Finland manage to form their own judgements about the US political motives and calculations, if the US media close ranks with their political and military elite? How is an informed and independent public opinion possible in other countries, if their media are dominated by

the interests and viewpoints of the USA? From which viewpoint would an alternative perspective be at all possible in a globalized communication world?<sup>3</sup> In view of the importance of the cultural dimensions of international communication as suggested by Hamid Mowlana (1997), these are questions that will be raised all over the world in the near future. This is also the reason why this chapter has a US focus.

## Important Media

The United States coordinated the media policy of the entire Western Coalition, in addition to coordinating the war itself. This does not imply that there would not have been differences between various countries and the behaviour of their troops. However, to the United States, what was important here was more than ensuring the support of US voters; equally pivotal were the support of industrialized countries, which had to a significant extent financed the war, and the political cooperation of the Arab members of the Coalition. It was of central importance to create an image of a war waged as 'cleanly' as possible, both morally and in terms of international law.

As to Arab countries, it was important to prevent any interpretations of the war in ethnic, religious or North vs. South contexts. Allusions to growing US influence in the area and to its close relations with Israel were also considered harmful. In interventions in general it was seen as important to strive for the formation of local pro-Western coalitions, which could justify the war and maintain the expected order without the necessity of a prolonged presence of Western armies.

The media can be used as a tool in political and diplomatic games and in the implementation of military operations. CNN's live coverage soon became an important alternative to the traditional intelligence communication lines. When Dennis Ross, Director of the US State Department's Planning Staff, went to Moscow to coordinate the policy on James Baker's trip to Geneva just before the war broke out, he was amazed to find that his Soviet opposite number, Sergei Tarasenko, systematically used CNN to keep updated, rather than relying on the traditional Soviet intelligence channels (Freedman & Karsh, 1993, p. 78).

On the other hand, the media are actors with some independent power, as could be observed for example in the Somalia intervention (Maren, 1995). The importance of the media as integral part of military and diplomatic action has highlighted not only techniques of news management but also the relative dependence of governments on media images. 'Ironically', writes William A. Hachten, 'the greatly expanded capability of global television to report instantly on a modern war provides another rationale for governments to control and censor war news' (Hachten, 1992, p. 169).

New journalistic strategies are probably needed to face the challenges of growing media management and to protect the independence of journalism as functional and responsible element of democracy. In particular three aspects

seem important here: journalists must develop their skills in analysing news management strategies and develop their working practices; journalists must learn to be more critical towards colleagues who fail to live up to demands as to professional competence; and journalists must recognize and be aware of their new role in interventions – they are no longer bystanders, but an organic part of the implementation of interventions, and this imposes on them certain responsibilities.

Source criticism is essential to the ‘counter-strategies’ to protect journalistic integrity in time of war and crisis. Journalists are remarkably slack in source criticism when it comes to other media, and here greater selectivity is needed. There also seems to be a tendency to close ranks with official sources when a war breaks out, and to drop alternative and critical sources of information (Reese & Buckalew, 1995). Surely, however, it is a sign of quality journalism to inform the audience, even in the midst of patriotic ‘war hype’, about uncertainties of knowledge, interests and news management strategies of sources and alternative explanations of the reasons for the conflict.

This is not to say that journalists have failed to draw any conclusions or learn anything from the experiences of the Gulf War. Rather, the chapter aims to find out exactly what conclusions and lessons journalists *have* drawn in terms of the new world order and its challenge to professional journalistic values. (See also Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 1994.)

We can sum up challenges for journalism in the following fields:

- Technological aspects, especially the consequences in terms of ethics and working practices of real-time reporting, when there is no time to check the facts.
- Political and diplomatic aspects, for instance the consequence of the ‘CNN factor’ when press conferences broadcast from both US and Iraqi officials had their counterparts in Washington and Baghdad as target groups just as much as the media.
- Military aspects: in some cases the journalistic presentation of the warfare had an impact on the warfare itself, both on strategic and tactical level of operations, or it was influenced by the military as part of operational planning.
- Media management/information policy aspects, for instance the misuse of pools, press conferences, misinformation, manipulation of opinion polls and systematic use of modern commercial public relations techniques.
- Professional aspects inside and between the professions of journalism and the military, including considerations on the social and cultural status of journalists. Media critics have queried whether there has been a change in the institutional and social power balance in advance of the military.
- Sociocultural aspects, including discussions about militarization of the media and society.

## Access and Censorship

The specific nature of the Gulf theatre of war – the possibility of controlling access to Saudi Arabia, the uncommunicativeness of Iraq and the difficulty of moving in the theatre of operations – made it relatively easy to control the journalists. The control of publicity was also facilitated by the long preparation time that elapsed, from the occupation of Kuwait to the beginning of aerial warfare. As the 16 January deadline for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait approached, preparations were made for setting up a news pool for British and US reporters. A total of 192 journalists from various agencies, TV stations and newspapers were divided into 24 pools and assigned to different military units. In theory, this was done so as to make all information from pool members available to all stations and newspapers, while also safeguarding the journalists. Critics, however, maintain that the system served to provide more effective control of the journalistic process.

In the opinion of several Gulf journalists, the most important form of control was 'access control'. This included several phases: accreditation to theatre of operations, access to pools and access to witness actual combat.

There were various problems in the action of the pools which have made them almost an emblem of the Gulf War media criticism. One of these problems was the restricted number of journalists in the pools, as the US media reserved most of the places for their own number, while the British and the French for their part favoured their own people. Journalists from other parts of the world had to be content with the hotel perspective and casual visits. According to Thomas (1992, p. 417) some 14% of the journalists accredited to Saudi Arabia were in military units at the beginning of the land war. Another problem was that pool journalists were not allowed to make interviews without the control of a military officer. A third problem was the slow pace at which the material could be dispatched, and a fourth was that the pool system acted to make the material more uniform.

The effect of censorship was actually less than the attention the journalists paid to it. The accredited journalists committed themselves to complying with the rules of reporting which ensured operative safety (The Media..., 1991, pp. 98–101). Their compliance was examined in a 'security check' before the material was sent on. If there were disputable passages, the matter was consulted between military leadership, the US Department of Defense and the leadership of the media involved, who formally bore the final responsibility.

In our view, the most important conclusion in the journalistic debate about the media restrictions in the Gulf War concerns the importance of *access*. In many cases censorship can be circumvented, or the unpleasant information can be revealed after the crisis. Access is the crucial factor, because without any independent eye-witnesses the true story may remain untold forever.



## Persuasive Methods

The dependence of the media on the benevolence of the army eventually led to the expected result that journalists and news organizations began to compete amongst themselves for the approval of the soldiers, for interviews, background information, transportation and access to the front. The price they paid was strict compliance with regulations; according to Fialka (1991, p. 41), even the promotion of the careers of individual officers through favourable publicity. In accordance with the lessons of Vietnam, politically 'easy' local US media and journalists (whose background was cleared and whose activities were being monitored) received 'most-favoured' treatment (DeParle, 1991, p. 20).

The professional skill of the film trade can be seen in the visual material the US Army provided for journalists, dealing especially with attacking aeroplanes and even shots taken from the tips of missiles. These fantastic views were repeatedly screened on TV, establishing their position in the history of war visualization. This was a new and fascinating way of looking at war. Many journalists were well aware of the fact that the material the army produced was selective and that views of the damage caused by, for example, B-52 bombers might be different. However, it was not possible for them not to use alternative imagery. The army also fed the media through frequent press conferences. Mary Mander (1991, p. 19) stated in the *Christian Science Monitor*:

At televised press conferences, the military had direct access to the people – and at the same time was able to undermine the credibility of journalistic interpretations. It was stunning reversal of roles from Vietnam, where the press called military credibility into question.

General T.W. Kelly, a leading Pentagon spokesman during both Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm, summed it up this way in an interview with *Naval Institute Proceedings* (September 1991):

...in the Gulf War the press briefing became all-important, which did the government a great big favor (...) we had an hour and a half every day to talk directly to the American people and make our case.

The chances for spontaneous questions were almost nil. High-level meetings with General Schwarzkopf were planned down to the last detail, and journalists were not allowed to mess up the script. Mander (1991) gives one example: When Schwarzkopf was asked whether the Allies had overestimated Iraqi fortifications, the General simply retorted: 'Have you ever been in a minefield?...Not a fun place to be.' The answers to the question were sometimes not important – what counted most was the impression given to the audience.

One Swedish journalist described the press conferences as a sort of quiz show. The same correspondent thought it was remarkable to see how the US journalists took part in a show arranged by the military, how they walked around in the corridors at the press centre dressed in combat uniforms, thinking that they were covering the war (Nohrstedt, 1992).

Kjell Gjerseth, the only Norwegian journalist to cover the war from within Iraq, accepted restrictions in the war zone both for reasons of safety and the need for the parties involved to keep military secrets. He too was critical to the atmosphere at the press centre:

Five-star hotels in Saudi were overflowing with media people, sitting on the fourth floor and listening to the generals. Then they would go to the roof, e.g. at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Riyadh. Among the forest of parabola antennas, they would stand there and report home the same stories they just heard from the generals on fourth floor. If they were real lucky a B 52 bomber would just be landing, they flew in over the hotel-roof, and they could close to the accompaniment of the jet engines. 'This is Peter Smith reporting live from Riyadh' (quoted from Ottosen 1994, p. 22)<sup>4</sup>

Journalists were provided with a vast amount of confidential information – even to the extent that many journalists were aware of the beginning time of the land-war several days in advance (Thomson, 1992, p. 54). Background information was also used to spread misinformation, however.

At one point the military consciously used misinformation through the media to mislead the Iraqi Army as to the siting of a possible Marine landing. When the real attack started, the Iraqi Army had its back to the front of the operation (Whiting, 1991, p. 66). In summing up the use of misinformation, General Schwarzkopf stated, at a press briefing on 28 February, that it should only be used for tactical reasons, 'never for political or personal gain' (Keene, 1991, p. 69). It is more doubtful whether such a distinction between honourable and non-justifiable use of misinformation can be any comfort to the reporters who are subjected to such misinformation when *their* job is to tell the truth.

## Problems of a Multi-Cultural Conflict

In the Gulf War the US military information policy tried by all available means to avoid the 'David and Goliath' impression, which the USA had found quite annoying in some interventions. On the other hand, it polished the skills of 'multi-cultural propaganda'. Because of the heterogeneous character of the Coalition, the main themes and metaphors of the information had to be acceptable in various cultures, not only to audiences in the USA.

While the Soviet Union still remained a strong military power, the United States prepared for an extensive showdown in Europe on the one hand and for small-scale operations carried out in the Third World in order to stem the growth of Soviet influence on the other. The Gulf War was the first large-scale conflict since the end of the Cold War, and was also the first one to involve a new crisis scenario: a conflict with a well-armed Third World country which might use also chemical and nuclear weapons (Klare, 1991, p. 32).

The Gulf War was, in military parlance, a 'middle intensity conflict' – one which, from the US point of view, was not a matter of national survival or a

threatening military defeat, but which nevertheless necessitated the use of a significant amount of resources. On the one hand it was considered important to obtain firm international and domestic support for the project; on the other hand the attack would have to be carried out quickly and with such strength that the opponent would not be able to rally its own strength and to inflict defeats.

The principle of massive use of force necessitated a clear-cut schedule and plan. This also made it possible to time publicity in a way best suited to support the political and military objectives. The problem with such massive use of force in terms of its effect on opinion is that the war will easily begin to appear an uneven fight – David and Goliath again – in which the weaker party may win the sympathy of the onlookers. Therefore the battle was compared to World War II – the comparison of Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler in the US propaganda was no coincidence – and the present military power of Iraq was stressed, together with allusions to the possibility of a future threat brought about by nuclear weapons. Likewise, Iraq emphasized its military might and revenge plans in its propaganda directed mainly to Arab countries – so the public image of an ‘even fight’ was created.

According to the doctrine of massive use of force, combat time is short. Thus, publicity must also be prepared for intensive action whose changes happen in synch with the real-time military operation. Even at its most predictable, war is so full of surprises that optimal planning of publicity should not be too detailed; the most important thing is to create an organization and system of decision-making which can fluidly adjust itself according to war situations.

A major problem of the USA in Vietnam (and of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan) was the fact that the war ‘grew on’ to the country’s domestic political divisions and conflicts. Vietnam became transformed into a symbol that divided the political right and left and partly also different generations. One of the central tasks of Coalition information activities during the Gulf War was to prevent the domestic or international ‘politicization’ of the war, to prevent it from being transformed into an event that could symbolize wider political divisions. It was of utmost importance to point out that the war was a *joint* international effort gallantly undertaken to counter the outrageous seizure of an independent state.

The fact that the Coalition army had been impracticably recruited from military units from many countries was typical ‘propaganda of the deed’, emphasizing the breadth and unity of the front against Iraq. This impression was also backed through publicity which stressed the contribution of the pilots who were not of US origin – especially Saudis. Moreover, during the battle of Khafj, for instance, wrong information was disseminated about the role of Arab troops in the re-conquest of the town. (Thomson, 1992, pp. 194–195; Shaw & Carr-Hill, 1992)

One of the problems was that both US troops and journalists acted largely in Saudi Arabia, a country whose social system does not correspond with the Western view of democracy. Considerable public attention has been paid to the

rules and instructions the US Department of Defense gave to the soldiers shipped to Saudi Arabia. There were, for example, instructions banning criticism of religious habits, women's rights, clothing, morals or media censorship. Also banned were pork commercials, nudity, sexuality and mention of the friendship of the United States and Israel (Freedom...1991). Less attention has been paid to the fact that also the journalists who worked in Saudi Arabia – because of both orders and self-censorship – gave a rather too rosy picture of social conditions in the country.

## Counter-Strategies

The discussion about the persuasive methods of the Coalition information policy in the Gulf War has been massive. A huge amount of books and articles has been published, scores of seminars and gatherings have been arranged by journalists, media critics and academics. Some publications – like the Finnish quality newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* – have publicly admitted that they were duped, and have pledged to their audiences that this would not happen again: 'The Gulf War, in which the Western Coalition smoothly controlled the news flow, has caused a commitment among journalists not to reconcile themselves anymore to fed and one-sided information' (*Helsingin Sanomat*, 17 January 1995, p. 2).

But, as Philip Knightley has said, the military has a much better 'organizational memory' than the media. It has the capacity and patience for planning. In the hectic journalistic work no one can guarantee that good promises will in fact be kept. Commercial, technological and political pressures can have negative effects on the quality of journalism, and the result can be, as Dan Rather (1994, p. 6) acidly describes it:

Kiss ass, move with the mass,  
and for heaven  
and the ratings' sake  
don't make anybody mad...  
Make nice, not news

The most important way the journalists in the Gulf opposed control were the attempts to gain access to the theatre of operations on their own. It has later been asked why the Coalition allowed a handful of reporters to work in defiance of prohibitions, although it was capable of keeping them completely in check. According to one explanation, military officials knew that these uncontrolled journalists would not endanger operative safety or create significant political problems. After all, the correspondents had already been carefully selected from the mass media and during accrediting.

In some cases, journalists tried to avoid using the 'story of the day' which was planned and fed by the Coalition information officials.<sup>5</sup> That was a brave choice, because editors at home would compare the performance of their re-

porters to that of their competitors, and would quite often demand that their correspondents cover the same issues.

Some reporters made the military media management and the press coverage of the battle a newsworthy issue itself. For instance in the British newspapers *The Times* and *The Guardian*, over 9% of reporting on the war concerned media issues during the first week of the air war (Luostarinen, 1994). Among those stories were some rather critical pieces describing the working conditions of correspondents in Saudi Arabia.

And finally: In many cases, news outlets balanced the uncritical, militaristic on-the-spot coverage of the war by also publishing more critical and analytical in-depth background stories and interviews. Paradoxically, precisely those elements of modern news journalism which are most trusted – ‘hard’ action news and pictures – were often the most heavily manipulated and misleading part of the coverage. It was in the background and opinion material that the reality of the war was sometimes seen in a more independent and objective way (Denton, 1993).<sup>6</sup>

In the gloomiest estimates, the Gulf War spelled the final achievement of news manipulation. The experience of Vietnam, the Falklands, Grenada and Panama had finally been merged into a seamless whole of controlled and persuasive information activity. Michael Getler (1991), one of the leaders of the foreign desk of the *Washington Post*, has come to the conclusion that it was a question of the ‘most profound and sophisticated’ control over the journalists, the total nature of which clearly surpassed that experienced during WWII, Korea or Vietnam. When all means of news management are put together, the deduction of Taylor (1992, p. 18; see also Nohrstedt, 1992, pp. 84–85) appears worth noting:

When so many processes of selection and omission are taking place – by the media themselves, by the military, by the enemy – it became virtually impossible to distinguish between what was simply information and what was in fact propaganda.

The army not only banned an independent role for journalism; it made journalism support censorship and rally its audience to support the goals of army and government. John Simpson (1991) has compared the media to free men crying loudly out for more manacles. The purpose of the controlling of the reporters and the reporting could be summed up in the following points:

- Limit the physical access of the journalists to the battlefield.
- Establish a pool and then deny journalists outside the pool access to military sources.
- Harass journalists outside the pools who try to get access to the scene of the battle.
- Control and manage the persons who are subject to interviews.

- Punish military personnel who comment critically on events outside the pool system.
- Censor reports, footage and film within the pool system.
- Punish journalists who engage in critical reporting.
- Withhold information that can place Coalition soldiers in a bad light.
- Use the media to misinform about the warfare. (Sharkey, 1991/1992; Ottosen, 1994).

For some media organizations and journalists, the cold-bloodedness and adroitness with which the media were used as a tool of warfare seemed to provide a special surprise – if not shock. In the opinion of *Newsweek* of 25 February 1991 (quoted in Taylor, 1992, p. 18), ‘the journalists of democratic societies work independently in theory, ... in practice they are treated as a part of the army’s weaponry during wars’.

The news organizations appeared unprepared for this attitude of professional control of publicity: As the chief of Finland’s HQ information bureau, Sgt. Col. Kari Kokkonen (1991, p. 15), commented after the war:

A new practice has clearly taken place also in the war-time information activity. It more and more resembles the crisis communication of commercial companies. The objective is to gain the initiative quickly in order to establish one’s position as a trustworthy source of information. The attempt is to keep the information profile as high as possible. If there are few facts, new ones are created to fill the blanks... A steadily growing concern...is that the organization must be able to lean on trust assets created in good time, which lend credence to the statements made in the crisis situation. This is why the control of communications is emphasized more and more even in normal times.

This quotation highlights two important aspects. First, modern military news management is a combination of traditional techniques of war propaganda and normal business and political public relations. Many of its special needs and problems can be tackled and solved by applying the damage control and news management strategies and techniques originally developed for the world of big business (Hiebert, 1991)<sup>7</sup>. Second, military writers in several countries (see for instance Thomas, 1992) emphasized the importance of having ‘trust capital’ and goodwill of the audience before the crisis. It is crucial to secure in peacetime the support of the public, to ensure support for media management and even for restrictions in times of crisis. Trust has a tendency to wear thin during a crisis, because blackouts or even lying are a natural part of waging war.<sup>8</sup> The more you have of ‘trust capital’ in the beginning of the conflict, the more you have to spend. For the military, ‘peacetime’ can be considered to be preparation time for the next conflict, not only in material terms but in cultural terms as well.

## The Post-Gulf War Discussion

The list of complaints delivered by the media and journalistic organizations after the Gulf War is a long one. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) protested against the pool arrangement. 'The way the pool system now functions it represents a clear violation of press freedom. Important information is stopped and the system discriminates non-British and non-American journalists', according to the statement issued by the IFJ, which represents more than 175,000 journalists worldwide (Ottosen, 1994).

Publishers and top executives of 17 US news organizations, including major networks like ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN and prestige newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, wrote to Defense Secretary Dick Cheney in the aftermath of the Gulf War – the reason being, according to the *International Herald Tribune* (2 July 1991), that they felt dissatisfied with conditions during the Gulf War. The media executives, who requested a meeting with the Defense Secretary, cited details of how military officials had suppressed news, controlled interviews, limited press access and delayed transmissions of stories. Such restrictions 'made it impossible for reporters and photographers to tell the public the full story of the war in a timely fashion'. Their message concluded: '... we believe it is imperative that the Gulf War not serve as a model for future coverage'.

In this letter, the 17 organizations specifically said that combat pools should be used only for the first 24 to 36 hours of any deployment. In Saudi Arabia, military officials detained reporters who attempted to operate outside such pools. The news organizations also stated that the pools should not replace independent coverage, that journalists should be provided access to all major military units, that stories and pictures should not be subject to prior military review and that military escorts should not interfere with reporting.

Pentagon spokesman, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Pete Williams, at the time welcomed the initiative from the news organization. According to the *IHT* he stated that 'nobody should get the impression that because we did it one way during the Persian Gulf War it's going to be that way forever and ever' (Williams, 1991).

Presented with such criticism, the US political and military establishment disagreed as to who was ultimately responsible for the media policy in the Gulf War. According to Aukofer and Lawrence (1995) General Schwarzkopf said all the media orders came from the Pentagon. On the other hand, Steve Katz, who compiled the most extensive record of military-media relations during the war as counsel to the US Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, has said that President Bush, Cheney and Williams surrendered civilian control of the Pentagon's public affairs operations to Schwarzkopf.

What then came out of these discussions? After a year of negotiations between the military and the media, an agreement was made in May 1992 – affirming most of the guidelines from the Gulf War. The meeting between the media and Department of Defense (DOD) resulted in nine DOD principles.



On the question of prior security review, the two sides agreed to disagree, with the Pentagon insisting on reviewing all stories from the battlefield before publication. Marie Gottschalk, associate editor of *World Policy Journal*, concluded:

With this agreement, the media have once again rolled over and played dead, allowing great constitutional questions to be bargained away in a series of negotiations with military officials who have a history of trampling on previous agreements. The gaps in the latest agreement are wide enough to drive an M-1 tank through and it includes no mechanism that would allow the media to compel the Pentagon to abide by its provisions. (Gottschalk, 1992, p. 478)

In the negotiations, the Secretary of Defense Cheney did not commit himself to any changes, nor did the 1993 Clinton Administration change the policy (Steiner, 1993, p. 298). In a report delivered to Congress, the Pentagon announced that there were faults in the information service only at the lowest strata of the command chain. All information officers acting among the troops were not equally capable of sending on the journalists' reports effectively enough and in some exceptional cases the security orders were misinterpreted, it was said. (Policies...1992)

After the war it has been asked why the US mass media were organizationally unprepared for this new type of publicity. According to the extensive investigation which DeParle (1991) carried out for the *New York Times*, the Pentagon had also misled the media leaders:

Pentagon officials decided early in the operation to radically change the purpose of press pools, taking what had been set up as a temporary device to get reporters to a combat zone and turning it into the sole means of combat coverage. Despite that decision, Mr. Cheney's spokesman, Pete Williams, held a series of autumn meetings with news executives that encouraged them to believe that traditional independent reporting would follow.

The representatives of media organizations thought they were negotiating with the Pentagon, but later the Pentagon announced they had merely listened to the opinion of the media. According to DeParle this was a deliberate bluff.

In the opinion of Tamar Liebes (1992, p. 54), the dissatisfaction shown by the media after the war and talk about how the media 'lost the war' to the control and manipulation of publicity was merely shifting the responsibility. According to Liebes, the media are reluctant to own up to the fact that professional journalist ideals are replaced by patriotic loyalty when one's own country is at war. At the very least it is obvious that the history of the 1980s should have taught the news organizations that if efficient media control was created for minor skirmishes like Grenada and Panama, the reins could hardly be expected to loosen in a larger war. If the media really believed the Pentagon's prewar assurances, that was a sign of naiveté.<sup>9</sup> MacArthur (1991/1992, pp. 35–36) cites Stanley Cloud of *Time* as follows:



Throughout the long evolution of Department of Defense pool, the press willingly, passively, and stupidly went along with it. This is the original sin which got us here, and I don't blame anybody as much as I blame us.

As a result of this criticism, DOD Directive 5122.5 of 2 December 1993, covering these issues, was cancelled and replaced by a new DOD Directive 5122.5 of 29 March 1996. In an attachment titled 'statement of DOD principles for News Media coverage of DOD operations', it is stated in point 1: 'Open and independent reporting will be the principal means of coverage of US military operations'. In point 2: 'Pools are not to serve as standard means of covering US military operations'. On the other hand, pools are not totally ruled out in point 3: 'Even under conditions of open coverage, pools may be appropriate for specific events, such as those at extremely remote locations or where space is limited'. What this will mean in practice can only be tested through future conflicts. It is the Pentagon that will have the final word on access through a credentials system, as stated in point 4: 'Journalists in a combat zone will be credentialed by the US military and will be required to abide by a clear set of military security ground rules that protect US forces and their operations. Violation of the ground rules can result in suspension of credentials and expulsion from the combat zone of the journalist involved'.<sup>10</sup>

## Changing Work of War Reporters

Most media sent to Saudi Arabia action-oriented reporters who were principally supposed to relate the feeling of 'presence' to the audience. Background writers were often left behind. Presence is most impressive in real time, as for example a listener or viewer following a Scud attack cannot know where the missile will hit. The attempt was also to bring the reporters into regular news broadcasts in live broadcasts, especially to report the current situations and the moods in the theatre of operations, often through conversation with the news anchor. Such activities required a massive real-time, high-tech and two-way communications capacity.

In these circumstances, the electronic media organizations tended to choose correspondents who had charisma and ability to perform in live broadcasts with personal appeal and distinctiveness, but were also team leaders capable of handling the complex logistical and technical system of live transmissions.

A writing reporter can make do with a pen, but the situation of a TV reporter attempting to get in a live broadcast across the globe is somewhat different. Personnel and equipment are necessary, so the risk of source dependency and news manipulation grows. The more massive the technology the reporter has to rely on, the more dependent he or she is on events previously planned just for reporters, such as press conferences. CNN-type real-time news broadcasts bring the audience into the midst of the scene, *in medias res* – but this is first and foremost a scene arranged for public relations purposes.

Neither performance- nor logistics-oriented journalists tend to be 'difficult cases' from the point of view of source organizations. The inflated egos of some media stars may cause friction, but such problems can generally be overcome by offering privileges and treating such individuals with sufficient respect. Logistics people will usually be satisfied if the technology needed in the gathering and broadcasting of information functions smoothly. Some reporters even complained that the work of a war correspondent has come to taking notes in front of a television set.

Zelizer (1992, p. 73) believes that the journalist profession analysed the role of CNN in the Gulf War with such seriousness first of all because it was trying to come to grips with the new situation in which the reporter had become 'less important than the satellite dish next to him'. In discussions among journalists, terms like 'the television war', 'real-time war', 'war in video veritas', 'CNN war', 'news without end', 'new kind of journalism' and 'instantaneous journalism' (op.cit., pp. 77–78) have often been heard. Professional demands differ from those of traditional war journalism. In our opinion, however, the core-issue of the discussion and criticism lies the disappearance of editorial power – not the problems of real-time as such.

The arguments of the Gulf War publicity and journalism implied that the profession of war correspondents was being altered, from investigative and interpretative 'sense-making' work, to serving as a mouthpiece of official sources, with no individual authority to assess or analyse events. Expertise and intellect resided in London and Washington, all that was needed in Dhahran and Riyadh were hands, feet – and striking faces. The way to promote a career became the art of performing.

In internal discussions within the journalistic profession, those reporters who had worked independently have been elevated into heroes who rescued the honour of the entire profession. Especially Robert Fisk, the Middle East correspondent for the British *Independent*, has gained a reputation on a par only with that of CNN's Baghdad correspondent Peter Arnett in terms of quantity. Critical writers have recited as a 'basic story' the following incident, here in Taylor's (1992, p. 142) rendering:

Robert Fisk...encountered a news pool attached to the 1st US Marine Division and was told by one American network reporter: 'You asshole: You'll prevent us from working. You're not allowed here. Get out. Go back to Dhahran'.

To us, it seems that the popularity enjoyed by this anecdote reveals more than the actual story itself. Pitted against each other in this scenario are an arrogant, pushy US TV reporter willing to play by the army rules, and an independent British journalist familiar with the region and language, and who furthermore works for one of the top quality papers in the field. The story serves to strengthen the belief that the task of professional ideology is independence and a resolute attitude in the face of external circumstances – even the hostility of colleagues – to see with one's own eyes and to assess events independently.

As to modern technology in the Gulf War, we would like to emphasize three aspects that have seen so much discussion.

First, in information technology the gap between the military and the media is not self-evidently narrowing. The media have new and very effective means to transmit information in real time and from different places. But for *gathering* information they have no new technologies (except electronic databanks and the Internet, which was not that important in 1991). In the Gulf War journalists often had at their disposal advanced means for transmitting their reports – but they had nothing special to say, because they had no access to the battlefield. The military has at its disposal various applications of recognition technology, advanced ‘seeing technology’, considered decisive in modern warfare.

Second, real-time reports can have real-time effects, and this points up the importance of journalistic professionalism and accountability. In the US journal *Naval Institute Proceedings*, Renaldo R. Keene (1991, p. 70) cites the following incident as an example:

ABCs Dean Reynolds in Jerusalem, with only one source, erroneously announced that the Scud missiles that hit Israel had chemical warheads. His statement caused confusion at the highest levels of various allied governments and nearly put Israel into the war.

This argument was used mainly to legitimate the press restrictions, but it has a certain point. Real-time reporting can cause hastily made decisions, for instance in the international money markets and world stock exchanges, or the exaggerated and unchecked reports can be used as a pretext for military reprisal raids.

During the first hours of the air offensive in the Gulf War, the Coalition information officers clearly set about misleading the entire international media in order to keep the markets calm. The initial reports, telling for example about total destruction of the Iraqi air forces, had a very positive effect on the markets, and the price of oil came down. (Luostarinen, 1992)

Third, during the Gulf War there was same kind of ‘hype’ concerning both military technology and media technology. Most of the basic questions in journalism still have more to do with ethics and professional skills than with technology. To some extent, the Gulf War discussion reflected more intellectual, professional and political hopes and fears concerning the effects of modern media technology, than any real changes in basic working habits of journalists and in content of reporting.

The self-critical discussion after the Gulf War among journalists showed that many of them regarded the war experience as a threat to the foundations of the professional ideology. Professional ideals rely on the principles of independence, power of editing and interpretation and immediate experience. The Gulf War and its publicity challenged all of this. According to the critics, journalism was politically controlled, uncritical, negligent of the background, lacking its power of editing and immediate experience. The large number of ‘se-

crets' proved that the area of things known was radically more restricted than, say, during the Vietnam War.

Journalists were interested in the war partly as a sign of their own social authority. As Watergate had symbolized the impotence and clumsiness of the power establishment – the most powerful man in the world, the President of the United States, seeming to stumble because of two local reporters – the Gulf War witnessed the capacity of the elite to control publicity. The former incident was a crystallization of the growth of media power which had begun in the 1960s, the latter tellingly reflected the loss of power which took place during the 1980s.

## Military Reactions

In the US military magazines after the war, very arrogant, even scathing comments about the media were common. According to one *Naval Institute Proceedings* author, 'In the Gulf War, the military, in almost every instance, proved that it was more in touch with the American public than were the media, who showed elitism, arrogance, and disunity' (Keene, 1991). Consequently, the press has no right to speak in the name of the public:

...reporting is business, and information has commercial value...the interest of the press is gathering information and the interest of the military, and the nation, is winning our wars...it is soldiers, not reporters, who take on oath to defend with their lives the US Constitution (Wells-Petry, 1993, p. 35).

According to that logic, 'the military is accountable to the American people primarily through Congress' (Wells-Petry, 1993, p. 30), not through the media or to the media. When military is identified with the nation ('the military, and ultimately the nation'), that means that there is no role for critical reporting:

Military victory is more easily accomplished when the image of the military is a good one. Otherwise, not only is troop morale sometimes weakened, but the enemy is always encouraged when a unfavorable story is aired or printed, even if the story does not directly affect operational security or endanger the troops. (Sidle, 1991, p. 53)

And so, the military tried to use the favourable situation to change the public agenda: The question was not one of restricted media access to the battlefield, but shameful and unpatriotic behaviour shown by the media in daring to criticize the military. One aspect in this 'agenda battle' was the reinterpretation of the Vietnam War. The furious reactions caused by the publication of the book *In Retrospect* by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara in 1995 prove the still living importance of the Vietnam War in the recent US political understanding and debate. No wonder, then, that in the Gulf War and after it the US military made repeated reference to the Vietnam experience, attempting to give

their interpretation to the battle, and maintaining that it was the media, not the military, who lost the war. (Franklin, 1994; Kendrick, 1994)<sup>11</sup>

It is difficult to say to what extent this reinterpretation process actually succeeded. During the Gulf War and immediately afterwards, when supportive demonstrations, national victory parades and local celebrations and events were arranged throughout the USA, the rehabilitation of the US military honour seemed a prominent phenomenon in the US media, especially on the local level (Reese & Buckalew, 1995). But this militaristic hype was soon to fade. Now we need empirical studies of whether the cultural and media picture of the Vietnam War did change more permanently, or whether the 'militarization of consciousness' (Kellner, 1992) gained more ground in the long run.

## Moral Considerations

A major theme in the self-critical discussion undertaken by the journalistic profession in analysing professional identity has concerned attitudes to showing death and human suffering. According to standard criticism the US media machinery packaged the war into a tidy, non-violent game without the messy details.

Such criticism was countered by at least four different grounds. According to the first one, the moral and political starting point of criticism is that war and violence are always wrong. However, people are well aware that war causes destruction and suffering, and what matters are the goals and gains of the battle. Alex Thomson (1992, p. 114) interviewed Mark Laity, who put it bluntly:

I think a lot of the criticism comes from people who seem to think that the only story was whether bombs kill people. Well of course they do. The big story was whether the Allies were going to win the war.

The other 'criticism of criticism' is based on the idea that the showing of death and suffering as the 'real' picture of war is only a habit adopted from previous wars, and involves the 'dumb receiver theory': a TV viewer, for instance, is seen as a hapless victim of media manipulation, a being without volition whom journalists must educate and rouse with moral lessons:

Do the TV broadcasts of the Persian Gulf War...not give the true picture of war when all you can see are combat aircraft, missiles, cross-hair pictures of precision weapons and distant explosions instead of mutilated people and corpses?...is it not essential to see instead of the face of death the face of power, the life-negating powers of technological culture? Therefore they can be considered genuine pictures of war. (Eerikäinen, 1991, p. a-21)

The idea includes the assumption that television gave the audience the chance to see the same electronic look with which modern war is being waged. Armies have become war machines integrated by satellites, radar systems and computers, playing a global game of hide-and-seek. (Morse, 1991).

The premise of the third argument is that it is unreasonable to demand that the United States should show the sufferings caused by its own military machinery. The aerial war was mainly waged above Iraqi-controlled territory, and the Iraqi government alone had the power to decide how much of the civilian and military casualties was to be revealed to the international media. According to Hvitfelt and Mattsson (1991, pp. 65–66) the journalistic picture of the war would not have been essentially changed if for instance journalists had had greater freedom of access in the area controlled by the Coalition: ‘The most interesting information for the entire duration of the war was on the Iraqi side. The aerial war was fought above Iraq and the bombings tried Iraq’ (p. 66).

The fourth counter-argument is that war journalism has made use of death and suffering politically and commercially in such a way that images of destruction have undergone emotional inflation and journalism has lost its moral justification to deal with these issues. No longer do depictions of death deal with a hidden reality which could affect the opinions of the citizenry. The bottom line is money and career promotion – not the people’s right to know. (Vanhanen, 1991)

The demand that the media present the human consequences of war does not, however, necessarily presuppose a ‘dumb viewer theory’, nor does it postulate that more technical/technological descriptions of war are wrong or unreal. War is undoubtedly equally real for the man with his finger on the trigger and for the man who stands at gunpoint. Likewise, suffering is so essential a part of the war it cannot be removed from the total picture.

For journalists and Western critics the issue has gained symbolical value – we feel – first and foremost because the neat electronic look at war was believed to embody a certain specifically Western way of grasping and organizing reality: a professionalized and technical gaze which bore witness to the destruction of its target. This ‘gaze’ was especially represented by the videos shown by the US army at their press conferences, footage shot from aeroplanes or missiles closing in on their targets. Alex Thomson (1992, p. 103) describes a press conference held by General Norman Schwarzkopf:

He said he wanted to show people “the luckiest man alive in Iraq” and the video rolled on the cue. It depicted a bridge, seen through the closing cross-hairs of the bomb-guiding screen. Suddenly a truck appeared across the hairs into the target area. Just as it had passed the centre of the target, the bridge was blown to smithereens. Norman beamed and chuckled, the press beamed back and tittered like schoolgirls.

Other incidents could be cited: a US pilot comparing the war to lighting up the kitchen at night and butchering the cockroaches. A pilot describing the destruction of Basra road as a ‘turkey hunt’.

This was a time when the world was trying to forge its way into the post-Cold War era, an era in which there would be many conflicts between North and South, or so it was said. What kind of prognosis would a ‘turkey hunt’ imply in terms of solving the problems of the future?

The demand that we should be presented with the effects of violence on a human level is linked with the idea that the very essence of war is violence, and that no other reality involving war can be as essential, unless we should prefer some other value to life itself. The general and the journalist may go on living, the targets of weapons become disabled or die.

Anyone familiar with the history of the 20th century should readily acknowledge that journalism has more than once kindled the audience's hearts to war. The attempt to see the human effect of combat is thus a part of the historical experience of the profession of journalism: it may serve to provide a sense of proportion and diminish the excesses of macabre enthusiasm. It is just as easy to think that war itself prostitutes suffering, transforms it into propaganda, and that journalists relating to their audiences their experience of suffering are in modern wars incapable of escaping the rhetorical system created around the war.

In our view, the debate on the 'clinical' nature of the Gulf War unflinchingly takes up precisely these themes. Pictures of hunger catastrophes, natural disasters and war victims united with 20th century journalism's moral contradictions and the cultural criticism created by the cold electronic gaze of war. Journalists awkwardly set about asking themselves whether they were a kind of cockroaches, or giggling Peeping Toms, or perhaps a gaze at the hair-cross of a gun, seeing all – and feeling nothing.

## Notes

1. In the newsletter of the Organization of American Historians this is illustrated by reference to a volume in the historical series, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, on Iran 1951–54: [It] 'presented not only a woefully incomplete but even entirely misleading account of events surrounding the ouster of (Iranian Premier) Mohammed Mosadeq (by a CIA-supported coup that put Shah Reza Pahlavi back in power in 1953)' (quoted from Sharkey, 1992, p. 37). It was not until a former CIA representative in Iran published his memoir (presumably with the Agency's stamp of approval) that the real truth about the events came out. The documents in the official archives did not tell the truth. Following this and other examples of declassification policies and practices, the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation which consults with the Department regarding preparation of volumes of this historical series resigned in protest (Sharkey, 1992, p. 36).
2. In US military magazines, the Gulf War information policy was regularly legitimated by quoting opinion polls. According to those quoted polls, the US public thought the press coverage adequate, even excellent, and accepted the press restrictions implemented by the military (Baker, 1991; Sidle, 1991).
3. A good example of that is given by P. Saintah, who speaks of 'borrowed brains' in the Third World media. During the Gulf War editors in India started to talk '...about problems in the "Middle East" – for those in India the area ought to be called "West Asia"' (Sainath, 1992, pp. 70–71).
4. The same ironic tone can be found in the title of John Fialka's Gulf War book: *Hotel Warriors. Covering the Gulf War* (1991).

5. Alex Thomson (1992, p. 122) writes: 'The military were trying to produce at least one story a day. Journalists did not go out and find stories, they were to wait until the military decided what the story was to be and that, duly, became the evening news or next day's headlines from Dhahran'.
6. According to the study by Luostarinen (1994) the visual image of the war was remarkably similar in the British tabloid and quality papers. For instance the *Guardian*, otherwise rather critical in its coverage, devoted 25–30% of its 'war pages' to ordinary, militarily controlled visual images during the first week of the aerial war.
7. Hiebert (1991) has pointed out the fact that the Gulf tactics of publicity closely resembled the layout for the US presidential election of 1988 – five out of the eight closest assistants to President Bush had previously participated in the Republican election campaign.
8. According to a survey conducted by The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 6 out of 10 US military officers said they believed their leaders should be allowed to provide false information to the news media to deceive an enemy, even if it meant deceiving the American public as well. (Aukofer & Lawrence, 1995)
9. Fialka (1991, p. 8) comments: 'Although journalists simply love to recite the old cliché that generals always prepare to fight the previous war, this time...the media were mentally prepared to write about a second Vietnam.'
10. All quotations are from DODD 5122.5, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, 29 March 1996, (ASD(PA)), obtained through the US embassy in Oslo.
11. Cultural interpretations of historical battles and wars are a crucial issue in the public relations of the military. In American culture, which is very visual, this process meant, in part, attempts to re-interpret the famous photographs of the Vietnam War. It was told, for instance, that the photograph by Eddie Adams showing the South Vietnamese Police General Loan shooting a Viet Cong sapper through the head on a Saigon street has been misinterpreted. The whole story was not told:

The VC (Viet Cong) sapper had minutes before been caught in the act of murdering Loan's best friends and family...What appeared to the American public as an incredibly cold-blooded act (which would later be used to characterize the corrupt nature of the war effort) turns out in reality to have been the passionate and understandable reaction of a man blinded by grief and anger (Chiaventone, 1991, p. 73).

Likewise, those crying kids running down a road, wounded by napalm in the picture by Nick Ut, were in fact there because of pure childish curiosity. They had decided to watch the bombing too closely, and had run out from the shelter provided by the US military to protect them.



## UN–US Relations in the Gulf War

Gunnar Garbo

The media of the North generally hailed the Gulf War as an encouraging proof of the ability of the UN Security Council, after the end of the Cold War, to act efficiently to maintain international peace and security. Many media followed the line of US President Bush: a New World Order had emerged. But what kind of order? This author feels bound to support a more critical and disheartening view: that the war demonstrated how the sole remaining superpower is now able to use the United Nations Organization as a cover for exercising and legitimizing its own power politics. On closer look this ‘new order’ reveals itself as an old type of hegemony.

A Peruvian diplomat was once quoted as saying that the UN is a body where something always disappears. In a conflict between two small powers, the conflict disappears. In a conflict between one small and one big power, the small power disappears. And in a conflict between two big powers, the UN disappears. To this ironical description might be added that in a world with only one superpower left, it seems that the UN *reappears*, in a subservient role.

### Demand for Withdrawal

Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 was a clear case of aggression. It is true that the occupied state had been established by the colonial powers and that Iraq had never willingly relinquished its own claim to the land. But Kuwait was nonetheless a sovereign state recognized by the international community. Never before in the history of the United Nations had a member-state simply annexed another one. Nobody could be surprised that the Security Council already on the same day unanimously adopted resolution 660, condemning the aggression and demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces. There was no disagreement about that demand. The question, it turned out, was how to get it implemented.

Four days later the Council adopted resolution 661, imposing mandatory economic sanctions on Iraq, the only exceptions being medical supplies and

possibly foodstuffs, if humanitarian considerations justified such exemptions. (To the managers of the sanctions regime, they seldom seemed to do that.) This blockade put severe pressure on Iraq, paralysing practically all the country's foreign trade. Iraqi imports were cut by 90% and exports by 97%, according to information given to the US Congress by the head of the CIA, who is not likely to be a 'dove'.

Article 42 of the UN Charter permits the Security Council to move on to military action if the Council considers that the economic sanctions 'would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate'. But the Council never undertook an assessment of the impact of the sanctions. Alongside the actions of the Security Council the United States had built up a massive military force in Saudi Arabia, which borders on Kuwait and Iraq. After three months of economic sanctions, the USA simply introduced a draft resolution requesting a mandate to go to war unless Iraq withdrew from Kuwait before 15 January 1991. The language of the text might look softer to outsiders, but every member of the Security Council knew what it meant. Resolution 678, adopted on 29 November 1990, authorized 'member-states cooperating with the government of Kuwait' to use 'all necessary means' to implement the decisions of the Council.

However, Council members did not accept this draft resolution without strong doubts. The representative of Yemen, supported by his colleague from Cuba, asked that the blockade be given more time to work:

Never before has such a comprehensive and sweeping sanctions regime been imposed on any country. One can easily assert that for all practical purposes Iraq is completely isolated from the outside world. For a country that is almost landlocked and can neither export anything, including oil, nor import anything, including foodstuffs, it will not take long, in our opinion, for the sanctions to hurt badly and eventually force Iraq to comply and withdraw from Kuwait.

China's representative spoke in a similar vein, pointing out that the UN had not yet done its utmost to seek a peaceful solution. He gave some sensible advice about the role of the world organization in relation to its members: 'It should act with great caution and avoid taking hasty action on such a major question as authorizing some member-states to take military action against another member-state.' The representative of Malaysia rightly feared that the Security Council would have no control over the military action: 'When the United Nations Security Council provides the authorization for countries to use force, these countries are fully accountable for their actions to the Council through a clear system of reporting and accountability, which is not adequately covered in resolution 678.'<sup>1</sup>

Resolution 678 was adopted by twelve votes to two (Cuba and Yemen), with one abstention (China). The USA had beforehand approached practically every Council member from the South, offering increased aid or new credits from the World Bank or the IMF if they voted correctly (Riddle-Dixon, 1994). Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Zaire were promised economic aid. The

Soviet representatives received assurances that the Baltic countries would be prevented from attending the All-European summit in Paris and that the USA would facilitate the provision of foreign currency to the Soviet Union from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. China was promised that the trade boycott after the Tiananmen massacre would be lifted and that the way would be paved for a dollar loan from the World Bank. Three days after one of the world's poorest countries, Yemen, had courageously defied the USA and joined Cuba in casting a negative vote, the USA punished the country by withdrawing US \$70 million in aid. Cuba's vote was evidently taken as yet another justification for the long-term US-imposed ban on that country. This pattern of awards and punishments was systematically applied in the Security Council throughout the whole Gulf War process (Caron, 1993).

Nonetheless, before the deadline of 15 January several efforts were made to avoid the war and to seek a solution through negotiations with Iraq. President Gorbachev of the Soviet Union asked for a new meeting of the Security Council. He felt that the gap between the conditions set by the Council and the concessions which Iraq had given at that stage was sufficiently narrow for a peaceful solution to be possible. But US President Bush had decided that the time had come to unleash 'Desert Storm'. He had obtained the loose and wide mandate which he wanted from the Security Council. No debate should now be permitted to muddle the military follow-up. All who were involved knew that the USA would have no difficulty in mustering the seven members which were necessary to prevent a formal meeting on the issue. Until the 'storm' was over the Council avoided all deliberations about the Gulf crisis. During the four months between 2 August and the end of November, the Security Council met almost continually in formal sessions and adopted twelve resolutions about the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Then, once the USA and its allies had acquired the mandate to go to war, no action was taken until Iraq had surrendered three months later. These facts tell something about who is managing the Security Council.

What did this war cost in terms of human losses and material devastation? The US military leadership did its utmost to manage the press coverage and to prevent any repetition of a critical media scrutiny like that of the Vietnam War. Global communications are dominated by the media of the north – and they complied. Through a 'pool' arrangement, a hand-picked group of journalists was allowed to visit the front, and the stories filed by these participants were censored. This is explained in more detail elsewhere in this book.

Estimates of the number of casualties vary dramatically, from 2,500 to over a quarter-million. One vivid illustration was given in a report from Martti Ahtisaari, who in his capacity as UN Under-Secretary-General headed a mission to Iraq immediately after the war in order to assess the humanitarian needs of the country. Ahtisaari stated that he had been quite unprepared for the devastation which had befallen the country: 'The recent conflict has wrought near-apocalyptic results upon the economic infrastructure of what had been, until January 1991, a rather highly urbanized and mechanized society. Now, most means of

modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology.' To this may be added the finding reported by UNICEF in March 1995, that since the Gulf War started 100,000 children had lost their lives because of illnesses like diarrhoea, diphtheria and measles, implying a trebling of the death rate among children since before the war. The blockade of Iraq's oil export has hindered import of medicines; the needs of children have become subordinated to the war of nerves still raging between the Iraqi leaders and the powers dominating the Security Council.

After the victory of the US-led Coalition, the sanctions regime was kept in place as a lever to secure the implementation of a veritable peace treaty imposed on Iraq by the Security Council. An immediate resolution to take care of the ceasefire needs – the end to military action, return of prisoners, identification of mines etc. – was passed on 3 March. But the crucial claims were spelled out in resolution 687, adopted on 3 April 1991. In this decision, which upheld all the resolutions passed earlier, the Council instructed the Secretary-General to demarcate the contested boundary between Iraq and Kuwait. At the same time it undertook to guarantee the inviolability of that boundary. Secondly, it commanded Iraq to accept the destruction of all chemical and biological weapons and ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometres, as well as to undertake never to acquire nuclear weapons. Thirdly, the Council took steps to establish a fund financed from Iraqi assets with a view to paying compensation for all losses and damages due to the invasion and occupation of Kuwait. Several commissions and other agents were nominated to supervise implementation of these and other decisions on behalf of the Security Council.

## Unilateral Intervention

The Gulf War led, in the next round, to a humanitarian intervention which had deep implications for the debate about the principle of non-interference as against the duty of the international community to intervene in a sovereign state. Predictably, in the wake of the war both the Kurdish minorities in the North and the Shiites in the South of Iraq rose up against the ruling dictatorship in the country, inflamed by the defeat of Saddam Hussein and encouraged by statements from the US President. These uprisings were met with ruthless military action, and masses of people fled towards the borders of Turkey and Iran. To begin with the Coalition did not bother much about the catastrophic results of its own doings, but action became necessary when the press started to focus on the tragedy and the Western public began to wonder what the Gulf War had been fought for. On 5 April 1991 the Security Council adopted resolution 688, declaring that the Iraqi government's persecution of the Kurds and the Shiites represented a threat to international peace and security in the region. The government was instructed to give immediate access by international humanitarian

organizations to all those in need of assistance and to make available all necessary facilities for their operation. Resolution 688 was adopted against three votes (Cuba, Yemen and Zimbabwe), with two abstentions (China and India).

In addition the USA wanted the Secretary-General, who had already obtained an agreement with the Iraqi authorities to send UN humanitarian units to the country, to deploy UN police troops in the North of Iraq in order to establish safe areas for the Kurds. This the Secretary-General was unwilling to do without either the accord of the Iraqi government or a clear mandate from the Security Council. The Iraqi government was, predictably, opposed to the proposition. The Coalition leaders then decided that the resolutions already adopted by the Security Council might be interpreted as giving them the necessary power to act. Troops from the USA, France, the Netherlands and the UK invaded the North of Iraq and established protected areas, without a specific mandate from the UN to do anything of the kind (Zacklin, 1991). Later the Iraqi government agreed that the Coalition's troops should be replaced by guards under UN command.

Similarly the four intervening powers – again without any specific authorization from the Security Council – declared 'no-fly' zones forbidding Iraqi air traffic north of the 36th parallel and south of the 32nd. After the war the USA organized a comprehensive assistance programme in the Kurdish zone, joined by several international humanitarian organizations, including UN agencies. But the USA did not stop there. The CIA also established a 'Military Cooperation Centre' in Zakhu, only a stone's throw from the Turkish border, in support of Kurdish resistance groups and launched a covert operation to destabilize the Iraqi government. Thus the USA carried out a subversive action in right in the midst of a humanitarian aid programme, making it highly unlikely that understandably suspicious Iraqi authorities would be able to distinguish genuine aid workers from CIA agents. In August 1996 fighting broke out between two different Kurdish resistance movements. One of the groups, KDP, accused its rival PUK of receiving arms from neighbouring Iran and asked Saddam Hussein for military aid. The Iraqi leader gladly sent troops to the North and helped the KDP to oust PUK from the town of Arbil. At the same time his troops broke up the CIA-funded covert operation. According to US officials and Iraqi dissident sources, more than 100 Iraqis associated with this operation were arrested and apparently executed (Smith, 1996). A number of foreign aid organizations, fearing reprisals, left the civilian population to fend for itself. This tragedy demonstrated once again how irresponsible it is to combine humanitarian work with military action.

The US leadership, however, took the Iraqi operation in the northern zone of the country to be a provocative violation of Security Council decisions, disregarding the fact that the zone had been established unilaterally by four Western powers. Moreover, the 'no-fly' zone concerned air traffic, not traffic on the ground. And what is more, Security Council resolution 688 had instructed Iraq to respect human rights – but it had not mandated others to disregard international law and to unleash enforcement actions of their own. But President

Clinton was by now in the middle of an election campaign. He demonstrated his strong-arm ability to police the world by ordering the bombing of air defence and communication targets in southern Iraq and declaring an extension of the southern 'no-fly' zone right up to the outskirts of Baghdad (Randal & Mintz, 1996).

The Gulf War demonstrated that under this 'New World Order' the Security Council may authorize an extremely powerful military enforcement action. But the main aim of the United Nations is to promote peace and security through *peaceful* means. From that point of view the war was a defeat for the international community. Furthermore, the whole process raises some important questions about the expedience and the legitimacy of the decisions taken by the Security Council. And it raises the crucial question of whether it was the UN which made use of the forces of the Coalition – or whether the leaders of the Coalition were simply using the UN for their own purposes. Different member-states of the United Nations are likely to draw very different lessons from their experiences of the Gulf War.

The first question to ask is whether the Iraqi invasion could have been prevented. The answer is that there is a distinct possibility that the attack could have been avoided if the international community had acted with greater foresight. Observers knew in 1990 that tensions between the two countries were high. The Iraqi leaders were irritated that Kuwait and other Gulf states were pressing down the price of oil by producing what Iraq considered to be too much. At the same time they accused Kuwait of stealing oil from the Rumaila field, which straddled the border between the two countries. In July Saddam Hussein moved 100,000 troops to the border. At this stage a sharp warning from the Security Council, perhaps backed up by preventive deployment of UN troops, might have hindered the invasion. But nothing was done. This experience further underlines the need for a substantial strengthening of the institutional capacities for fact-finding and early warning of the United Nations, which for years has suffered from drastic resource cuts imposed by the USA and its Northern coalition partners.

Secondly: might the economic sanctions have been sufficient to force Iraq to withdraw? No definite answer can be given to that question. But it is unlikely that any country could long have sustained a blockade which reduced its foreign trade by close to 100%. The UN Charter does not directly forbid the Security Council to apply force before economic sanctions have proved useless. But the language in Article 42, which permits force if the Council considers that sanctions 'would be inadequate or have proved to be inadequate', clearly presupposes that the Council makes an assessment of the impact of the sanctions. That was never done. Ralph Zacklin, Director of the UN Bureau of Legal Affairs, has confirmed that several various indications suggest that the blockade against Iraq was proving so effective that one ought to have given the sanctions some more time to work before unleashing war (Zacklin, 1991). That would even have permitted continued efforts at conciliation and negotiation.

## Licence to Kill

However, even if we should accept that enforcement action might be necessary, a new question arises concerning the *carte blanche* accorded the Coalition to wage war, without any limitations and without controls by the Security Council. Chapter VII of the UN Charter empowers the Council 'to take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to restore international peace and security'. All members of the UN may, according to Article 43, be obliged to make forces available to the Council. According to Article 47, the Military Staff Committee shall be responsible under the Council for the strategic direction of the forces. All the Articles of Chapter VII, with the exception of Article 51, which permits individual or collective self-defence *until the Security Council has taken the necessary measures*, presuppose that the enforcement actions are carried out by troops placed under the control and the overall direction of the Council. All the same, such a mechanism has never been established. Member-states have not agreed to make forces available on call, and the Military Staff Committee has never been allowed to function as foreseen by the UN Charter.

An open mandate to wage war is, however, far from the system envisaged by the Charter, which makes it clear that the Security Council will remain in control of all operations. It would seem as if the Council, by adopting resolution 678, abdicated its powers and gave the Coalition free hands to carry out the enforcement action in whatever way it deemed fit. No organized connection was established between the enforcement armies and the Security Council. The forces were under US command. The authority to 'use all necessary means' put no limitations on the military operations, and left the Council no possibility of intervening if it should find that the Coalition was employing forces out of proportion to the aims of the action. This question was, in fact, raised several times in the period from 17 January to 2 March 1991. The Secretary-General was concerned about the bombing of civilian quarters, and many people were shocked to learn that during the final 24 hours of the war the Iraqi army was still under heavy fire, even though it had left Kuwait and was in full retreat. In operative paragraph 4 of Resolution 678, the members of the Coalition were requested 'to keep the Security Council regularly informed on the progress of actions' undertaken on the basis of the resolution. But no meeting of the Council was summoned to receive and consider such reports. As the President of the International Court of Justice puts it in his *The New World Order and the Security Council*: 'From the time of adoption of the last-mentioned resolution, i.e. resolution 678 of 29 November 1990, until the end of those operations, three months went by in which the Council did not adopt any further resolutions and did not control the use of force it had authorized' (Bedjaoui, 1994). It is no wonder that the legality of resolution 678 and the enforcement action mandated by this resolution have been challenged.

Even the legality of follow-up actions after the war has been brought into question. Serious doubts have been raised as to the juridical justification of the far-reaching decisions contained in resolution 687, adopted on 3 April 1991. In particular, heavy criticism has been directed at operative paragraph 3, instruct-



ing the Secretary-General to make arrangements for the demarcation of the boundary between Iraq and Kuwait. Nowhere in the UN Charter has the Security Council been empowered to lay down boundaries between states. This is a legal matter which in modern times has been dealt with through negotiations or brought before the International Court of Justice. The representative of the United States emphasized in the Security Council debate that the resolution was tailored exclusively to the circumstances then prevailing in the Gulf. 'Certainly, the United States does not seek, nor will it support, a new role for the Security Council as the body that determines international boundaries', he said.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, this was what the Council did, on the insistence of the USA. To ask the International Court of Justice to settle the matter would have taken more time, and the outcome might have been less predictable. Better to have the Council fix and guarantee the boundary under US supervision, even though the Council was not legally entitled to deal with the matter. One author summarized the whole process in the following words: 'The provisions of Chapter VII were in turn reaffirmed, neglected and then, on the contrary, surpassed.' (Dupuy, 1993, quoted from Bedjaoui, 1994)

Resolution 688 adopted on 5 April 1991 has been exposed to heavy criticism as well. Though the Western powers pretended that this resolution mandated the 'humanitarian intervention' carried out by the USA and three of its Coalition partners, the Secretary-General refused to accept this construction. The resolution made no clear reference to Chapter VII about action with respect to breaches of the peace. On the contrary, it 'reaffirmed the commitment of all member-states to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of Iraq'. The position of the Secretary-General was that the UN could undertake an armed humanitarian intervention only if the action had an unquestioned legal basis in the Charter (Zacklin, 1991). But even in its diluted form resolution 688 instructed Iraq to receive and to assist international humanitarian organizations. The five member-states which voted against or abstained from voting on the resolution felt that this was too strong interference in the internal decisionmaking of a country. They also argued that the Security Council was usurping powers which belong to the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council. Chapter IX of the Charter states expressly that the promotion of human rights shall be vested in the General Assembly – not in the Security Council. But to work through the Assembly would be more cumbersome. And the United States and its allies have less power in the Assembly than in the Security Council. From their point of view it was better to interpret the violation of the rights of the Kurds loosely, as a question of international peace and security – and thereby have it dealt with in a forum which they could control.



## A New Global Standard?

But the main question is this: Has the enforcement action against Iraq really introduced a new global standard for Security Council action to maintain international peace and security? Or has the treatment accorded to Iraq quite simply been yet another example of how the dominant powers in the Security Council deal with equivalent cases on very different terms? Did they enforce the regime of war and reprisals and drawn-out sanctions against Iraq merely because it suited their own economic and strategic interests?

Another case of aggression which bears comparison with the Iraqi attack on Kuwait is actually at hand in the Gulf. In September 1980, Iraq unilaterally abrogated the reconciliation treaty with Iran and established exclusive Iraqi sovereignty over the Shatt-al-Arab waterway. Iraq subsequently launched a major military offensive against neighbouring Iran. During this cruel war, which lasted for eight years, almost as long as the two World Wars combined, the Security Council received reports from UN experts showing that Iraq was grossly violating international law and using chemical weapons against Iranian forces.<sup>3</sup> All in all, more than a million people were killed and 150,000 were taken prisoner during the war. When the war ended in 1988, material losses were estimated at more than one thousand billion dollars – a sum which exceeded the total debt of the Third World at that time. But the Security Council did not identify the aggressor. Nor did it impose a ceasefire or insist that the parties respect international humanitarian law. The Council made no effort to enforce its calls for suspension of the fighting and peaceful resolution of the conflict. In the course of ten weeks in 1990 the Security Council adopted more resolutions about the Gulf crisis than it had about the murderous battle between Iraq and Iran over a period of eight years. All the same, there was at that time a remarkable convergence of views on the belligerents among the great powers. Therefore the passivity of the Security Council during the first Gulf War cannot be explained by Cold War disagreements which no longer existed in 1990.

Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui has pointed out that the powers of the North were not consistently passive during the first Gulf War. On the contrary, they supplied both sides massively with weapons, technological equipment and military intelligence. They contributed to making the fighting more deadly and the devastation more total. In the second Gulf War their objective was to cut Iraq down to a more modest size. In the first Gulf War their agenda was different. Then the strategy of the big powers must quite simply have been to play a balance-of-power game by shifting their support from one side to the other. The Security Council does from time to time ask third parties to abstain from acts which might intensify a conflict. What about the world's leading merchants of death? Bedjaoui asks a very important question: how should the acts of the arms suppliers during a mass slaughter like the first Gulf War be judged from the perspective of international law? (Bedjaoui, 1994, p. 510).

But even if it emerges that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was treated quite differently from its attack on Iran, it could still be argued that one wrong does not excuse another one – that the lack of efficient Security Council action on

the first war ought not to prevent lawful action on the second one. The second Gulf War might initiate a new willingness and a new ability of the Security Council to take action and if necessary use force to have its resolutions implemented. The whole process of condemning and punishing Iraq was accompanied and justified by innumerable references to human rights and international law – often with good reason. But can one invoke international law without consequences for the future? Will not the principles declared so solemnly in one case oblige the actors to treat similar cases in the same way next time? Or is it really possible, without raising a storm of protest from the international community, to use international law as it seems convenient, applying it in one case and neglecting it in another one?

Take the case of the Kurds. When Saddam Hussein suppressed the Kurdish revolt in 1991, four self-established policemen of the world intervened. But when, four years later, their ally Turkey invaded northern Iraq in order to eradicate Kurdish resistance forces in the same area, these same powers demonstrated that they could tolerate violations of international law when it suited their own interests.

By far the most arrant example of the use of double standards concerns Israel. With military might Israel has occupied the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and East Jerusalem. The occupied areas have been treated as though they belonged to Israel and not to the Palestinians. Palestinian families have been driven away by force, and land which did not belong to Israel has been handed out to its own citizens. And yet, Israel has got away with these massive violations of international law without reprisals. By the time of the second Gulf War the UN Security Council had adopted 169 – one hundred and sixty-nine – resolutions against these violations, all of which Israel had totally disregarded. However, at no point did the powers which dominate the Security Council do anything to force Israel to comply with its resolutions. The contradiction between the Council's treatment of Iraqi aggression against Kuwait and Israeli aggression against the Palestinians could not be more striking. Then, after the second Gulf War, some people felt that things would have to change. Having demonstrated its will to enforce its decisions concerning the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, surely – they reasoned – the international community was bound to act with far greater determination concerning Israel's annexation of other peoples' territory? Or could the world really accept that the Security Council applies double moral standards? Unfortunately, it looks as if that is possible.

## More Enforcement?

In the North – and to a lesser extent in the South – one immediate result of the Gulf War was greater trust in the ability of the Security Council to organize the policing of the world and to initiate 'humanitarian interventions' in countries where human rights were seen to be massively violated. Concerns for the situation of human beings seemed to be given greater weight as compared to

respect for the domestic jurisdiction of states. The fact that during the Gulf crisis the Security Council had contracted out the enforcement mission to the USA and its coalition partners was often overlooked during this period of euphoria. With his *Agenda for Peace* even Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali saw in 1992 a new opportunity for achieving a United Nations capable of maintaining international peace and security. Among his proposals was the establishment of a system of peace enforcement units under the command of the Secretary-General (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 26).

One of the first effects of this new belief in international UN enforcement was seen in Somalia. Since 1991 a devastating struggle had developed between the different clans and militias in the country. Peace negotiations led by the Secretary-General's envoy Mohammed Sahoun of Algeria moved on slowly, until they were cut off – prematurely, it seemed. A small UN peacekeeping force of five hundred was sent to the country to secure the deliveries of aid to the civilian population, but they could hardly do more than protect the airport at Mogadishu. During the US election campaign in the autumn of 1992 President Bush announced the launch of 'Operation Restore Hope', whereby the USA undertook to send 24,000 troops to Somalia to protect aid deliveries. This initiative was supported by the UN Security Council, and 13,000 troops were recruited from other countries to join the US forces; the whole operation was to be led by the USA. UNITAF was authorized to use 'all necessary means' to secure the humanitarian deliveries. In its resolution, the Council stated that those who hindered the deliveries would be held accountable for their crimes. This was evidently a drastic intervention inside the borders of a sovereign state, but very few reacted, as the state of Somalia had practically speaking ceased to function. However the USA had no wish to get bogged down in Somalia for a long period, and in May 1993 UNITAF was replaced by UNOSOM 2, placed under the authority of the United Nations. Four thousand US troops continued to participate, and the operation was still commanded by the US military. Though the UNOSOM troops were fewer and less uniform than UNITAF, theirs was a widely expanded mandate. The troops were instructed to restore law and order in the country, secure the safe return or resettlement of displaced people, prevent the import of weapons, disarm the militias and contribute to economic reconstruction.

Neither the Security Council nor the Secretary-General had at their disposal personnel with the resources and the experience necessary to undertake a semi-military humanitarian operation on such a scale. To make matters worse, disagreements arose between the Secretary-General and some of the commanding officers in the field, who took orders from the General Staffs in their own countries, and not from the UN. One US elite force operated wholly on directions from its headquarters in Florida. When 23 Pakistani soldiers were killed in an ambush, a crisis erupted. Rightly or wrongly, one of the militia leaders, General Aideed, was held responsible for the assault. The USA insisted that UNOSOM should arrest Aideed, and for once the Secretary-General wholly agreed. This turned the peace enforcers into involved parties to the war. Hun-

dreds of Somalis lost their lives, as well as fifteen UNOSOM troops, twelve of them US soldiers. Neither was UNOSOM able to protect aid workers: more of them were killed after the humanitarian mission had been initiated than before. Aideed was not arrested, and the militias remained armed. The US government, which had main responsibility for the whole exercise, deemed it advisable to withdraw its troops, who were followed in turn by those of all the other Western countries which had participated in the operation. It was, however, the United Nations that was made the scapegoat.

David Owen, former British foreign minister and EU negotiator in the former Yugoslavia, put it this way:

We have seen in recent years how major governments escape their responsibilities as soon as something goes wrong. In Somalia, when the American-led UN operation crossed the 'Mogadishu line' between peace-keeper and combatant, responsibility was barely acknowledged by the US administration, who had run the whole operation; it became the UN's fault. The other member-states on the Security Council who had passed the same resolutions also shuffled their responsibilities on to the UN as fast as they could. (Owen, 1995, p. 361).

Western media in general reflected the views of their political leaders and blamed the UN – not the USA – for the failure in Somalia.

The events in Somalia demonstrated how dangerous it is to combine a humanitarian mission with an enforcement action. As soon as troops acting under the authority of the United Nations get involved in fighting they are perceived by the native population as joining one of the sides in the war. Then it is not only UN peace-enforcers and peacekeepers that are endangered. People easily see international humanitarian organizations as representing the UN family, with the result that even aid workers become targets for the belligerents. The ill-fated Somali venture also showed how hazardous it is to initiate enforcement without forces strong enough to guarantee that the objectives of the operation will be realized. The member-states in the Security Council instructed UNOSOM to carry out a highly taxing operation – without being willing to provide the necessary resources. This was a pattern which was to be repeated in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The new chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili, later referred to the 'bitter lessons' of Somalia. Indeed, he speculated that there was now a 'Somalia syndrome' at work in the USA, making it extremely difficult for US peacekeepers to suffer any casualties without jeopardizing public support for the operation. Far from the original intention of President Clinton, the Somali experience served to strengthen opposition – from the military and others – to a more active US peacekeeping role, especially if that might entail subordination to non-US commanders or dependence on foreign units for key support to defence functions (Stevenson, 1996). The failures in Somalia were mostly due to wrong US decisions, and yet the final result was greater US unwillingness to participate in UN-led operations.

## Pax Americana

The New World Order initiated through the Gulf War is a Pax Americana. If the trends of the last decade continue in the years to come, we will experience a world where the USA uses its political, economic and military power to intervene in situations the world over which are perceived as threatening US national interests. This will not be done through open superpower dictates: such interventions will as a rule take place under the cloak of international law: The United States and its allies will be mandated by the Security Council to carry out enforcement operations which Washington considers necessary. There will be no question of implementing the provisions of the UN Charter which imply that enforcement troops shall be put under the direction of the Security Council and its Military Staff Committee. The USA will insist on having a free hand to control the use of force. Even international law may be disregarded if Washington should perceive it as preventing the USA from teaching its enemies lessons which US leaders find that they deserve. This scenario is not free fantasy – it is a highly likely forecast based on present trends. The political leadership in the USA has brushed off Senator A. H. Vandenberg's wise advice to his country in 1945: that force should be used 'through the UN whenever possible, within the Charter always' (Owen, 1996, p. 357). It has also neglected Senator J. W. Fulbright's warning against arrogantly believing that God has entrusted the USA with its power in order that it shall carry out His will on earth (see Fulbright, 1966).

However, trends need not be permanent. What are the chances for freeing the United Nations from hegemonic dominance, and turning the world organization into a global forum with relatively democratic decisionmaking, in conformity with basic rules of the Charter? The chances seem slim indeed. One of the reasons is that the USA and its allies have sabotaged the provisions in Chapter IV of the UN Charter, which prescribe that the expenses of the organization are to be borne by the members as apportioned by the General Assembly with a two-thirds majority. And the USA has for a long time – in violation of its legal international obligations – refused to pay its dues, in order to put political pressure on the organization. It is a misconception to hold that the UN system is run by the countries of the South. In 1996 more than 60% of the executive heads within the system were still from Western Europe and North America. The industrialized countries' share of the vote in the General Assembly is somewhat higher than their share of the world's population (Childers & Urquhart, 1996). But the US leadership flatly declines to accept that member-states which pay a minor part of the assessed contributions shall be in a position to approve the budget – even though they represent a qualified majority of the General Assembly. It does not matter that when counting the votes from the ballot boxes no democratic country accords the votes of poor electors less weight than the those of the rich ones.

In per capita terms a country like Norway contributes some 14 times more to the UN system's voluntary finance for development than does the United States (South Centre, 1996). Nonetheless, in the late 1980s Norway and the

other wealthy countries joined the United States in forcing through a practice implying that the UN budget has to be approved by consensus. This means that the rich countries may veto any growth in the planned activities. Through this practice the USA and its partners have succeeded in strangling the world organization at a time when what is desperately needed is a stronger and more active UN. In 1993 the UN budget – including peacekeeping – was about the size of the expenses of the fire and police departments of New York City (Childers & Urquhart, 1994, p. 29). After having cut personnel and activities drastically, the rich countries have established the rule of zero growth in the United Nations.

Among the means at the disposal of the dominating powers – the former Soviet Union was a good second to the United States in this regard – is the use of sticks and carrots. We have seen how the USA employed this treatment with Security Council members during the Gulf War. But that is not the only case. David Owen had this to say about the situation of the UN Secretary-General and his colleagues:

His is one of the most exacting jobs in the world, for there is little of the back-up which most heads of state receive. It has always been difficult to avoid being dictated to by the permanent members of the Security Council, and since the collapse of the Soviet Union there is a new danger of the Secretary-General and other senior UN officials becoming too subservient to the United States. It is to Boutros-Ghali's credit that he has kept his independence of mind and of action, albeit at the price of being subjected at times to savage and unwarranted criticism.' (Owen, 1996, p. 21)

Nor is it any secret that the USA was firmly opposed to any re-election of Boutros-Ghali as Secretary-General.

The South Centre, established as a follow-up of the report from the South Commission led by Julius Nyerere, has made this observation about the use of economic intimidation in the UN:

Although more usually associated with the Security Council, the practice of permanent members silencing or forcing the votes of economically weak members has now extended to the General Assembly. As more and more countries have become economically unstable and placed under the tutelage of the Bretton Woods institutions, they have become more vulnerable to external economic pressures and retaliation. Furthermore, the fact that a list of delegations that vote in the 'wrong way' exists, presents enough of an implicit threat as to take its unavoidable toll of South solidarity.' (South Centre, 1996, p. 134)

The South Centre adds that such pressures are violations of the UN Charter, but the fact that the victim is not supposed to air the intimidation publicly, means that the public remains unaware of this practice (pp. 134–135).

In the General Assembly the countries of the South may all the same muster a majority for resolutions against the use of economic measures as a means of political coercion against developing countries. Indeed, they have done so three

times: first in 1989, then in 1991 and finally in 1993. The two first resolutions were very broad, covering direct political pressure as well as blockades, embargoes and other economic sanctions in violation of the Charter. The latest resolution is, however, more limited. The Secretary-General, who had been invited to report on the implementation of the two first resolutions, announced in 1993 that an expert group, summoned by the UN and UNCTAD to study the question, had agreed to define their theme this way: ‘The intent of imposing coercive economic measures is to induce changes in the non-economic policies – domestic or foreign – of the receiving state.’<sup>4</sup> Despite this sensible start, the Secretary-General reported that after the restructuring of the Secretariat and the redefinition of UNCTAD’s programme of work, no further work was being carried out on the subject. The rich countries’ dismantling of UN functions had evidently served them well.

Having received this discouraging report from the Secretary-General, the Group of 77 and China again introduced a draft resolution on political and economic coercion. The resolution called upon the international community to take measures to eliminate

the use by some developed countries of unilateral economic coercive measures against developing countries that are not authorized by relevant organs of the United Nations or are inconsistent with the principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, as a means of forcibly imposing the will of one state on another.

This resolution, which despite the clumsy wording seemed to uphold some important international principles, suffered the same fate as its two predecessors. It was adopted by 116 votes for, 32 against, and 16 abstentions. But the General Assembly was split along North–South lines. All Western countries voted against the resolution, with the exception of Greece and Spain, who abstained.<sup>5</sup> Resolutions of this kind are clearly not seen as binding: they are recommendations only. Those who voted against feel no need to pay attention to them. Neither did the media take notice of the conflict. Not even as a manifestation of their claim did the countries of the South come far with the resolution.

## The 15-Member Council

The permanent members feel happier with the Security Council. With only fifteen members, it is easier to handle; and besides, they themselves enjoy the privilege of veto power. In recent years the UN has experienced a marginalization of the General Assembly, accompanied by a greater empowerment of the Council, due in part to greater harmony among the permanent members. But at the same time this body has appropriated for itself responsibilities that do not respect the separation of powers inscribed in the UN Charter. To dictate where and how the frontier between Iraq and Kuwait should be re-drawn was certainly not the



business of the Security Council. The Charter allows the Council to make recommendations (*not decisions*) about the settlement of disputes, but 'legal disputes should as a general rule be referred by the parties to the International Court of Justice'. Neither is it the business of the Security Council to establish new international courts, which according to Article 13 falls under the competence of the General Assembly. But the most problematic appropriation of new powers by the Security Council concerns the interventions which it has authorized within the borders of member-states. It is not always easy to decide when an internal conflict should be dealt with as a question of economic and social cooperation under the authority of the General Assembly – and when even an internal conflict represents a threat to international peace and security. But decisions of that kind are not the prerogative of the 15 members of the Security Council. According to Article 10 of the UN Charter, the General Assembly is entitled to discuss any matter related to the powers and functions of the other organs of the UN. At the very least the Assembly should formulate the principles upon which such a choice should be made, as well as specify the terms and conditions for possible 'humanitarian interventions'. The South Centre is not the only body to note that 'in all but one instance since 1990, the kinds of crises with which the Security Council has been involved, and which have given it such prominence relative to the General Assembly, are crises within individual developing countries' (South Centre, 1996, p. 130).

## A Reform Agenda

The Gulf War initiated a practice whereby the United Nations was used as an instrument by the remaining superpower and its satellites to police the world in such a way as they saw fit. Again and again, international public opinion passively acquiesced as the provisions of the UN Charter were disregarded and violated. Thus, it will be a formidable task to renew the world organization in conformity with the democratic spirit of its Charter.

Various plans and proposals have been put forward for changing today's practices so that the peoples of the South can gain a more equitable share in world governance. The problem is how to muster the necessary political power to ensure the adoption of reform decisions which will also be upheld and respected by member-states. Let us start by looking at a reform agenda which might satisfy some of the most justified claims of the countries of the South. One excellent plan has been spelled out by the two former UN officials Erskine Childers and Brian Urquhart in *Renewing the United Nations System* (1994). Another plan has been described by the Commission on Global Governance in its report *Our Global Neighbourhood* (1995). In the view of the South Centre, however, this report is essentially inspired by thinking common in the North:

For the South, all proposals need to pass the litmus test as to whether they will actually redress the current imbalance of power within the UN and that resulting from the organization's relations with other multilateral institutions domi-



nated by the North. All proposed changes also have to be judged by the extent to which they will contribute to improving global governance in the sense of bringing the policies and behaviour of 'actors' in the North, as well as the South, into the area of multilateral scrutiny and coordination. (South Centre, 1996, p. 207)

Let us now turn to a South perspective on UN reform as presented by the Centre itself. This plan contains two main recommendations:

Firstly the Centre proposes that revenue discipline should be restored among UN member governments, and the budget should be accepted by *all* when it has been adopted by a two-thirds majority, as the Charter prescribes. The USA has complained about the size of its own contribution to the regular UN budget, which is 25%. Of course this share is very high; it makes the UN too dependent upon one single member-state. But US leaders have been lukewarm to the idea of reducing their share – that would deprive them of political leverage. According to the South Centre, a new approach is needed. The ceiling for the budget contribution of one any country 10% to 12.5% of the total. But, even more importantly, new means of financing the United Nations should be established, based upon international taxation, the Centre recommends. We have seen that big powers may disregard international obligations when it suits them to do so, but a sound and predictable income founded on legally binding treaties might provide the United Nations with somewhat greater protection against big-power bullying.

Secondly, according to the South Centre, the General Assembly must assume its intended central place in global policymaking, and reassert its mandates with respect to peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs. Veto power in the Security Council should be abolished; a two-thirds or three-quarters majority should be a sufficient qualification for decisions regarding threats to the peace. Neither should the permanent membership of five countries be continued; rules assuring equitable geographical representation should be enough. On this basis the Council should be enlarged moderately to serve the needs of close to two hundred member-states.

In addition, mention should also be made of some observations on how to test the legality and control the political expediency of the acts of the Security Council, put forward by the President of the International Court of Justice (Bedjaoui, 1994). Judge Bedjaoui acknowledges that the General Assembly has only weak political control of the acts of the Council, despite the terms of Article 10 touching upon the powers and functions of any UN organ. But there, possibilities do exist. Firstly the Assembly may insist that the reports from the Council provide the Assembly with a full account of the decisionmaking process, and not be limited to a simple record of the measures and decisions taken. Secondly, the Assembly may exert influence through its budgetary control; it is the Assembly's prerogative to examine and approve the budget of the United Nations. Thirdly, all the Council's substantive decisions have to be taken by a vote of not fewer than nine members, including all the permanent members. This means that there exists a potential 'blocking minority' which forms, to

some extent, a counterweight to the veto right of the permanent members. Any group of seven of the ten non-permanent members elected by the Assembly will be able to block a decision by the Council.

These, however, are means of political control that exist already. When a solid and dominating rich minority within the United Nations have at their disposal the overwhelming majority of the economic, political and military resources outside the organization, they can easily counter any efforts seen as threatening this hegemony.

Judge Bedjaoui points out that the current strengthening of the Security Council may include the marginalization not only of the General Assembly, but also of the International Court of Justice. The Security Council is legally bound to respect international law and to conform to the principles of the Charter. But there is no mechanism for sanctioning the Council if it breaches the Charter. Today it is left to the Council itself to determine its own competence. However, the greater the accumulation of powers conferred on an international organ, the more necessary it will be to be able to test the legality of its acts. Bedjaoui finds it inconceivable that the Security Council can continue to function without another organ of a judicial nature to help it build a society based on law (Bedjaoui 1994, p. 116). As early as in 1947 the General Assembly recommended the UN organs to make more frequent use of the International Court of Justice for resolving difficult points of law encountered in the course of their activities, including the interpretation of the Charter.<sup>6</sup> This recommendation has been neglected, like so many others. The first steps toward the testing of the legality of the acts of the Security Council should be to initiate the practice of asking the Court for advisory opinions. Of course that may be impossible when the Council is confronted with an immediate threat to the peace. But it can very well be done in matters of principle when there is time to wait for the Court's advice. Bedjaoui also finds that it is high time for the General Assembly to authorize the Secretary-General to apply directly to the International Court of Justice for advisory opinions.

If implemented, these proposals could go a long way toward re-establishing that system of checks and balances envisaged by the Charter of the United Nations. They might even help to ensure that similar cases of violations of international law are handled in similar ways. And that, in turn, is one reason why the proposals will meet strong objections from those who are satisfied with the present (lack of) World Order.

This agenda might be supplied with some ideas aired by former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, issued in January 1995, after he had seen the consequences of the Gulf War and had lost some illusions about the post-Cold War world.

Firstly, Boutros-Ghali stresses the need for preventive diplomacy and peace-making, and for a substantive increase of the budget for such activities. Had these capabilities been in place, in combination with locally based development assistance, some of the man-made disasters mentioned in this chapter might have been prevented – and at much lower cost. Secondly, when peace-

keeping operations become necessary, the former Secretary-General urges Security Council members to resist the temptation to use military power to speed them up. 'Peacekeeping and the use of force (other than in self-defence) should be seen as alternative techniques and not as adjacent points on a continuum, permitting easy transition from one to the other.' (p. 9)

Boutros-Ghali also raises the principle of command, which may apply both to peacekeeping and even more to enforcement actions. 'The experience in Somalia has underlined again the necessity for a peacekeeping operation to function as an integrated whole' (p. 9). There must be no attempt by troop-contributing governments to give orders to their contingents on operational matters. That might even 'create the impression amongst the parties that the operation is serving the policy objectives of the contributing governments rather than the collective will of the United Nations as formulated by the Security Council' (p. 10). After having referred to his own experience in May 1994, when 19 governments had undertaken to have troops on stand-by for the UN, but none of them agreed to contribute to an expansion of the UN assistance mission for Rwanda, Boutros-Ghali asks member-states to give serious thought to the establishment of a rapid reaction force as a strategic reserve for the Security Council.

Fourthly the former Secretary-General raises the question of enforcement actions. Given the fact that member-states lack the political will to make forces available to the Security Council and its Military Staff Committee along the lines foreseen by the Charter, he seems to accept that it may once again become necessary to 'entrust enforcement tasks to groups of member-states' (Boutros-Ghali, p. 16). This might be preferable to the unilateral use of force, he states meekly. He then goes on to point out 'the danger that the states concerned may claim international legitimacy and approval for forceful actions that were not in fact envisaged by the Security Council when it gave its authorization to them' (p. 17). The answer, which Boutros-Ghali does not give, is of course that the General Assembly, together with the Security Council, needs to elaborate a binding set of rules and principles for enforcement operations contracted out to coalitions of member-states. These rules should ensure that the Security Council retains overall control of operations that it has authorized. On this point the powers of the Council should be strengthened, not weakened.

Lastly, Boutros-Ghali raises the difficult question of sanctions. According to the Charter, the Security Council should if possible try compulsory economic measures before resorting to military ones. But he also underlines – no doubt with Iraq in mind – that the legal purpose of UN sanctions is to modify the behaviour of a party that is threatening international peace and security, and not to punish or otherwise exact retribution. At the same time he raises the ethical question 'whether suffering inflicted on vulnerable groups in the target country is a legitimate means of exerting pressure on political leaders whose behaviour is unlikely to be affected by the plight of their subjects' (p. 15). The lessening of the hardship for civilians may unfortunately also lessen the impact of the sanctions on the political leaders. But the former Secretary-General's

sensible conclusion is that whenever sanctions are imposed, provision should be made to facilitate the work of humanitarian agencies, to avoid banning imports necessary to local health institutions and to devise a fast track for handling applications for exemptions for humanitarian activities.

### A North–South Alliance?

The UN reform agenda which emerges from the proposals of the South Centre, the President of the ICJ and the former UN Secretary-General is not a radical one, even though the two latter individuals happen to have Southern roots. With the exception of the abolition of the veto and permanent membership in the Security Council, none of the proposals calls for amending the Charter. The introduction of international taxes will – in due course – necessitate new international agreements. But basically this agenda is a question of applying the Charter provisions more faithfully. All the same such ideas are certain to be met with scornful rejection from the USA and some other large Northern countries. The US leadership considers the principle of ‘one state, one vote’ to be anachronistic, as it fails to recognize the hierarchy of power and discourages serious and committed participation by those states that ‘count’ and that are in a position to assume responsibility. Therefore any step to involve a broader part of the world’s countries in global management is likely to encounter vehement opposition.

A majority of nations advocating the Southern perspectives on UN reform can easily manage to get a resolution along the indicated lines adopted by the General Assembly. But there is little point in making decisions which have no chance of being implemented because they will be disregarded by a handful of member-states which command 70% to 80% of the world’s resources. To exercise global governance through a renewed United Nations, one that respects broad participation in the deliberation of matters of principle, will not be possible unless even those powers who are favoured by the present hegemonic order can be moved to participate. It all comes down to a question of power. But as Bertrand Russell pointed out some time ago, power consists of more than merely the ability to use physical resources to one’s own advantage (Russell, 1939). Power is just as much a question of being able to influence opinion, to further behaviour which respects the rule of law and to appeal successfully to ethical norms. Though influencing the public mind is far easier for those with considerable economic resources at their disposal, even economically weaker groups can sometimes find a comparable strength in popular attitudes and create powerful movements for a just cause.

In the North, broad groups of humanitarian and solidarity-oriented nongovernmental movements in general support the demands from the South. It is not impossible to envisage a new North–South dialogue about global governance and UN reform. Small and medium sized Northern countries may more easily build new alliances with like-minded countries in the South. This would

mean that some political leaders in the North would have to risk displeasing the US government by siding with the South in matters of importance. It would also call for increased efforts from liberal and progressive groups in the USA which are working for a stronger United Nations and for a less dominating US foreign policy. As the South Centre points out, the South and North share many common interests in dealing with global problems of mutual concern, such as financial instability, unemployment, environmental degradation, social tensions and growing delinquency. 'By taking a clear stand and speaking out on these issues, the South is likely also to mobilize the interest and support of progressive and internationalist opinion in the North, which may in turn be able to exert greater pressure on North governments to take a more positive, forward-looking approach to the matter of UN reform' (South Centre, 1996, p. 229). Here very much hard work remains to be done – both in the South and in the North. And here the media have an important role to play. The way in which they cover matters concerning the United Nations and the need for global governance will mean a lot to the success of this venture.

## Notes

1. Security Council Meeting of 29 November 1990, doc. S/PV. 2963.
2. Provisional Verbatim Record of the 2981st Meeting of the Security Council, 3 April (S/PV.2981).
3. Security Council resolution 582 (1986) of 24 February 1986; Statement from the President of the Security Council at its 2667th Meeting on 21 March 1986.
4. *United Nations doc. A/48/535, 25.10.93.*
5. Resolution 48/168 adopted by the General Assembly, 21 December 1993.
6. General Assembly resolution 171 (11) (A) 1947.



## Voicing the Gulf

### *The Voice of America Constructs the Gulf War*

Laurien Alexandre

Media studies are replete with a rich array of case-studies illustrating how news outlets construct reality, framing events and contexts to serve the needs of advertisers or other dominant interests. This chapter examines how the US government, and its radio arm, the Voice of America (VOA), constructed the story of the Gulf War. After a brief overview of the radio operation and its broadcasting to the Gulf region, the chapter delves into an analysis of the VOA's daily editorials immediately prior to and during the Gulf War. Using these editorials as a undiluted expression of the official framing of events, this analysis illustrates the nature of the story being told – and, just as importantly, the story *not* being told.

### Overview of the Voice

When Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in 1989, the VOA claimed a global audience of 120 million listeners. This figure does not take into account listeners who receive VOA programming rebroadcast on local and private stations around the world. If these figures were included, the total would be much larger.

Established immediately after World War II as part of the US government's Cold War propaganda effort, the VOA had grown by the 1990s into an operation broadcasting to every region of the world. The official mission of the VOA can be found in its Charter, reaffirmed during President Jimmy Carter's years, which calls for the radio to report the news in a manner that is 'accurate, objective and comprehensive', to 'represent America ... and present a balanced and comprehensive projection of significant American thought and institutions', and, at the same time, to 'present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively'.

The first component of the Charter is the principle that is supposed to guide the news operation and other reporting initiatives. The second, 'to represent America', guides much of the cultural, Americana, and human interest

programming. It is the third and final component of the Charter, ‘to present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively’, which specifically refers to, among other aspects of VOA programming, the daily editorials. Since 1980, the VOA has broadcast daily editorials of approximately three minutes in length. The day’s editorial, written by VOA’s English-language Policy Division, is translated by the various language desks. Each editorial begins and ends with the following words, ‘This editorial reflects the views of the United States government.’

In extreme cases – for example, during the Vietnam War and the bombing of Libya – the State Department itself actually approved editorials that referred to particularly sensitive foreign policy events or negotiations. In most cases, however, the VOA’s own writers in the Policy Division construct the editorials to be consistent with State Department policy as gleaned from briefings, reports, and other statements. Thus, the VOA editorials represent the official ‘spin’ on critical issues of the day. Their undiluted patriotic flavour is celebrated by each editorial’s introduction with a resounding stanza of ‘Yankee Doodle Dandy’.

The VOA’s general programming mix must be explained in a little more detail, however, before we delve further into the editorials themselves. The majority of VOA programming, be it news, cultural pieces, or human interest stories, is written in English. The main focus is usually on life and times in the United States – its people, policies, practices, and cultures. These stories are then translated by the many languages desks for rebroadcast to a particular region. Some regions or countries, such as Russia, may have 24-hour-a-day VOA programming in Russian, English, and various regional languages, whereas, say, Creole to the Caribbean might transmit only a few hours daily. The amount of hours broadcast may vary over months or years, depending on US strategic and foreign policy interests in the recipient zones. The many language desks, housed in Regional Divisions, also create programming specific to and for their own regions. Finally, each language broadcast, whether transmitting for only one hour a day or for 24, must include an hourly newscast as well as the 3-minute editorial. Whereas many of the English-language programs are optional for translation and rebroadcast, certain news stories every day are required for translation and rebroadcast. Here we should note that the day’s editorial is required for broadcast by all languages every day.

### Broadcasting to the Gulf Region

US policymakers have focused on the Middle East for decades. Long before the Gulf War broke out, VOA programming to the region was under watchful eyes. In 1989, for example, the Voice broadcast an editorial that stated that ‘the rulers of these countries [Persian Gulf countries] hold power by force and fear’. Saddam Hussein, then a US ally, protested the broadcast formally to the US State Department as a ‘call to revolution’. It is reported that then-Secretary of State James Baker requested that the United States Information Agency (USIA), VOA’s parent agency, have its radio broadcasting arm, the VOA, refrain from beaming



messages that might anger Hussein (Aruri 1991, pp. 321–322). A year later, on 23 October 1990, the VOA received a commendation for its Middle East broadcasting from Vice President Dan Quayle. And, on 7 November 1990, a letter from President George Bush commended the VOA team, especially the North Africa, Near East and South Asia Division, for its outstanding response to the demands of the situation (*Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, p. 82).

During the time period under investigation in this study, VOA programming to Iraq, Kuwait, and the Gulf area operated under the auspices of the VOA's North Africa, Near East and South Asia Division, one of the radio's larger regional divisions. The head of the Division at the time of the war was Iraqi-born Salman Hilmy, a 32-year veteran of VOA programming, who had started working in the VOA Arabic service under the radio name of 'Samir Nader'.

VOA's Arabic broadcasting to the area increased dramatically with the escalation of hostilities. Before 2 August 1990, the VOA broadcast 7 hours in Arabic a day; after the invasion of Kuwait, Arabic programming was expanded to 15 hours daily. As of 16 January 1991 and for the next 6–7 weeks, Arabic programming was 17 hours a day. In early March, Arabic programming was reduced to 13 hours, and stayed at that level until March 1993, when it was reduced to the prewar hours of 7. The Farsi broadcast was increased to 4 hours daily. A Kurdish-language program was started as well. The Arabic programming switched to an all-news format, dropping all cultural and musical shows. Interviews and talk shows with policymakers filled the airwaves, with as many as 30 interviews a day. Live call-in shows were arranged with Muslim countries from Pakistan to Morocco.

The VOA also established a 24-hour call-in news service, which provided 3-minute news summaries. Before the war, the service had been receiving 20–25 calls a day. Once the invasion occurred, the VOA set up three answering machines, which tallied some 300–400 calls daily, and from 1 January through the next weeks, the VOA received 700–800 calls daily, 85% of these from Saudi Arabia. The VOA also received about 25 direct phone calls daily during the war; this included three Saudi princesses who called the VOA every day. VOA listenership increased, especially in Kuwait: from 1% of its population, to 18%.<sup>1</sup>

That VOA broadcasts during the Gulf War were the source of much controversy is not surprising. Over the years, members of the US Congress have occasionally criticized the VOA if it presented anything about the USA that might put it and the country's policies in an unfavourable light. Similarly, foreign countries and their ambassadors have complained about VOA reports which they felt reflected unfavourably on their countries. As Mahmoud Zawawi, head of the Arabic Service, commented in an interview, 'VOA programming was criticized and praised by all sides' during the Gulf War. The Kuwaitis, for example, praised the VOA because it lost confidence in the BBC's broadcasts. The BBC was 'more daring in who they interviewed and the questions they asked'. In fact, the BBC (as was CNN), was accused of being a propaganda tool of Iraq. Zawawi noted with frustration how Washington criticized the radio, saying, 'During Republican Administrations, ideology is an essential part of our work.'

That is unfortunate. Reagan did so much damage. They just don't understand what that does to our audience. You can lose credibility overnight. I am proud of our performance during the Gulf War. We were balanced, objective and, at the same time, represented the US government.'

### Studying balance

This author is aware of two formal studies (the Hudson Institute's 1991 study and a 1991 study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies) that reviewed the VOA's programming to the Middle East during the Gulf conflict to determine if there was bias or balance in the broadcasting. While a brief summary of these reports follows, it is important to recognize *that neither study addressed the issue of the editorials*, as those are, by definition, the official (and therefore inherently partial) view of the US government. Journalistic rules of balance and bias do not apply to opinion pieces. Both studies shared general agreement that VOA programming followed standard journalistic practices, yet each was critical of the preponderance of views representing only the Coalition perspective.

- *VOA Programming During the Persian Gulf War* (Herman Kahn Center 1991). The Hudson Institute was commissioned by the VOA itself to review its programming. The reviewers initially examined a single day, 21 February 1991, with over 8 hours of English broadcast to the Middle East region, and 16 hours of Arabic broadcast. Subsequently, the VOA asked the Hudson Institute to conduct a second phase and evaluate a selection of Arabic programming from 16, 19, and 20 January and 1–2 February 1991. The reviewers generally agreed that the VOA provided an effective and informative news service which compared favourably with other US media sources. From this author's perspective, however, using US other media sources as the standard for balanced coverage of the Gulf War is a questionable measure in and of itself.

In a seemingly contradictory position, one recurrent critique expressed by the Hudson reviewers was that the reporting, in both English and Arabic, relied too heavily on US and Coalition government sources, and that the views of those who opposed the war, or who might be critical of both sides in the conflict, were not well-represented. Arab-language reviewers noted the tendency to focus primarily on Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as opposed to the views of other Arab states or the Palestinians. The predominance of Egyptian government sources was noted, and reference made to how this might affect listener perceptions. 'One has the impression that they are listening to Radio Cairo.' The English-language reviewers noted the preponderance of views from the Executive Branch – the White House, State Department, and Pentagon – as opposed to members of Congress and non-government experts. The two native-language reviewers were also quite critical of the quality of the VOA's Arabic translations.

- *Analysis of Voice of America Broadcasts to the Middle East During the Gulf Crisis* (The Center for Strategic & International Studies 1991).

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a conservative think-tank, chose random samples of VOA broadcasts to the Middle East during the Gulf crisis to analyse for news bias. Two separate periods were selected: the first was a five-day period (20–24 January 1991) from near the end of the first week of Operation Desert Storm. The second period began about a month after the first. In its conclusion, the study noted that ‘VOA followed standard US journalistic practice – with all the positive and negative results that implies’ (p. 54). According to this study, most news stories were internally balanced, although 35% of the news stories presented a pro-Coalition bias. Overall, it noted a relative lack of attention to Arab opinion.

Both these studies ignored the editorials as a component of the VOA’s programming mix: it is this chapter’s task to de-construct precisely those pieces. While not measuring for balance in presentation, the current study seeks to understand the nature and texture of the frame of events being presented. Before we embark on this analysis, however, a final point must be made. VOA broadcasts to the Middle East during the Gulf crisis reached primarily three separate audiences: (1) the Iraqi government, its peoples, and its sympathizers within Iraq and in other Arab countries; (2) the Arab Coalition partners; and (3) non-Arab Coalition forces. Each of these constituencies holds widely disparate political, cultural, territorial, and religious views amongst and between its members. Compound this with an awareness of the profound distrust of Western intervention felt by many Arabs who were part of both the first and second audiences noted above. Given all of these complexities, we can begin to understand the difficulty of making *any* assumptions about what listeners heard or how they interpreted VOA broadcasting. Such an audience analysis would be an entirely different study. This chapter is an attempt to analyse the messages (editorials) *transmitted* – not an analysis of their reception. That would be a far different undertaking.

## The Official Story as Told in VOA Editorials

Because the editorials explicitly reflect the position of the US government, they can be used as a baseline to determine the dominant framing of Gulf events and issues. The author reviewed the VOA Editorial Log from June 1990–December 1992. Appendix I shows the total numbers of editorials during this time period that specifically addressed the Gulf region. This was determined by counting those editorials in which the names of countries, such as Iraq, Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, appeared in the title, or a when related event such as a meeting or war activity appeared in the title. Subsequently, those editorials listed in the VOA Editorial Log as broadcast during the specific time periods selected for this research project were read into a tape recorder at the VOA Offices in Washington DC (Appendix II) and then later transcribed. (The writ-

ten script of VOA editorials could not be photocopied on-site because of restrictive US government regulations operative at the time.) These 51 editorials were then reviewed for their presentation of the Gulf War conflict, extracting phraseology and contextual content analysis around themes and questions selected by the research project itself. Editorials were reviewed around the following themes: the US involvement and its interests, objectives and mandate; the background context of the conflict, including its history, US–UN policy, and global changes; the images of the enemy; the treatment of possible solutions; and media management.

From this analysis, and to summarize the general conclusions of the study, the VOA's framing can be characterized as follows:

- all of the objectives of the United States were explicit, legitimate, and sanctioned;
- the United States was engaged in this conflict because of its defence of the principles of democracy, sovereignty, the protection of human rights, and that at stake was the battle between pure good and unadulterated evil;
- the United States was but one member of a multinational coalition united and of equal voice in their actions, and that all US actions were sanctioned by a dozen United Nations resolutions;
- the US military presence in the Gulf was at the request of Arab nations and not the result of unilateral impulses;
- US material interests, such oil, were of lesser importance than higher level principles, such as human rights.

While there may be few surprises about the nature of this news frame, given the sponsor of the editorials, it is illuminating to examine the nature of the frame's construction.

## Why the United States Fought the War

The Gulf War was fought not to restore Kuwait's sovereignty, as George Bush proclaimed, but to establish US power over the region and its oil.

*Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General  
(The Fire this Time, 1994)*

We seek Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, completely, immediately, and without condition, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, and the security and stability of the Gulf.

The United States seeks nothing for itself in this war.

*VOA Editorial, 29 January 1991*

### Explicit objectives with no objections

On 3 August 1990: 'The United States condemns the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and calls for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces.' On 7 August, not only was unconditional withdrawal demanded, but also 'the reinstatement of Kuwait's legitimate government' The four 'simple' and official principles that guide US policy were stated. 'First, the United States seeks the immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored to replace that puppet regime. Third, the United States is committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. And fourth, the United States is determined to protect the lives of American citizens living abroad.'

These early editorials identify the objectives that form the official objectives for US involvement. The principles, repeated verbatim in part or in total in many editorials, are framed as explicit and legitimate. Virtually every editorial in this study reiterates one or more aspects of these four objectives. Typical of this reiteration is the editorial of 16 August 1990 that stated, 'US objectives remain clear: the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait, the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf, and the protection of the lives of American citizens abroad.' Or, that of 5 October 1990: 'The United States remains committed to achieving by whatever means may be necessary the complete unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait.' On 13 February 1991: 'United States officials have made it clear that the United States' aim is no more or less than the full achievement of the United Nations resolutions, including the liberation of Kuwait.'

More specific sub-components of these four guiding objectives are identified in editorials as well. For instance, deterring 'Iraqi aggression' and Iraq's threat to other nations, as an example of the US commitment to security in the region, are identified in many editorials. The 8 August 1990 VOA editorial reads 'US forces will work with those of Saudi Arabia and other nations to preserve the integrity of Saudi Arabia and deter future Iraqi aggression.' The 11 August

editorial states the ‘unequivocal reaffirmation of NATO’s clear and unconditional obligations to come collectively to the defense of any member of the allies who comes under armed attack’. The reference here is to Turkey, a NATO member ‘critically exposed to dangers aggravated by Iraq’s aggression’.

### Principles at stake

According to the Voice of America editorials, the USA was involved in the Gulf for principles of a higher order than crass geopolitics. The 8 August 1990 VOA editorial stated, ‘In both war and peace America has never wavered when her purpose is driven by principle.’ The principles at stake were described in many subsequent editorials. ‘Today American and Allied Forces are keeping watch along the sands and off the shores of Saudi Arabia’, reads the editorial of 16 August. ‘They are there for a purpose, to serve the cause of justice and freedom, a cause the world supports.’ The 18 August editorial notes, ‘No one should doubt our staying power or our determination to uphold the principle that might does not make right.’

One of these central higher-order principles repeatedly presented in the VOA editorials, as it was throughout the US government’s media campaign, is the defence of human rights. Prominent in the VOA editorials is the issue of human rights as a major factor underlying US involvement in this war. Half a dozen of the editorials are devoted entirely to the human rights situation, with titles such as ‘Action Overdue on Iraqi Human Rights’, ‘Iraqi Atrocities’, ‘Quayle, Human Rights Not An Afterthought’, and ‘Saddam’s Kurdish Victories’. Many others address human rights issues as part of broader editorial texts. As stated in one illuminating editorial on 23 February 1991, ‘The United States has long maintained that our concern for human rights is not just an add-on or an afterthought to our overall foreign policy; rather, it constitutes its very core.’ This centrality might come as a surprise to the many victims of US-backed human rights violators in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, as well as in Middle East countries in the anti-Iraq Coalition such as Syria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.

Any brief survey of human rights and political freedoms in the Gulf region easily yields manifold human rights violations, including the restrictions against women’s and worker’s rights, and the torture, imprisonment, and death of political dissidents. As stated in Naseer Aruri’s essay, *Human Rights and the Gulf Crisis*, ‘Irrespective of the type of government, republics, emirates, or kingdoms, and irrespective of ideological alignment or foreign policy orientation, whether aligned with the West in the anti-Iraq Coalition or not, most Arab regimes fall short of the minimum international requirements for human rights’ (Aruri 1991, p. 310).

US President Bush, however, decided to single out Iraqi violations in the aftermath of its invasion of Kuwait and to employ the defence of human rights as a principal motivation for his determination to go to war. Bush charged the Iraqi government and Saddam Hussein in particular with egregious violations of human rights. The VOA editorials carried this message with fervour. The 1 October 1990 editorial reports the UN’s findings that ‘there are reliable reports

of mass executions, disappearances, and arbitrary detentions in Iraq as well as forced relocation of Kurds in the northern part of the country.' The editorial concludes that the 'United States remains committed to the worldwide protection of human rights and urges all countries to join this effort.'

Barbarism in Kuwait at the hands of the Iraqis appears in many editorials. On 5 October 1990, the VOA editorial reports on Amnesty International's documentation of atrocities committed by Iraqi forces in Kuwait: 'Rape, terror, and torture are now the rule of the day in the once peaceful and tranquil land of Kuwait.' Again, the conclusion is that 'the United States joins with all civilized nations in denouncing Iraq's appalling barbarism.' The 17 October editorial mentions 'ghoulish and nightmarish horror stories coming from totally credible eye-witnesses', and the 'Rape of Kuwait' is repeated in many others. The 3 February 1991 editorial focuses on the Middle East Watch testimony of violations and torture in Iraq and Kuwait.

In an ironic twist of history-telling, the VOA editorial of 29 October 1990 refers to the unwillingness of the UN Commission on Human Rights to 'take action against Saddam Hussein' the previous March. 'This probably influenced his belief', says the editorial, 'that the international community would not actively oppose his invasion of Kuwait.' The 7 February 1991 editorial reports that 'the worst of the atrocities against the Kurds took place in March 1988' when thousands of civilians were killed with poisonous gas. First, it must be noted that Bush's comment are themselves very belated and obviously contorted to accommodate a political agenda. Secondly, perhaps the US government's own long silence concerning human rights violations in Iraq was due to the exigencies of its client state, and may themselves have fed Saddam Hussein's belief that his US benefactor would not actively oppose him.

### America is not alone

The importance of presenting this military conflict not as a war of the United States but rather, of many freedom-loving nations united in a noble cause was paramount in the US propaganda effort. The Bush Administration wasted little time in utilizing its resources to internationalize the conflict, since the multinational appearance provided a mantle of legitimacy for the distinctly unilateral US plan to obtain a permanent military presence in the region.

The VOA editorials certainly did their part in the construction of this story. The first editorial on 3 August 1990 states, 'The UN Security Council had voted overwhelmingly to condemn the Iraqi invasion, calling for immediate and unconditional withdrawal', and adds: 'The United States urges the governments around the world to condemn the Iraqi aggression and to consult to determine what measures should be taken to bring an end to this totally unjustified action.' There is no mention whatsoever in any of the 51 editorials of any recalcitrance among some Security Council members or of the concessions that Washington utilized in its negotiations to obtain cooperation with the EEC, or of the backdoor manipulation exercised to bypass regional efforts by the Arab League members.



The 7 August 1990 VOA editorial speaks about the UN Security Council actions including the unanimous vote to impose an arms embargo and mandatory economic sanctions, as well as the economic sanctions imposed by the European Community, and states that ‘The United States calls on the United Nations to invoke Chapter 7 of the UN Charter which authorizes a broad range of actions to counter any threat to peace, breach of peace, or act of aggression.’ The 8–9 August editorial laments: ‘After unparalleled international consultation and exhausting every alternative, it became necessary to take such action.’ As the rush to military conflict escalated and finally, as the war erupted, VOA editorials were careful to always note ‘American *and* Allied (or Coalition) Forces’.

Virtually all of the 51 editorials point out just how global was the condemnation and how seemingly unanimous the decisions for military action. As examples of global unity, the 10 August editorial discusses the actions of the United States, along with those of the Arab League, Britain, Canada, China, the EC, France, Japan, Norway, and the Soviet Union. The 15 August editorial identifies that ‘The United States, France, Great Britain, West Germany, Canada, Australia, and the Soviet Union have dispatched naval vessels to the region.’ Similarly, ‘President Bush was encouraged by the worldwide support he is receiving’, said the 22 August 1990 editorial. And the 30 October editorial reads, ‘A majority of the Arab League is with us. The Soviet Union and China are both with us. NATO’s resolve has never been more firm. Today, it is not Iraq against Kuwait, but Iraq against the world.’ The editorial continues, ‘The President stressed that the United States is not acting alone in its determination to counter Iraqi aggression.’ On 9 January 1991, just days before the war broke out, the VOA editorial reads, ‘The world has witnessed the emergence of an unprecedented coalition against aggression. In 12 resolutions, the United Nations has overwhelmingly condemned Iraq’s outlaw act. At this moment, forces from 27 nations, rich and poor, Arab and Muslim, European, Asian, African, and American, stand side by side in the Gulf, determined that Saddam’s aggression will not stand.’

Again and again, the VOA editorials stress that the United States was not acting alone. ‘Operation Desert Storm is supported by the principle of collective self-defense and by 12 United Nations Security Council resolutions. Twenty-eight nations from six continents have sent forces to the Gulf’, reports the editorial 29 January 1991. ‘The United States is one member of a worldwide coalition of states determined to insure that the rule of law prevails over the rule of the jungle’, reads the editorial of 10 February. As the war was drawing to an end, the 28 February 1991 editorial notes, ‘Seven months ago we declared that the aggression against Kuwait would not stand and Americans have kept their word. No one country can claim this victory as its own. It was not a victory for Kuwait, but a victory for all Coalition partners. This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, for the will of law, and for what is right.’

One very complex aspect of the Allied Coalition was the involvement of Arab nations. The VOA editorials reviewed for this study avoid mention of any regional peacemaking efforts and present the Arab League nations as in total



agreement with the US-led Coalition. President Bush is quoted in the 22 August 1990 editorial as saying, 'Nations of every language and of every religion, size, and form of government have joined in renouncing the aggression against Kuwait and it is also important to note that 12 Arab countries condemned Iraq at the Arab Summit.' During the war, Arab support for the military solution was continually mentioned. As an example, the VOA editorial of 24 February 1991 reads, 'Many of Kuwait's Arab neighbors, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt, have joined the international coalition, as have such world powers as the United States and Britain.'

Significantly, three editorials specifically note that Arab countries asked the United States to become involved. This invitation provided much-needed legitimacy to the US military presence and the expansion of its military capabilities. 'Saudi Arabia requested United States military assistance to help defend itself from Iraq', said the August 19 editorial. 'Kuwait has formally requested that the United States enforce the United Nations call for a total embargo against Iraq', read the 15 August editorial. And, the 18 August editorial, in quoting the Reverend Jesse Jackson says, 'Saudi Arabia asked for our help. It seems to me we are obliged to respond.' What is left unstated in the VOA editorials is that at the very time the 'official' Saudi invitation for US military intervention was being issued (7 August), US forces were already, according to Jordan's King Hussein, 'halfway to their destination', this being 'before the request came for them to come' (in Bennis & Moushabeck 1991, p. 57). In fact, since 1985, the United States has had an agreement with the Saudi royal family for a standing, open invitation for US military access as necessary to counter Soviet aggression or in a regional crisis that it cannot manage on its own. Behind-the-scenes manipulations to internationalize the conflict beyond the region are not mentioned in the official story. However, in reality, Middle East reactions did differ dramatically from the aggressive US response. Arab leaders at first withheld official declarations in an effort to discourage foreign intervention and to give time for an Arab diplomatic solution to the crisis, while the US was calling an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council in order to unanimously condemn the invasion and to demand immediate withdrawal. Without going into the detailed chronology of the diplomatic passages, it is believed by many of the authors cited in this chapter that the United States intended to undercut regional efforts to negotiate an end to the crisis.

### Less noble goal 1 – could oil be the reason?

VOA editorials virtually ignored oil as a reason for the US involvement in the war. Only two editorials of 51 even mention oil or resources, and even then, these are downplayed. The 11 August 1990 editorial reads, 'Since 1949', Secretary of State James Baker noted, 'every American president has said that the Persian Gulf was a vital United States and Western interest and that we could not allow any hostile power to gain a stranglehold over its energy resources. Now, Saddam Hussein poses just such a threat. At the same time', said Mr.

Baker, 'the issue we face goes beyond the fate of a single state or for that matter the price and supply of oil. If might is to make right, then the world will be plunged into a new dark age.' Compared to a new dark ages, what is mere oil? Similarly, the editorial of 16 August 1990 states, 'The United States action in the Gulf is about fighting aggression and preserving the sovereignty of nations. It is about America's national security and interests and insuring the peace and stability of the world. The United States has made its stand not simply to protect resources or real estate, but to protect the freedom of nations.'

Totally omitted in the official story as presented in the VOA editorials is the centrality of the long, hard push by the USA to obtain a permanent presence in the region and to gain control over the oil resources. As a motive for involvement and as an objective for that engagement, this US interest was never articulated nor offered as an explanation in the VOA editorials reviewed in this study.

### Less noble goals 2 – not another Vietnam

It has been argued by some that the US military was intent on re-establishing supremacy (Chomsky & Herman 1988, Kellner 1992). Especially after the collapse of the Soviet empire, the need to assert the United States as the number one superpower required a demonstration of the use of US military power in a quick, decisive victory...not another Vietnam. The 1 January 1991 editorial speaks to this in quoting George Bush, 'This is not going to be another Vietnam.' Says the editorial, 'Mr. Bush was referring to the US policy put in motion three decades ago in Southern East Asia. In the 1960s, the US decided to deploy military forces to South Vietnam in small increments. [...] Theory had it that North Vietnam would despair once it realized the seriousness of US intentions. This theory proved disastrously wrong. After a costly and inconclusive fighting, the US withdrew without achieving its objectives.' Note that this editorial does not say the USA *lost* the war: rather, the fighting was 'inconclusive' and the USA 'withdrew'. In an essential summation, the editorial concludes by quoting the President, 'Our military effort in the Gulf represents the Pentagon's greatest success story since the end of the war in Vietnam.'

Indeed, the United States did emerge from the Gulf War as the world's military superpower. This was acknowledged, although in different words, in the 26 January 1993 editorial, 'When American vital interests are challenged or the will and conscience of the international community is defied, we will act with peaceful diplomacy wherever possible, and with force when necessary.'

In conclusion, the VOA editorials present the picture of a militarily strong, territorially expansionist, human rights-abusing pariah, Iraq, engaged in unprovoked aggression against its peace-loving neighbour, Kuwait, and on the brink of further aggression against other neighbours, such as Saudi Arabia, who were unable to contain the conflict. That 'The US seeks to assist its Arab friends in their hour of need', provided the seemingly legitimate and long-awaited opening for the United States to place troops on the sands of the Gulf.

## The Regional and Global Context : The New World Order

The large industrial powers saw in the Gulf crisis a golden opportunity to reorganize the area according to designs in harmony with their ambitions and interests, and at the expense of the aspirations and interests of the Arab people, and to put in place a new international order.  
*King Hussein of Jordan, September 1990*

What is at stake is more than one small country. It is a big idea. A new world order where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind, peace and security, freedom and the rule of law.  
*VOA Editorial, 8 January 1991*

The official story as told through the VOA editorials has some interesting things to say, or *not* say, about regional history and global changes. An analysis of the 51 VOA editorials demonstrates the following elements:

- No mention whatsoever is made of a prior, and indeed even friendly, relationship between the United States and Iraq in the editorials reviewed for this study;
- The Iraqi invasion is presented as totally unprovoked and Kuwait bears no responsibility for the conflict;
- While there is little specific mention of a post–Cold War condition, there are abundant allusions to a new world order.

### The telling of history – no context to speak of!

To judge solely from VOA editorials in this study, the United States had had no prior relationship with Iraq or its leader, Saddam Hussein, let alone a friendly one. Not one of the 51 editorials even mentions the relationship that dates back to the 1960s and is dotted with both covert and overt activities. Not surprisingly, the official story fails to note the CIA-supported coup in 1963 and the continued covert operations against Iraq's Ba'athist Party after it nationalized US/UK-owned oil fields in Iraq. That the United States supported and supplied Iraq during the latter's eight-year war with Iran is also never mentioned. It is as though the United States had not been an active and interested player in this vital region.

Given the editorials' obsession with Iraq's unacceptable behaviour during the years prior to the invasion of Kuwait, it is hardly surprising that the official story chooses to eliminate the past relationship with the USA. The 8 August editorial reminds listeners of 'the Iraqi government's history of aggression against its own citizens as well as its neighbors.' The editorial of 16 August 1990 says, 'It is Saddam who has used poison gas against the men, women, and children of his own country, who invaded Iran in a war that cost the lives of more than

a million Muslims, and who now plunders Kuwait.' On 1 February 1991, the VOA editorial provides a history to the region, and recounts how Saddam signed a treaty with the Shah of Iran in 1971, then tore it up five years later and attacked. Says the editorial, 'Iraqis were shamed by Saddam's indiscriminate slaughter of several thousand Kurds with poison gas. They were humiliated by Saddam's maniacal posturing while Allied forces gathered to reverse Saddam's rape of Kuwait.' This is clearly not a friend with whom one wants to be associated.

This failure to provide a full accounting of the US–Iraq relationship illustrates perfectly the official story's 'failure of contextualization' (Kellner 1992, p. 92). The history of the conflict is told as a simple story of Iraq's invasion of peaceful Kuwait, 'without provocation or warning', as the 3 August editorial states. The words 'unprovoked invasion' appear many times in the editorials. 'The Iraqi occupation of Kuwait violated virtually every standard of civilized society', notes the editorial of 12 October 1990. The 18 January editorial speaks of the conflict as starting 'when the dictator of Iraq invaded a small and helpless neighbor.'

It should be noted that in the VOA editorials, Iraq had *no* legitimate grievances against its neighbours. In fact, however, there was a long history of problems between the countries: territorial claims dating back to the 1922 British delineation of borders; Kuwait's refusal to lease two strategic islands to Iraq which it had been asking for since the early 1970s; Iraq's long-standing anger over Kuwait's pumping of huge oil from the Rumaila oil fields (90% of the field is in Iraqi territory); Kuwait's refusal to forgive Iraq's debt incurred during the Iran–Iraq War; and finally, Iraq's accusation that Kuwait was waging economic war against it by flooding the oil market in violation of OPEC production quotas. Identifying Iraq's grievances does not justify Iraq's aggression – but it does provide some context for conflict in the region. Whether or not Iraq had any legitimate grievances against Kuwait is, however, a complete non-issue in the VOA editorials. The only issue is the dictator Hussein, his miscalculations and his brutal folly.

The official story is a highly simplistic one. As summarized by Kellner, 'Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, he wouldn't leave, and war was necessary.' Kellner continues:

This narrative leaves out the crucial fact that the United States and other Western coalition powers built up the military machine of the Iraqis; that Kuwait and Iraq had an extremely complex and conflictual relation, and that US policy had long asserted its interests in controlling the flow of Gulf oil and in maintaining a military presence in the region. It failed to clarify why Saddam Hussein refused to leave Kuwait and why it was in the interests of George Bush and the US military to have war. (Kellner 1992, pp. 92–93)

While Kellner is speaking of the US media narrative in general, his description perfectly captures the story as told by the VOA editorials.

### The Gulf War, the New World Order, and the United Nations

That the Gulf War was being fought for a New World Order was a theme repeated many times in the editorials. It seems the world is a different place, with new rules of conduct and cooperation. The 3 August 1990 editorial quotes President Bush asserting that, 'There is no place for this sort of naked aggression in today's world.' The 16 August editorial states that 'The United States has worked for decades to develop an international order, a common code, and rule of law that promote cooperation in place of conflict. Without this order, peace and freedom are impossible.' President Bush is quoted on 8 January 1991, 'The United States and its allies are ready to use force to defend a new order emerging among the nations of the world, a world of sovereign nations living in peace. At this critical moment in history, at a time when the Cold War is fading into the past, we cannot fail. At stake is not simply some distant country called Kuwait. At stake is the kind of world we want to inhabit.' The 18 January editorial quotes a US soldier, 'There are things worth fighting for. A world in which brutality and lawlessness are allowed to go unchecked isn't the kind of world we're going to want to live in.' This 'new world order' is never defined. Rather, the order is described as 'emerging', one in which the 'sovereignty of nations is respected' and 'real peace' exists.

That Iraq's behaviour is an assault on this new order is an assertion found in several of the editorials. On 10 August 1990, the editorial says, 'The vicious aggression against Kuwait is not an American problem, or a European problem, or a Middle East problem. It is the world's problem.' On 11 August, the theme continues, 'All of us share the interest born of bitter experience in demonstrating that aggression does not pay.' On 15 August, 'The whole world knows what Iraq has done. The whole world has condemned it and the whole world is insisting that it end.' On 22 August, 'It was a ruthless assault on the very essence of international order and civilized ideals. And now, in a further offense against all norms of international behavior, Iraq has imposed restrictions on innocent civilians from many countries.' On 8–9 January 1991, the VOA editorial announces, 'The United States and its allies are ready to use force to defend a new order emerging among the nations of the world, a world of sovereign nations living in peace...At this critical moment in history, at a time when the Cold

War is fading into the past, we cannot fail. At stake is not simply some distant country called Kuwait. At stake is the kind of world we want to inhabit.' On 9 January, 'The unprovoked invasion of Kuwait was an assault on the very notion of international order...Saddam has held the world and the norms of civilized conduct in contempt.'

It is this 'new order' that the United States is protecting. For example, 'US action in the Gulf', says the editorial of 16 August, 'is about fighting aggression and preserving the sovereignty of nations. The United States has made its stand, to protect the freedom of nations.' On 23 February 1991, the VOA editorial proclaims that 'Where there is a genuine world at peace, let us find ways to encourage it. Where there is hatred and malice, let us not fear to confront it. And where democracy stands embattled and besieged, let us never hesitate to support it.'

The Cold War, from the ashes of which the new world is apparently rising, is referred to a much lesser degree. The 8–9 August editorial notes that ‘The struggle for freedom in Europe succeeded because the United States and its allies remained stalwart. Keeping the peace in the Middle East will require no less.’ Many might well question the validity of this causality. On 31 January 1991, the editorial quotes President Bush: ‘The end of the Cold War has been a victory for all humanity. America has never found glory in war but we know that the cause is just. Let future generations understand the burden and the blessings of freedom. Let them say we stood where duty required us to stand. Let them know that together we affirmed America and the world as a community of conscience.’

Virtually all of the 51 editorials identify one or another of the United Nations resolutions condemning Iraq’s actions and authorizing sanctions and other actions, including military force. In the official story, the actions of the United States are always sanctioned by the UN. Indeed, according to the official VOA story, the United Nations appeared to be mobilizing the world to confront and punish this international outlaw. It was the United Nations, not the United States, that was at the centre of the whirlwind. On 10 August 1990, ‘The United Nations Security Council without dissent denounced the invasion and approved the most sweeping embargo in its history.’ On 22 August, ‘The President pointed out that the UN Security Council has once again voted unanimously to condemn Iraq’s lawlessness.’ On 13 February 1991, ‘The people of the world, acting through the United Nations, have determined that Saddam Hussein’s crime must be reversed.’ When the war was over, the VOA editorial of 28 February celebrates, ‘This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, for the will of the law, and for what is right.’ And, two years later, in the VOA editorial of 26 January 1993, President Clinton ‘has made it clear in both words and deeds that he will continue to insist that Iraq comply with the UN Security Council resolutions.’

In the US government’s official story, the UN resolutions against Iraq demonstrated unequivocally the positive potential of the organization as a force for global peace. The 29 October 1990 editorial entitled ‘United Nations Returns to Founding Principles’ quotes US Assistant Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, John Bolton: ‘I believe that what we are seeing today in the UN is a return to the principles contained in the UN’s Charter and to the intentions of its founders who believe that a world body should not just rely upon lofty international legal formulations, but should have the capacity to act to enforce the Charter’s cardinal rule, use of force in the settlement of international disputes is illegitimate and represents a threat to the vital interests of all UN member states.’ It concludes, ‘The United States is greatly heartened by the UN’s new effectiveness. If the UN remains faithful to the principles in its Charter, it can be a significant force for peace and stability.’

Yet, an alternative interpretation of events argues that the United States manipulated the UN, turning an organization dedicated to peace into a body that legitimated a brutal war (see Chapter 3).

## Enemy Images – Hitler Revisited

In the beginning we create the enemy. Before the weapon comes the image. We think others to death then invent the battle-ax with which to actually kill them. Propaganda precedes technology.  
*Sam Keen, quoted in Kellner 1992, p. 62*

America is moving to eliminate a monster who is documentatively murderous, possibly mad.  
*VOA Editorial, 11 February 1991*

The frames utilized to present possible US military intervention or war involved producing an image of the enemy (Kellner 1992, p. 62). From the outset of the crisis in the Gulf, the VOA editorials employed the frame of a classic battle between good and evil. (The 22 August 1990 is, in fact, entitled, ‘America Will Stand Up to Evil’.) The 30 October editorial, ‘Gulf Challenge – Good Versus Evil’, states the issue very clearly. ‘Just as in World War II, said President Bush, the challenge in the Gulf is one between good and evil, right and wrong.’ The dichotomy is extended even to how war itself is waged. In the 24 January 1991 editorial, ‘How Democracies Wage War’, the listener is informed that ‘A democracy is distinguished not only by the way it behaves in peacetime, but also by the way it wages war. The principle of democracy is the sanctity of the individual.’ Despite the inescapable visual images of civilian victims of Allied-bombed hospitals and centres, the indiscriminate bombing of retreating Iraqi troops and other incidents, the official story tries to convince the world’s publics that the United States and Allied Forces are humane and care more for human life than do Iraqis.

Saddam’s history of brutality against his own people is a theme in many editorials, and indeed, it certainly deserves attention and condemnation. At least 15 of the editorials make specific allusions to this brutality. ‘The brutal aggression against a neighboring country has focused attention on conditions inside Iraq itself’, opens the editorial of 1 October 1990. The 30 October editorial, quoting President Bush, states, ‘Iraq has waged a war of aggression, plundered a peaceful neighbor, held innocent hostages, and gassed its own people.’ The 3 February 1991 editorial points out that ‘The world is well aware of the torture, rape, and pillage that Iraqi occupational forces have inflicted on helpless Kuwaiti citizens, but fewer people may realize the extent to which Saddam Hussein subjects his own citizens to the same inhumane treatment.’ The 7 February 1990 editorial places this in a philosophic context when it notes, ‘In his classic dialog on tyranny, the ancient Greek philosopher, Xenophobe [sic], quotes a favorite tyrant’s complaint that, ‘If private men go on an expedition somewhere in enemy country, they believe they are safe at least after they have returned home. But the tyrants know that when they reach their own city, they are then in the midst of the largest number of their own enemies.’ No tyrant knows this better than Saddam Hussein. He has many enemies among



the people of Iraq, and the bitterest of these, the ones with the most cause to hate him, are the approximately three million Kurds living in Iraq.'

The VOA editorials were able components of a comprehensive campaign that constructed the perfect, absolute villain. Every editorial surveyed employs words such as 'aggressive', 'bellicose', 'maniacal', 'menacing', 'savage', and 'brutal' to describe Saddam Hussein. In the 25 January 1991 editorial he is 'immoral'; the 1 February editorial questions Saddam's intelligence to comprehend the resolve of the Allied Forces. The 11 February editorial recognizes that the United States is moving to 'eliminate a monster.' For purposes of this war, Saddam becomes the personification of evil incarnate.

One of the most powerful rhetorical techniques was the Saddam-as-Hitler metaphor, a dominant image utilized throughout the crisis and the war. Although the practice of comparing Saddam Hussein to Adolf Hitler and to World War II events actually preceded the invasion of Kuwait by several weeks in the US commercial media, the analogy exploded on the scene after the 2 August invasion. In total, 11 of the editorials reviewed for this study specifically identify Hitler and/or the Nuremberg Trials, while many more simply refer to the lessons learned from the 1930s. Beginning with the 8 August 1990 editorial, the historical allusion is made in quoting President Bush, 'As was the case in the 1930s, Saddam Hussein is an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors.' The following day, the VOA quotes from several newspaper editorials, with statements such as, 'What happened is a throwback to the aggression of Mussolini or Hitler in the 1930s', and 'It reminds one of Hitler.' The next VOA editorial quotes Secretary of State James Baker: 'We know the history of the 1930s and how appeasement whets the appetite of aggressors. I can think of a few examples in recent history of aggression. I can think of few in recent history more callous or more brutal than Saddam's invasion of Kuwait.' Several months later, on 1 October, the VOA editorial states, 'More than half a century ago, other totalitarian dictators threatened world peace in a similar manner. The dictators of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, and Imperial Japan began denying human rights to citizens of their own countries; then they initiated aggression against neighboring countries and, ultimately, plunged the world into war.'

In an editorial with rather interesting implications, the February 1991 text reads, 'There is an ominous pattern to wartime psychology of dictators who hide in bunkers beneath the streets. Fifty-five years ago, military decisions by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler were driving his generals to despair. They even tried to assassinate him to save Germany from destruction. As Nazi Germany's defeat was drawing near, Hitler was in his Berlin bunker still blaming others for his mistake. He finally committed suicide.' The 11 February editorial quotes a London-based Saudi newspaper, 'The same ending of Hitler and Mussolini is happening now to Saddam.'

References to the Nuremberg Trials were powerful subsets of the Saddam-as-Hitler metaphor. On 17 October 1990, the VOA editorial reminds the world that 'When Hitler's war ended, there were the Nuremberg trials.' On 23 October: 'Iraq's brutal occupation of Kuwait is increasingly being compared with the



criminal behavior of Adolf Hitler and his German Nazis. It is Hitler revisited, said George Bush last week. But remember, Bush added, when Hitler's war ended, there were the Nuremberg Trials. Just as the world was determined that the war crimes of the Nazis should not go unpunished, there is a growing consensus that justice must be served in regard to Iraqi violations of international law.'

The issue of war crimes is filled with an irony in its brutality. Ramsey Clark, former US Attorney General, accuses the US government of horrific war crimes, for which it should be brought to trial in a world court. While it is obvious why these allegations and the final judgement of Clark's War Crimes Tribunal have not been discussed on the VOA, it is noteworthy that the final judgement was ignored by the US private commercial media as well (Clark 1994).

The enemy image of Hussein as presented in the VOA editorials is full of clichés and hyperbole. According to some non-VOA accounts, Hussein is a pragmatist with whom one could deal and with whom one has dealt in the past. While torture and murder are factors in Iraqi life and must not be overlooked (as the United States did during the 1980s), Hussein's government has also produced one of the best welfare states in the Middle East. The wartime propaganda campaign to make the absolute villain is also hypocritical, as it was the United States and other Coalition countries that had built up Hussein's military might and sided with him in the Iran-Iraq war. But, for the Bush Administration, the principle objective of this campaign was to shape the debate and to build international support for a military response. Constructing the absolute villain was an absolute necessity.

## Possible Solutions – Was There Anything But War?

The ease with which the Bush Administration frustrated all efforts to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the dispute it had created reveals the tragic failure of international peace-keeping mechanisms, the UN, the US Constitution, the media, and finally, the people themselves, who watched war coming for nearly six months but did not act to prevent the slaughter.

*Ramsey Clark 1994, p. 37*

The President emphasized that he is willing to go the extra mile to seek a peaceful solution to the Gulf Crisis... The United States and its allies, said the President, are ready to use force to defend a new order emerging among the nations of the world.

*VOA editorial, 8 January 1991*

According to many critics of Operation Desert Storm, the United States was marching to the battle from the moment that Iraq invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990. 'Instead of sending negotiators to Baghdad and elsewhere to find a way

to settle the crisis', writes former US Attorney General and peace activist, Ramsey Clark, 'Washington pursued a war course from the moment it received word of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The military moved with remarkable speed' (1994, p. 35). However, the official story as told in the VOA editorials paints a different scenario: the United States was committed to a peaceful solution and exhausted every effort to avoid war; Iraq never made any serious overture toward negotiated settlement of the conflict; and the global sanctions were relatively ineffective and not worth waiting for.

### Sanctions and other diplomatic initiatives

Little of substance about sanctions is addressed in the VOA editorials. A majority of the editorials in this study briefly mention one or another of the UN sanctions, or note those imposed by individual nations, such as the USA, Japan, Norway, and Turkey, or groups of nations, like the European Community and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Far fewer editorials mention consequences, and only one – the editorial of 25 October 1990 – spends any time discussing the impact of the sanctions on Iraq:

This past week, the Iraqi regime began to ration gasoline and motor oil. The Iraqi regime said that rationing is necessary to insure adequate supplies of gasoline and motor oil for the country's military forces. Meanwhile, Iraqi citizens have been told to drive more slowly and efficiently ... With foreign supplies now unobtainable, the inventories will eventually be exhausted and Iraq will become increasingly vulnerable to massive economic dislocation.

What does this relative silence in the official story mean? That virtually no attention is devoted to sanctions and their impact leads this author to assume that these measures, although touted as critical steps to pressure Iraq for concessions and avoid war, did not hold such a prominent place in the actual prewar process. The impact on Iraq that did occur, and could have continued to occur, as a result of the sanctions was downplayed. Waiting for sanctions to take effect was dismissed outright, as being a non-viable strategy. War was the only solution. The 8 January 1991 editorial states that 'Even though economic sanctions are taking their toll, they have not forced Saddam out of Kuwait.' President Bush is quoted as saying:

Each day that passes brings Saddam Hussein further on the path to developing biological and nuclear weapons. If Saddam corners the world energy market, he can then finance further aggression, terror and blackmail. Each day that passes increases Saddam's worldwide threat to democracy ... Further delays would also raise the cost in human lives and add to the fear and suffering and terror endured by the people of Kuwait.

In the official story, there was no time for waiting.

Relatively little attention is devoted to diplomatic initiatives of any kind by anyone. Absolutely no discussion was found in any VOA editorial in this study

of the diplomatic initiatives of Jordan or other Arab countries, or of the Soviet Union. Only the briefest mention of such efforts appears in two editorials. On 11 January 1991: 'The record shows that whether the diplomacy is initiated by the United States, the United Nations, the Arab League, or the European Community, the results are the same. Unfortunately, Saddam Hussein continues to reject a diplomatic solution.' The 25 January editorial reads, 'In spite of more than five months of sustained diplomatic efforts by the Arab League, the European Community, the United States, and the United Nations, Saddam Hussein met every overture of peace with contempt.' No further information is provided as to what these efforts entailed, when they occurred, or the terms of the activities. Their use value in the text is primarily as a mechanism to demonstrate Hussein's resolve to march to war. Perhaps delving deeper into diplomatic ventures would have laid bare the ways in which the United States had torpedoed many early efforts to negotiate a settlement, particularly among the Arab nations.

There is not one indication, in any VOA editorial, that Saddam Hussein ever made any diplomatic movement or suggested through word or deed any possible ways to avoid war. 'Saddam has met every overture of peace with contempt', reads the editorial of 18 January. Saddam's war-hungry stance is repeated throughout the editorials. 'The choice of peace or war is really Saddam Hussein's to make', suggests the 11 January editorial. The 15 January editorial states 'Unfortunately, Iraq thus far has turned a deaf ear to the voices of peace and reason. Peace is everyone's goal. But it is for Iraq to decide.' On 25 January, the VOA declares that 'Saddam brought the war upon himself.' The 7 February editorial asserts that 'Saddam Hussein has rejected out of hand every overture made by the United States and by other countries as well. He has made this just war inevitable.' Yet all these examples stand in stark contrast to information that Iraq did try on many occasions to negotiate. Moreover, according to one US Congressional summary prepared in January 1991, 'A diplomatic solution satisfactory to the interests of the United States may well have been possible since the earliest days of the invasion' (quoted in Clark 1994, p. 33).

One editorial does make specific reference to the issue of 'linkage', a term that originally emerged within the politics of the Cold War, and has referred to a power in one region which, anxious to resolve a particular conflict, is prepared to compromise in favour of its competitor in another region in which its own interests are not viewed as critical. On 12 August Iraq proposed talks linking Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait with comprehensive discussions of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. The actual proposal included replacing US forces in the Gulf with Arab forces under UN direction. The relevant VOA editorial, entitled 'Iraq and Israel No Linkage', did not appear until 12 October. That editorial notes that 'some people have tried to suggest a parallel between Iraq's seizure and occupation of Kuwait and the 23-year Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.' It contrasts Iraq's brutal aggression against Kuwait to an Israel that 'occupied these territories not as a result of aggression, but as a result of a defensive war.' The editorial emphatically concludes, 'The United

States will reject any attempt to link this issue (Palestinian political rights) to the issue of Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. Saddam will not succeed in justifying his illegal aggression by trying to make such a false linkage.'

The 'linkage' editorial is a loyal adherent to the Bush Administration's official position, to dismiss Iraq's assertion as a purely opportunistic ploy and to ridicule Iraq's allegation that it had any commitment to the interests of the occupied Arab states. Many in the Arab world apparently felt differently, however, and identified a strong and evident linkage with the Palestine/Israel/Arab conflicts based on core issues of self-determination, occupation of territory of another states, and means of settlement of inter-state conflict. President Bush himself had stated in fall 1990 that the Arabs and Israel would find it easier to deal with their conflict after Iraq's eviction from Kuwait. The United States saw the linkage in that in the aftermath of the Gulf War, the US was left to exercise unchallenged and immediate political hegemony throughout the Arab world including its conflict spots (Abu-Lughod 1991, p.185). Linkage clearly exists, and existed. However, when Saddam Hussein tried to make it an issue and a strategy for settlement, it is was ridiculed and dismissed.

Other than this editorial, there is no VOA editorial text that refers, even obliquely, to other Iraqi or Arab initiatives. In mid-August 1990, Iraq made another modified proposal to Washington. This new plan did not mention linkage, and it proposed an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait and release of all Americans who were not permitted to leave Iraq. In return, Iraq wanted the lifting of UN sanctions, guaranteed access to the Gulf, and control of the Rumaila oil field. No reference to this initiative appears in any VOA editorial reviewed in this study.

Saddam Hussein's intentions or initiatives are not the focus of this study – as interesting, opportunistic, brutal and/or misconceived as they might be. Our focus here is on the dominant interpretation of the Gulf War story as presented by the United States through its global radio broadcasting arm. From the above review of VOA editorials we can see how that the official US story completely ignored or ridiculed Hussein's overtures for a negotiated resolution to the conflict and dismissed initiatives from countries other than the United States, especially from Arab countries.

Diplomatic initiatives of the United States are mentioned more frequently, although here too, sparingly and superficially. In fact, the US position was that any negotiation with Saddam Hussein was a 'reward for aggression.' Prior to the war, the focus in the editorials was on the many UN-sanctioned resolutions and activities with which the United States was engaged. On the eve of the war, several editorials appear that note at least one specific US diplomatic initiative. The 8 January 1991 editorial states that the United States is willing to go the extra mile to seek a peaceful solution, hence the President was sending Secretary of State James Baker to meet with Iraq's Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz. The 11 January 1991 editorial reads:

President Bush said that Secretary of States James Baker's meeting in Geneva with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz gave 'no evidence whatsoever that Iraq was willing to comply with the international community's demands to withdraw from Kuwait and comply with the UN resolutions'. The President noted that 'This is but one more example that the Iraqi government is not interested in direct communications designed to settle the Persian Gulf situation.' President Bush admitted that he was discouraged by the results of the meeting. The President added, 'Nothing he said today, nothing, leads me to believe that this man, Saddam Hussein, is going to be reasonable.'

Along similar lines, on 7 February 1991, the VOA editorial states, 'Secretary of State James Baker held more than 200 meetings with foreign dignitaries and made 10 diplomatic missions. "Sadly", said the President, "Saddam Hussein rejected out of hand every overture made by the United States and other countries as well. He made this just war inevitable."' And the editorial of 13 February reads, 'Leaders from all over the world tried to persuade Saddam Hussein to reverse his aggression. The United States efforts included a 6 hour meeting of the Secretary of State with the Iraqi Foreign Minister.' The official story of this meeting, as told in the VOA editorials, is partial. It fails to mention that these talks, when originally proposed on 30 November, had immediately been agreed to by Iraq. But then the USA began to back away from the proposal for dual high-level talks in Washington and Baghdad. Ultimately, the one meeting which was held in Switzerland was framed by Bush as 'no negotiations, no compromises, no attempts at face saving, and no reward for aggression.'

The above-mentioned VOA editorial excerpt constitutes the sole reference to diplomatic initiatives. The lack of substantive discussion of diplomatic initiatives is significant. A VOA listener would have to assume, on the basis of this lack, that honest intentions for negotiation and concrete initiatives toward settlement were not underway, or were not of much import, despite the rhetoric of Washington's desire for peace. The absence of references to initiatives by other nations also demonstrates their relative lack of import in the official story. If the United States had truly been committed to a peaceful solution, one would assume that its official narrative would have been filled with abundant information to engage the public in the enormous task of the struggle for peace. Instead, in the absence of initiatives for seeking peace, the public became engaged in the task of the struggle toward war.

### **A bad peace or a good war, that is the question**

In the official story, war was unavoidable despite the best efforts of the United States to avoid it. 'Nobody has worked more for peace than the West under the leadership of the United States', says the VOA editorial of 11 February, in quoting a Brazilian newspaper. While the rhetoric of peace permeates the editorials, the possibility of war makes frequent appearances. Starting at the beginning, 'All measures are possible if Iraq continues its aggression' (VOA, 7 August 1990). On the day Bush deployed the first 40,000 troops, without consulting Congress

it might be added, the VOA editorial (8–9 August) reads, ‘No one, friend or foe, should doubt America’s desire for peace and no one should underestimate American determination to confront aggression.’ On 5 October, the VOA editorial quotes President Bush: ‘The United States remains committed to achieving by whatever means necessary the complete, unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait.’

If the war was unavoidable, it was also one for which the United States was ready. On 1 January 1991, the VOA editorial states that the war will be as brief as possible. ‘This is not going to be another Vietnam.’ Quoting the Commander of the US Marines in Saudi Arabia: ‘In general, the war will probably be fast moving.[...] It will be fairly brutal.’ On 1 February, the VOA quotes the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell: ‘Our strategy to go after this army is very, very simple. First, we are going to cut it off, then we are going to kill it.’ The following day, the VOA quotes the Allied Forces Commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf: ‘The best is yet to come.’ The rhetoric about how democracies wage war contrasts sharply with this celebration of brutality. Indeed, Iraq was essentially defenceless against US technological warfare and offered no real resistance. To celebrate our military effort in the Gulf as ‘the Pentagon’s greatest success story since the end of the war in Vietnam’ (VOA editorial, 1 January 1991) is a frightening statement of American character and conduct in the post–Cold War era.

## Media Management: Not An Issue

The Department of Defense has done an excellent job of managing the news in an almost classic way. If you were going to hire a public relations firm to do the media relations for an international event, it couldn’t have been done any better than this.

*Michael Deaver, in Bennett & Paletz 1994, p. 18*

Snippets of information that escape Iraqi censors are beginning to form a grotesque picture of Saddam Hussein’s world.

*VOA Editorial, 14 February 1991*

There are two major elements of the official story’s construct of issue regarding media management. The VOA editorials conclude that the Iraqi government employed overt censorship and wartime propaganda, whereas the United States government did not. Of the 51 editorials, only six mention media control at all. Of these six, four refer to Iraqi censorship and propaganda efforts. On 7 August 1990, the editorial reads, ‘When Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait last week, Iraq tried to hide the fact that it had brutally seized control of its neighbor. Radio Baghdad falsely claimed that the government of Kuwait had been overthrown by an internal coup whose organizers had requested Iraq’s assistance. Radio Baghdad followed this lie with a second.’ The 14 February 1991 editorial refers

to ‘snippets of information that escape Iraqi censors.’ The following day’s editorial reports that ‘Iraqi official brought journalists to take pictures of some 40 bodies placed on display near the bunker. Falsely claiming that the bunker was a civilian bomb shelter, the Iraqis claim that hundreds of civilians have been killed inside. Iraq claims that this was a civilian shelter and that the US is targeting civilians are lies being spread for propagandistic purposes.’ Finally, the editorial of 21 February makes reference to the ‘orchestrated events of 13 February when Saddam’s thought-control minions took international journalists to the site of a bombed-out military command-and-control bunker’, and charges that while ‘Saddam’s lie about the bunker was being exposed, a new lie was in preparation. This time, Saddam’s lie was that Allied bombing had destroyed the Basra Mosque.’ While there is much dispute about these events, it is not the purpose of this study to investigate the truths of battles and war crimes.

What the previous paragraph demonstrates is that, when mentioned, the official story focuses only on Iraqi censorship efforts. When it comes to US efforts, democracies apparently do not wage propaganda. Of the two remaining editorials, the text of 11 February simply refers to the fact that ‘The Western press and public have been strongly supportive of driving Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.’ A celebratory assertion whose cause the listener might well attribute to a case of full access to information and of free choice.

The other relevant editorial is the most interesting, for it makes reference to the fact that the United States ‘will not exploit on television or radio for propaganda purposes’ the defecting Iraqi soldiers (VOA Editorial, 7 August 1990). This brief reference to US media practices is particularly ironic not only because of the well-documented research showing the degree of US wartime propaganda used to control public opinion and support the military effort, but also because several of the VOA editorials themselves refer to these very Iraqi soldiers. The editorial of 2 February 1991 discusses the terrible state of affairs for Iraqi soldiers. The editorial of 18 February, entitled ‘The Trickle Grows’, focuses entirely on deserting and retreating Iraqi troops:

A number of reasons have been offered for the crumbling morale. Beyond lack of food and water, and the unbearable toll of continuous bombardment, there is another reason. Even the bravest soldier lives with the fear that his death may be meaningless. This his ultimate sacrifice may be futile, because his commander is fighting the wrong battle at the wrong time for the wrong reason. As one group of Iraqi defectors said, ‘We don’t believe in this war.’

And the editorial of 26 February states that ‘Iraqi prisoners of war surrendered because they had no interest in fighting Saddam’s war.’ Is not the United States government, through its Voice of America radio, guilty of using the defecting soldiers for propaganda purposes? Again, there is no mention of US government censorship or wartime propaganda in VOA editorials.

It is not surprising that VOA editorials, as the official radio voice of the US government, are slanted to frame issues in a manner consistent with stated policies and practices. What is surprising, however, is the lack of subtlety in the framing of events. This chapter has looked into the manner in which the VOA

editorials provided a dominate narrative of partial truths and outstanding omissions. In the case of the Gulf crisis, the VOA editorials provide a baseline – the official line in three-minute sound bites – from which other media coverage can be measured for variance from or proximity to the US government’s own propaganda effort.

**Note**

1. Zawawi interview, Washington DC, 29 March 1993.

**Interviews**

Zawawi, Mahmoud. Chief, Arabic Branch, VOA. Interview with author in Washington DC, 29 March 1993.

**Appendix I.** Number of VOA Editorials about the Gulf Region

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
<b>1990</b>						
<b>1991</b>	12	25	7	5	4	3
<b>1992</b>	3	2	4	4	3	2

	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>1990</b>		13	10	9	5	11
<b>1991</b>	5	7	3	5	4	1
<b>1992</b>	2	4	3	4	4	3

**Appendix II.** VOA Editorials about the Gulf Crisis

1. 3 August 1990 (004196) *President Bush Condemns Iraq Attack on Kuwait*
2. 7 August 1990 (004201) *Iraqi Aggression Will Not Stand*
3. 8–9 August 1990 (004204) *Bush Sending Troops*
4. 10 August 1990 (004205) *World United Against Iraq*
5. 11 August 1990 (004206) *Baker and NATO on Iraqi Aggression*
6. 15 August 1990 (004211) *Iraq – A World Outraged*
7. 16 August 1990 (004212) *Bush on Iraq*
8. 18 August 1990 (004214) *Bipartisan Support for President Bush on Iraq*
9. 22 August 1990 (004218) *America Will Stand Up to Evil*
10. 1 October 1990 (004265) *Action Overdue on Iraqi Human Rights*
11. 5 October 1990 (004269) *Iraqi Atrocities*



12. 12 October 1990 (004278) *Iraq and Israel – No Linkage*
13. 17 October 1990 (004283) *More Iraqi Atrocities*
14. 23 October 1990 (004290) *Nuremberg and Iraq*
15. 25 October 1990 (004293) *Iraq Feels Effects of UN Sanctions*
16. 29 October 1990 (004298) *UN Returns to Founding Principles*
17. 30 October 1990 (004299) *Gulf Challenge – Good Versus Evil*
18. 1 January 1991 (004376) *Iraq – Not Another Vietnam*
19. 8 January 1991 (004383) *Bush on Iraq*
20. 9 January 1991 (004384) *United Against Iraq*
21. 11 January 1991 (004388) *Bush on Geneva*
22. 15 January 1991 (004393) *Congress Backs President on Iraq*
23. 18 January 1991 (004391) *Kuwait Liberation Begins*
24. 24 January 1991 (004406) *How Democracies Wage War*
25. 25 January 1991 (004408) *Principles of Liberty and Peace*
26. 26 January 1991 (004409) *Coalition Against Iraq is Strong*
27. 29 January 1991 (004414) *Bush – A Just War*
28. 30 January 1991 (004415) *First, A Trickle*
29. 31 January 1991 (004416) *Bush, The Hard Work of Freedom*
30. 1 February 1991 (004417) *Saddam the Loser*
31. 2 February 1991 (004418) *Some Have It Better*
32. 3 February 1991 (004419) *Iraq, A State Ruled by Terror*
33. 6 February 1991 (004423) *Iraqi Sponsorship of Terrorism*
34. 7 February 1991 (004424) *Saddam's Kurdish Victims*
35. 9 February 1991 (004427) *Saddam's Snafu*
36. 10 February 1991 (004429) *Marking Kuwaiti Independence*
37. 11 February 1991 (004430) *Strong World Rights Support for a Gulf War*
38. 13 February 1991 (004432) *War is not Against Iraqi People*
39. 14 February 1991 (004434) *Saddam– Only People are Expendable*
40. 15 February 1991 (004435) *Saddam's Bunker Ploy*
41. 18 February 1991 (004438) *The Trickle Grows*
42. 20 February 1991 (004440) *Iraqi Atrocities Against Civilians*
43. 21 February 1991 (004441) *Saddam Dance of the Macabre*
44. 23 February 1991 (004445) *Quayle, Human Rights Not Afterthought*
45. 24 February 1991 (004446) *Czechoslovaks and Afghans Aid Kuwait*
46. 26 February 1991 (004448) *Saddam's War, The Final Phase*
47. 26 February 1991 (004449) *Bush Responds to Saddam*
48. 28 February 1991 (004450) *Kuwait City, Joy Amidst the Ruins*
49. 28 February 1991 (004451) *A Victory for What Is Right*
50. 14 January 1993 (Title unavailable)
51. 26 January 1993 (005278) *Clinton and US Stay With the Iraq Policy*



## *Baghdad Observer* During the Gulf Crisis

Hanne M. Mathisen

### Introduction

One of the challenges during the Gulf War was to understand the Iraqi diplomacy and the Arabic rhetoric transmitted through the Iraqi media. In the following, I analyse the daily newspaper the *Baghdad Observer*,<sup>1</sup> attempting to trace the Iraqi authorities' framework for interpreting the conflict, and looking at the presentation of the situation as given in this major Iraqi newspaper. The focus will thus be on showing how Saddam Hussein presented to the readers his interpretation of the conflict, and of the actions and decisions of Iraq and of its adversaries.

The analysis of the *Baghdad Observer* will be related to the ideological framework within which it operates. The Ba'ath party and policies have come to permeate the whole of Iraqi society. The media are all Ba'athi in content. To analyse the Iraqi press, therefore, we will need to understand more of the ideological context within which it operates.

### The Media in Ba'athist Iraq

In 1908–1909 there were 18 different newspapers in Arabic, Turkish and Persian in Iraq. By 1917 there were 69 local Iraqi newspapers, only 3 of which were government controlled. In the half century proceeding the 1958 revolution there were 350 different dailies and magazines. Between 1958 and 1963, a total of 33 new dailies appeared, including some for the first time in the Kurdish language.

After the military coup in 1963, all political groups and parties were banned along with their press organs, except those of the Ba'ath Party. When the Ba'athists regained power again in 1968, their goal was to bring the media under their control and make it an instrument for propagating Ba'ath ideology.

In the 1980s the two ideologically identical Ba'athi dailies – *al-Thawra* and *al-Jumburiyya* – were dominant. In 1986 there were 6 daily newspapers and 22 non-daily newspapers in Iraq ('Information, Freedom and Censorship', p. 364.).

More recent figures are not available; after the Gulf War, paper shortage as a result of the UN sanctions has forced newspapers to appear less frequently.

Why did the Ba'athi regime uproot and strangle the variegated Iraqi press? Al-Khalil (1989) gives the following description of the kind of fear imposed by the Ba'athi regime over the years and its consequences:

...the telling of stories by word of mouth or through print, journalism and the media, is the only way political actions as such acquire meaning... the telling of stories about public affairs seizes up totally for no other reason than that people are afraid... by the late 1970s in Ba'athist Iraq, political dialogue and gossip about public affairs... had vanished... A polity whose self-definition is that 'everything is political' today comprises one of the most apolitical populations around... The result is a very vulnerable populace, unable to 'think' or accumulate experience in dealing with itself, and consequently more prey than ever to believing the most fantastic lies. (Al-Khalil, pp. 60–61)

Ba'ath party membership has been made a condition for entering the journalism school. As a consequence, Iraq's newspapers, periodicals, radio, television and news agencies are now all government enterprises staffed solely by government employees and subject to rigid political and ideological control.

The Ministry of Culture and Information has, through its various departments, a monopoly on such central functions as the right to print, publish, advertise and distribute. For instance the al-Jamaheer Press House has been granted a monopoly on printing all authorized newspapers. The Department of Home Information is responsible for censorship through its Information and Media Censorship Branch.

There is nothing in the Iraqi Constitution specifically affirming the freedom of the press. Even though Article 26 of the Iraqi Provisional Constitution of 1968 guarantees 'freedom of opinion, publication, meeting, demonstration...', the Ministry of Culture and Information Act of 1981 states that 'the Ministry shall undertake to supervise all media and cultural activities according to the principles of the Ba'ath Party and the aims of the revolution'.

In 1977 Saddam Hussein wrote:

Information is one of our revolutionary democratic means of enlightening the people and acting as a surveillant. To function properly, information media needs great care, not only on the part of those directly responsible for it, but also on the part of all of us. We are required to attend to it but not to spoil it, to guide it and to cooperate with it, to criticize it in case it errs and to provide it with all possible means of power and development. (Hussein, 1977, p. 8)

Considerably less equivocal and all-inclusive than these words of Saddam Hussein is Article 16 of the Iraqi Press Code, which specifies the topics that may never be written about: 'Whatever injures the President... the revolutionary Command Council... the relation with the friendly Arab states... the revolution and its ideology...' Article 17 of the Press Code then lists what may be written about if permission is granted: 'Any statement or word attributed to the President...

Discussions or decisions of the Council of Ministers or other official decisions...’ The Penal Code, decree no. 840 of 1986, provides for life imprisonment, confiscation of property or the death penalty for insults (‘Freedom of Information and Expression in Iraq’, pp. 19–23).

The Ministry may also withdraw the licence of newspapers. Among the newspapers and periodicals that have been closed down are *al-Risalla ai-Isamiyya*, *Tariq al-Shab*, *al-Ta’akbi*, *al-Fikr* and *al-Jadid*. Since there is no opposition press in Iraq, writers and media workers are forced to live in exile unless they do declare their loyalty to the Party and to Saddam (Abd al-Jubar, 1991, p. 40).

Clearly, then, the Ministry exercises strict and comprehensive censorship of all publications. As one Iraqi writer is quoted as saying: ‘It is pointless to talk about censorship of the press, because the press was created by the state. Nothing that offends the system will appear, so censorship is unnecessary’ (Article 19, World Report: Information, Freedom and Censorship in 1988, cited in *Index of Censorship*, 4, 1988, p. 2931).

## Mobilizing through the Press

In 1979 William A. Rugh distinguished three sub-groups within the Arab press: ‘the loyalist press’, ‘the diverse press’ and ‘the mobilization press’. The Iraqi press definitely belong to the final category. The need to mobilize becomes particularly acute in times of crisis. In order to organize a chaotic and frightening reality, rhetoric is used to create order. The world is categorized into the good and the bad, the faithful and the unfaithful, the true and the false, the rich and the poor, the greedy and the sharing, etc. This way the population is mobilized and the regime given legitimacy.

In Iraq there are three grand traditions that may be used for legitimation purposes: the Iraqi tradition and history (such as the Babylon and Mesopotamia period), the pan-Arab tradition and the Islamic tradition (using symbols such as Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina, *jihad*, etc.).

## The *Baghdad Observer* During the Gulf War – First Impressions

The content of the *Baghdad Observer* during the Gulf Crisis can be summarized as follows: Iraq came to the rescue of the people of Kuwait; enemy number one is the anti-Arab and imperialist USA; Iraq has wide support both in the Arab world and in the West.

Among daily characteristics are a front-page photo of Saddam Hussein, articles that are mostly unsigned, many short pieces on support for and visits to Iraq from Arab leaders, organizations and peoples; several articles accredited to AP or Reuters – many reporting about anti-war demonstrations in the West.

The *Baghdad Observer* at the time of the Gulf conflict had 8 pages: 1. Front page, 2. Home news, 3. Foreign news, 4. Foreign features, 5. Arts, 6. Sport/Science/Features, 7. Sport, 8. Foreign news and self-advertisement and information lists.

## Methodology

After a preliminary review of articles in the *Baghdad Observer* from the Kuwait invasion in August 1990 to 15 January 1991, when the newspaper stopped appearing, and bearing in mind the ideological framework mentioned above, certain themes have been singled out for closer examination:

- the Iraqi version of the conflict
- enemy imagery
- personification
- religious and ideological rhetoric
- war-related sufferings.

The analysis will be descriptive rather than stringent. The objective is to map which messages were presented to the Iraqi readership. Therefore, the focus will be not so much on counting the number of appearances of each theme, but rather on *how* the various themes were covered. The presentation of the various themes is thought of as a part of the rhetorical strategy practised by the Iraqi authorities. The repressive character of the Iraqi regime makes it natural to study the *Baghdad Observer* as a messenger, not as a forum for the exchange of opinions.

Attention is thus directed to the communicative rather than the normative aspects of propaganda. Propaganda is seen as a strategy aimed at convincing the people of the leadership's ideas, views and interests. Various rhetorical forms may be used for these purposes, such as symbols and metaphors. The *Baghdad Observer's* choice and use of concepts is seen as an indication of how the Iraqi leadership perceives the situation.

Here let me emphasize that the sample does *not* include the period of actual allied attacks, as the newspaper was stopped just prior to that. Inevitably, this has an impact on the range of topics covered, and probably also on the rhetorical structure of the articles.

In selecting articles or editorials for closer study, what criteria were applied? Articles/editorials had to:

- exemplify the findings of the traditional content analysis (TCA) and the latent class analysis (LCA) (57 articles coded)<sup>2</sup>

- exemplify the general description – ideological framework – of the Iraqi media (e.g. focus on the use of religious rhetoric from a Ba'athi perspective)
- be 'typical'/major articles.

A combination of the three was chosen. This yielded 20 major articles and editorials that discuss topics related to the Ba'ath Party and the role of Saddam Hussein, as well as traits revealed by the LCA/TCA.

Consideration was given as to whether to group the crisis into phases, in order to study change in type/level of rhetoric in the articles. The low number of articles, the limited time-span covered and the descriptive quality of the analysis would seem to make a time-series approach inappropriate. On the other hand, any chronological development in the presentation of the themes will of course be noted.

### Qualitative Characteristics of the *Baghdad Observer*

The overall aim of the qualitative analysis is twofold: to understand what the Iraqi regime reveals about itself in its official media, and to see how the regime seeks to organize the experience of those who are to be persuaded of the regime's policies.

In other words: The first aim is to grasp the ideological and cultural interpretative framework underlying the Ba'athi regime's presentation of the conflict. This framework contains such categories as relations with other states, definition of the international system, understanding the conflict, and relationship with the Iraqi populace. The way in which one of the regime's organs, the *Baghdad Observer*, presents the conflict is likely to reveal the content of the framework in some detail. An additional goal is to reflect on the mobilizing propensities of the official presentation of the conflict. For these purposes the five themes identified above will be further developed.

### The Iraqi Explanation/Legitimization of the Invasion

How does the *Baghdad Observer* explain the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait? Why did Iraq act in the way it did? The following section will discuss the causal explanations and the legitimization of Iraqi behaviour. Various types of arguments appeared as the conflict developed. At first, the background of the conflict was held to be Kuwaiti unwillingness to settle unsolved matters through negotiations: 'We did not detect any seriousness by the Kuwaitis in dealing with the extensive damage inflicted on Iraq as a result of their latest attitudes and behaviour.' (2.8.1990)

Only one day later, the Iraqi 'involvement' in Kuwait was presented as a relief mission: 'Revolution in Kuwait. Kuwait asks for the Iraqi military aid, Baghdad positively responds.' (3.8.1990)

As war approached, the line of argument changed. No longer was the conflict explained in terms of the Kuwaitis' lack of understanding of Iraq's problems, or as the Kuwaitis asking Iraq for help. Now the main message was that Kuwait deserved what had happened to it:

The Sabah family had been very loyal servants to America and its Western partners. They had plundered the wealth of the Arab Gulf country and used that wealth to benefit the banks of the Western world. There have been many stories of members of the Sabah family gambling and losing millions of dollars in a matter of hours at European and American casinos.

The former ruling family's male members used to lead a profligate life, spending lavishly on harem and hedonistic pleasures. But, while they were preoccupied in such extravagant way of life, millions of Arab children, women and men in Africa and elsewhere suffered from malnutrition and stark poverty ... Yes, it was the behaviour of such families that made London prostitutes flock to Earls Court ... in hope of 'striking oil' or gold by dating a sheikh from Kuwait. (7.8.1990)

The *Baghdad Observer* used situational explanations for Iraq's actions: Kuwait provoked Iraq by failing to listen to Iraq's claims; the Kuwaiti people demanded help to get rid of their rulers; and lastly, the lack of solidarity as well as the immorality of the Kuwaiti leadership had to be halted. It was in 'them' that the problem originated. Iraq was simply doing what it had to.

This review corresponds to the findings of the LCA. Of the variables of theme 2: Explanation of the conflict, the most frequently found was variable 2.4 – Kuwaiti refutation to negotiate with Iraq about the border dispute and/or the level of oil export mentioned as an explanation of the conflict. Indeed, this variable was also the second most frequent of all the 44 variables used in the LCA analysis.

The second most common explanation for the conflict, as shown by the LCA, was that the alliance had an interest in controlling the oil resources and/or strengthening their power and dominance (variable 2.2). Iraq's claims of historical right to the territory of Kuwait was also mentioned to explain the conflict – variable 2.3. What were *not* mentioned as causal factors in the conflict were Iraqi interests in controlling the oil resources, and/or strengthening its power and dominance – variable 2.1.

## Enemy Imagery – the USA as the Enemy of the Arabs

Contrary to the message of Western media, where Iraq was seen as the hostile and Kuwait as the insulted party, the *Baghdad Observer* in October portrays Iraq as the real victim: 'the United States and its imperialist allies whose double-



standard policy has turned the victim, Iraq, into an aggressor, and Israel, the source of aggression in the Middle East, into a target of threats by Iraq and the Arabs.' (8.10.1990)

As war became more and more likely, and finally, directly impending, structural explanations of the conflict appeared: the conflict was a result of the imperialist and aggressive policy, of the United States and not of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The USA was the enemy of the Arab world. 'Probably the US will yet come up with other stories, but the naked fact is that it wants to destroy Iraq and the Arab world to impose its hegemony on the region, perpetuate Israeli superiority and occupation of Arab lands and control its vital source of energy in this oil-rich region. ... what is going on now ... is only a chapter in a carefully drawn plan that started long ago.' (28.11.1990) The USA was seen as 'the world No 1 bully (who) has a long history of aggression against Cuba, Grenada, Panama, Indochina and other parts of the world.' (16.1.1990)

In the *Baghdad Observer*, as in many of Saddam Hussein's speeches during the conflict, imperialism was often held responsible for the Gulf Crisis. References to past historical experiences, in this case memories of the colonial past, may have a mobilizing effect, arousing feelings of injustice and revenge.

When Saddam Hussein claimed that the conflict was a result of Western imperialism, he was saying that Iraq was acting according to what the *situation* required. The behaviour of the USA, however, was described as *dispositional* – the USA wanted to destroy Iraq, since its power was by nature an aggressive one. The traditional content analysis (TCA) showed that no article in the *Baghdad Observer* sample described Iraqi aggression or threat of aggression against Kuwait, whereas 12 articles described expected, intentional allied aggression against Iraq.

The hegemonic role attributed to the USA was also found in the latent class analysis (LCA) material. The most frequent topic of all in the *Baghdad Observer* was that the UN was dominated by the USA. Of the 57 articles coded, 8 described the UN as being influenced and/or dominated by the USA and/or UK – variable 7.5. LCA variable 2.2 – the alliance's motive was to control the oil resources – also implied that the USA had imperial intentions. This was the third most frequent variable in the sample.

## Personification – Saddam Hussein as Objectified Subject, Bush as Subjectified Object

Personification is often thought of as a strategy for epitomizing 'the Other', creating a general enemy who is easily recognizable in the figure of one specific individual. In Iraq, George Bush came to symbolize America, the allies and an imperialist strategy. In Iraq the same strategy of creating a coherent picture of the leadership and the country through personification was in place before the conflict started. This might lead us to expect that the Iraqi media would

portray the conflict as one between Bush and Saddam (as was the case in the Western press).

But in the *Baghdad Observer*, Bush's target was *Iraq* and its population – not Saddam Hussein himself. Saddam Hussein was always a subject, never an object for criticism – whether from internal forces, the world community or from George Bush. Instead Saddam Hussein emerged as the defender of a broader Arab cause, detaching himself somehow from the causes and consequences of the conflict. As he was portrayed as playing a multi-vocal role, a military defeat or shift in policy would not leave him crippled as a political leader.

The following two passages illustrate the style in which George Bush and Saddam Hussein were depicted. George Bush had:

the mentality of a cowboy gangster whose aim is to murder and rob others... He reminds us of the early 17th Century European convicts who immigrated to the 'new world' to escape justice and start getting rich in the new country... a source of such improper language that no civilized man can accept... (12.1.1991)

Further:

The national Assembly on Monday passed a resolution giving President Saddam Hussein all constitutional powers to respond to any US-led attack and to preserve Iraq's rights and dignity. (15.1.1991)

Whilst very colourful language was used to describe George Bush, the equivalent was not found with regard to Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein was not the antithesis of all the bad traits attributed to George Bush. He was, quite simply, the leader of his people and his country. He was the President beyond reproach. Saddam Hussein was the leader acting on behalf of the Iraqi people, not out of any narrow self-interest.

This impression was supported by the TCA. Of the 10 articles where Saddam Hussein was the main individual subject actor, none expressed positive or negative attitudes towards him.

George Bush, however, was characterized in very direct language. The argumentation was overt, the metaphors leaving little doubts about the 'true' nature of the US President. Bush's qualities were all negative, whether they were acquired (a criminal) or congenital (unintelligent). Used for legitimizing and mobilizing purposes, such descriptions of the enemy can be very useful. After all, who would dispute the rightness of standing up against a ruthless and contemptible adversary?

## Religious and Ideological Rhetoric

As the last quotation shows, the *Baghdad Observer* emphasized Iraqi nationalism to legitimate the situation of high tension in the days before the allied attacks. Another example of the same pattern:

A civilized people like the Iraqis have a long history to boast of. Descendants of the ancient people of Mesopotamian, the Iraqis have the pride in being a people who taught mankind how to read and write some four thousand years ago. They have established centuries-long civilization when President Bush's ancestors were at the time cavemen eating raw meat. (12.1.1991)

At earlier stages of the conflict, we may note examples of using Arab nationalism as a source of legitimacy: 'On August 2, young Kuwaiti revolutionaries toppled the Kuwait government of petrol lords and American stooges to put Kuwait back in step with the Arab nation.' (3.8.1990)

The next day, 4 August 1990, the lead story of *Baghdad Observer*, titled 'Ba'ath Party's Command greets Kuwait revolution', was dominated by 'Arab' rhetoric. In the nine sentences comprising the first part of the article, 'Arab' is mentioned a full seven times, in such constellations as 'the role of Kuwait in the Arab nation', 'Kuwait's national Arab role', 'this Arab Gulf country', 'Arab national security', 'the feelings of the Arab people' and 'the Arab people of Kuwait'.

But Iraqi and Arab nationalisms were not presented as competing entities: 'Iraqis are aware that the fate of the Iraqis is the fate of the Arab nation.' (15.1.1991)

The rhetorical profile of the *Baghdad Observer* was not only characterized by 'Iraq' and the 'Arab world'. Religiously inspired arguments were also put forward, sometimes blended with other themes, as with Arab axioms: The First Deputy Prime Minister Ramadhan 'added that the enemy continued targeting Islam and Moslem people to eliminate everything related to Islam ... the colonial powers and their stooges mobilized all their potential to destroy the Arab nation, fragment and distance Moslems from their real cause.' (10.1.1991)

Arab and Islamic themes were combined to give Iraq a moral and historical mission:

In the same way as Judas betrayed Jesus, so has Bush through his aggressiveness and deep-rooted evil – betrayed the teachings of Jesus Christ', President Saddam Hussein said in a Christmas and New Year message. The new occupation of Moslems' Holy Land in Saudi Arabia has resulted in a new state of injustice. Iraq only wants to restore to the Arab nation its glorious humanitarian role. (1.1.1991)

This religious rhetoric was at its clearest when concepts like *jihad* and 'mother of all battles' entered into the argument. These concepts received attention also in the Western media; they became the ultimate proofs that the alliance was fighting not only a ruthless ruler but also a mentally confused leader determined to fight no matter what the cost. Here we should bear in mind that Islam does not differentiate between religious and secular wars. All wars between Muslims and non-Muslims are *jihad*, even if fought for purely non-religious motives. Furthermore, according to Islamic law, war between Muslims is forbidden – leaving *jihad* as the only acceptable kind of warfare (Paus, 1994, pp. 45-46).

Addressing Moslem dignitaries at an Islamic conference in Baghdad, Saddam Hussein said that 'the showdown between the Iraqis and the US-led alliance was a battle between the infidel and the faithful and between good and evil' which led him to conclude that they 'will fight the *jihad*'. (12.1.1991)

The occupation of Kuwait was presented as the first step on the road to the liberation of Jerusalem. In the 'mother of all battles', Good was defending itself against Evil, and, with the help of God, justice would finally triumph over injustice. The 'mother of all battles' was a new construction, used as an analogy to 'mother of all books'. Muslims believe that there exists a heavenly, primeval copy of the Quran. The concept implies that the war was connected to the sacred sphere. In addition, through this phrase, the war was related to the source of all existence, the mother. The mother symbolizes justice, and the 'mother of all battles' was presented as the archetype of wars between Good and Evil. Not only was the 'mother of all battles' a just war: the Ba'athi regime in Baghdad also claimed that it was the duty of all true believers to fight in it.

At the forefront of the faithful are the Iraqi people whom God and history gave the role of leading the confrontation ... The statement (by the RCC, led by Saddam Hussein) said this battle will be the mother of all battles ... God has wished for us to fight, from the land of Iraq, the battle of liberating the nation and humanity. (22.9.1990)

In addition to Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina are at the forefront of Muslim identity symbols. When Saudi Arabia allowed American soldiers to enter this sacred soil, Saddam Hussein urged the Arabs and the Muslims to 'Burn the ground under the feet of the invading aggressors who seek to harm your folk in Iraq'. They should, he said, 'strike at their interests wherever they are and to rescue holy Mecca and the tomb of Prophet Mohammed in al-Madina al-Monawara'. According to Saddam Hussein, this was a confrontation out of the ordinary: 'Oh Arabs, Oh Moslems, Oh believers in God wherever you are, this is your day to rise and to defend Mecca, which is prisoner of the Americans and the Zionists.' (11.8.1990)

The invading aggressors were portrayed as dangerous infidel crusaders aiming at putting the sacred places of Islam in jeopardy. A war against the allies was legitimate not only to save Iraq and the dignity of the Arab world, but also to defend Islam. In the sample analysed through the LCA, none of the articles in the *Baghdad Observer* indicated that the allies' motives might be to liberate Kuwait or create peace. On the other hand, one article did state that the motive of the allies was to contain Arab and/or Muslim influences.

As if to prove their religious conviction, the Iraqi authorities now paid special attention to religious institutions. In Baghdad, Saddam Hussein's University for Islamic Science was founded (Paus, 1994, p. 65). Under the title 'Millions spent to renovate, build worship places', an article in the *Baghdad Observer* listed examples of how the Ministry of Religious Affairs had built and repaired mosques and Islamic centres both inside Iraq and elsewhere, 'Iraqi holy shrines and places of worship have received special care from President

Saddam Hussein and the government. With 4,500 mosques all over the country, Iraq enjoys a long history of Islam.' (8.10.1991)

On the basis of the account given above, it seems reasonable to conclude that the Ba'athi regime used various strategies to seek legitimacy within the Iraqi, Arab and Islamic traditions. There existed a degree of coherence between the rhetorical elements employed, and Ba'athi ideology. Categorizations simplified the conflict and were meant to facilitate the mobilization of the people, making them ready to accept and even participate in the war to come.

## Human Rights Issues, Death Counts and Sufferings

Human rights, death counts and sufferings were not core issues in the thematic orientation of the Ba'ath party or the *Baghdad Observer*, to say the least.

In the days after the 25 November 1990 UN decision to use 'all necessary means' to get Iraq out of Kuwait, some *Baghdad Observer* editorials did put human sufferings in Iraq on the agenda. The headline of the editorial on 30 November was: 'Killing Iraqi children, an official US policy.' One day earlier, an editorial formulates the problem in the following manner:

A few months ago, a 'deranged' man opened fire from a sub-machine gun at a primary school in the United States killing and injuring a dozen of school children. The incident aroused the entire American population and they demanded that the man, though insane, be hanged. Another man, US President George Bush, hopefully sane, is trying to kill hundreds of Iraqi children not with bullets but by denying them milk and medicine. (29.11.1990)

Although children's sufferings were mentioned on a few occasions in the editorials, it was not a theme found in the news reporting.

As the conflict ran on into 1991, a status report on sufferings amongst the children was given. The Iraqi Minister of Health was quoted in *Baghdad Observer* on 1 January 1991, informing that 2182 Iraqis above the age of five had died over the past month due to the US-imposed embargo on medicines and food, and that over 2000 children under five had died because of the sanctions during the last four months. However, the article did not take up the question of sufferings or deaths among adults – civilian or military. The welfare of *children* was an emotional issue likely to provoke anger and vengeance. Why were adult sufferings not mentioned? Perhaps the figures numbers were not available; or perhaps it was felt that the emphasis on children would help to underline that the conflict was unfair and that Iraq was the real victim. But it is also possible to interpret this absence of any mention of adult sufferings in ideological terms: in Ba'athi rhetoric and ideology, the adults in Iraq were volunteering to fight, without any heed for personal death and suffering. The more a family showed loyalty to the war (even the war against Iran), the more they were praised and rewarded openly.

The hardships of war were not a favourite topic in the *Baghdad Observer*. But in its last issue, on 16 January, the *Baghdad Observer* featured a small article from Reuters stating that two British pilots had died in a jet crash in Saudi Arabia, bringing the total number of British losses to six. (16.1.1991) Figures on Iraqi casualties were not given. Such a short piece may seem insignificant, but it served to give the impression that the conflict had now turned into a military one and that soldiers were bound to be killed. It also indicated that the enemy was vulnerable.

## Other Characteristics

### Topics

Hitherto we have been examining five themes and their coverage in the *Baghdad Observer*. The TCA results with regard to the primary topics of the articles gave a broader picture on how the Gulf War conflict was covered in the *Baghdad Observer*.

Articles on civilian, non-operational policy-based issues outnumbered those on military, operational questions. Over one-fifth (12 out of 57 articles) had as their primary topic politics – parliament and politicians. Negotiations – meetings, demands, peace proposals – had the same frequency. Only in third place do we find armaments, military matters or warfare, including prognoses: 12% (7 articles). Furthermore, 11% (6 articles) dealt primarily with opinions and demonstrations (all taking place outside Iraq), whilst the UN was the main topic in 7%: there were 4 articles reporting on UN policy, debates and decisions.

To summarize: 60% of the articles may be said to have focused on diplomatic and civilian aspects of the conflict, in contrast to the mere 14% that emphasized military aspects.

In the TCA sample, none of the articles had casualties (soldiers or civilian), oil-related questions, internal conflicts or human rights issues as a primary topic. From the findings of the TCA, we may conclude that the *Baghdad Observer* sought to paint a moderating picture of the conflict. One reason could have been the wish to convey the impression that the leadership was in control of what it was doing. True, the *Baghdad Observer* was temporarily suspended just before the actual allied attacks, but one might have expected the sample to show more discussion of military questions and prognoses. Although the conflict dominated the columns of the paper, this was a conflict that seemed to involve political leaders shaking hands and talking to each other. The purpose of this obfuscation might have been to avoid public unrest or anti-war sentiments. What we do know is that if any opposition to the government's handling of the crises or warnings of a bloody adventure were expressed publicly, this was not recorded in our sample from the *Baghdad Observer*.

## Locations

The TCA showed that in 51% of the articles, the main event reported on took place in Iraq, 16% in the USA and 7% in Kuwait. Earlier we noted that, according to the Baghdad version, the conflict was not about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Iraq was the real victim, the USA the real enemy. The figures for location do not contradict such an interpretation.

## Sources

'In Iraq, there was ... no attempt to give space to Egyptian, Saudi, Kuwaiti or Western points of view', wrote Adel Darwish.

Analysis of the *Baghdad Observer* supported Darwish's proposition concerning the use of Arabic sources. The TCA showed that Arabic 'media sources' (news agencies, radio, television and/or newspapers) were used in only three articles. Western sources, on the other hand, were often cited. Western media sources were used in 19 articles, whilst Iraqi media sources were used in 20 articles.

However, here we must note that even though every issue of the *Baghdad Observer* featured articles from AP or Reuters, the use of the agency sources was selective: only those articles which expressed support for Iraq or warned against war were printed. Among such articles were stories on anti-war protests in Europe and in the United States or those which might implicitly be understood as supporting the Iraqi actions. Some titles (produced by the editorial staff of the *Baghdad Observer*, but encapsulating the content of the articles) may serve as examples: 'Few Arabs shed tears for ousted Sabah family' (Reuters); 'US lawyers say Congress not Bush to decide war' (AP); 'Algeria to oppose UN resolution against Iraq' (Reuters); 'Opinion poll shows ebb in French support for war' (Reuters); 'Anti-Gulf war protests sweep the world' (AP); 'US army resisters handcuffed for refusing to serve in Gulf' (Reuters). (6.8.1990; 28.11.1990; 29.11.1990; 30.11.1990; 14.1.1991)

On occasions an article would be made up of bits and pieces from Western news releases, mixed with the words of the staff reporter. The purpose of choosing certain elements from a news-wire story and leaving other parts out may have been to avoid internal contradiction with the Iraqi presentation of the war. The effect of citing Western sources several times in an article may also have been to strengthen the reliability of the message. One such article was 'Tens of thousands volunteers to fight for Iraq', signed 'by a staff reporter.' Quotations from Reuters were mixed with unidentified sources such as 'Reports from... said that' or 'witnesses said'. (11.8.1990)

As noted, the *Baghdad Observer* used foreign sources almost as often as Iraqi sources. But when citing Iraqi sources, the Iraqi regime was citing itself, since both the Iraqi News Agency (INA) and the *Baghdad Observer* are run by the Ministry of Information. This had of course serious consequences for the possibilities for critical and unbiased reporting.



To give one example: A few days after the invasion of Kuwait, the Iraqis said that Iraq was withdrawing from Kuwait. In the *Baghdad Observer*, various Iraqi sources were quoted:

Iraqi News Agency (INA) on Sunday said Iraqi troops started the withdrawal from Kuwait at 8 a.m.... An Iraqi military spokesman here on Sunday said more Iraqi troops will be withdrawn ... Baghdad television showed Iraqi troops heading back home ... An Iraqi News Agency reporter touring the city of Kuwait ... said people had resumed normal work. (6.8.1990)

Of course, it is only fair to inform the reader of the source of information. But such omnipresent use of INA quotations would also seem to convey the idea that the domestic sources should be seen as giving the sole correct, indisputable story. Other sources were included only if they happened to be in accordance with the official Iraqi version.

### Articles supporting Iraq

A distinctive feature of the *Baghdad Observer* was the large number of articles, some only a few lines long, which expressed support for Iraq. After reading the *Baghdad Observer* one gets the impression that Iraq was by no means isolated. Take for example 15 January 1991. Six out of the 13 stories on the front page reported on meetings between the Iraqi President or government and authorities from other countries like Yemen, Libya, Tunisia, Iran, Nicaragua and PLO. In addition, one story described worldwide anti-war reports in Pakistan, India, Turkey, Spain and elsewhere.

Or, take the front-page stories of 8 October 1990. Three stories were devoted to foreign news, the rest were all favourable to Iraq in one way or another. The support was mostly implicit, for instance when the enemies of Iraq were morally or otherwise discredited. A look at the headlines gives an idea of the general picture: 'Palestine uprising boosted by Iraq, says George Habash', 'Israelis raid Gaza mosque', 'Ben Bella says any attack on Iraq would fail', 'Aziz meets Arafat', 'Israel hands out gas masks', 'Foreign Ministry delegation to head for Iran', 'France reported rejecting use of force in Gulf', 'Iraq didn't intend attacking Saudis, says ex-general', 'Soviet General for peaceful end to crises' and 'Desert sand chews US copters, fights troops'.

Even though the articles did not proclaim that Iraq was the friendliest or most successful of all – compared to its aggressive and helpless enemies – the message was consistent and clear: Iraq was beyond reproach.

### Censorship

The issue of censorship was rarely discussed in the *Baghdad Observer*. No article in the LCA sample claimed that Iraq influenced the media coverage of the war – variable 10.1. But on 12 January 1991 the *Baghdad Observer* featured a Reuters article: Thirteen news organizations and journalists in New York were



suing the US government, protesting that the restrictions on the press due to the pool system were unconstitutional. 'The new restrictions impose a policy of censorship for the first time in the area of modern warfare,' the plaintiffs were reported as saying.

In a system of tight official management and orchestration of the media, one would think it unlikely for a newspaper to want to remind its readers of the phenomenon of censorship in war. Why did then the *Baghdad Observer* run this Reuters article? Whether it should be taken as a sign of imperfection, simply as an error, or as a subversive message is impossible to say.

## Conclusions

### Ideological and regime imprint

For a regime to be perceived as legitimate, the ideological platform on which it bases its politics must be an effective tool for governing, controlling and mobilizing the population. Mobilizing in the Gulf conflict had a dual function: motivating for warfare and hardship, and 'motivating' for general acquiescence towards the regime. In order for an authoritative regime to stay in power and engage in war, it must have the acceptance of the people. The means of control had been established long before the invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, and it came as no surprise that the Ba'ath regime managed to stay in control of the situation both during and after the conflict.

But even if the regime of Saddam Hussein was confidently in power, it found it necessary to use the media to present its rationale for the conflict. In the above, we have pointed out how the coverage in the *Baghdad Observer* reflected the regime behind it.

In order to reflect the ethnic and cultural identity of the population, the Iraqi leadership repeatedly reminded the readers of the *Baghdad Observer* of the Iraqi, Arab and Muslim bases for political decisions. Of Iraq's more than 19 million inhabitants (estimate for 1993), about 12 million are Shi'a and about 6.5 million are Sunni Muslims (which includes c. 3.5 million Kurds) (*The Statesman's Year-book 1994-1995*, pp. 777-782). The religious and ethnic composition of Iraq is reflected in the three main cultural traditions from which the Iraqi regime selected its ideas for legitimating purposes: the Iraqi, Arab and Muslim traditions.

In all these spheres the Iraqi regime claimed responsibility for 'others': in the Iraqi sphere for the Iraqi people when fighting against selfish neighbours and restoring the pride of the Iraqis facing the imperialist aggressors; in the Arab sphere for all Arabs, by standing up against those traitors on the Arab side who had joined forces with the enemies of Jerusalem; and in the Muslim sphere for all Muslims against the infidel non-believers.

### Saddam as Iraqi hero, Arab saviour and true believer

In order to make this ideological wrapping credible, various symbols were used. The purpose of using symbols was to draw a dividing line between 'them' and 'us', between the Good and the Bad, between the faithful and the infidel. We have seen that in the *Baghdad Observer* religious symbols were frequently used in order to suggest that Iraq was the true defender of Islamic values. At times the religious rhetoric was purely religious in content, but Islam was also often presented as an integral part of the Iraqi and Arab tradition.

The motive behind the extensive use of religious rhetoric may have been to present the occupation of Kuwait and 'the mother of all battles' as the first step on the road to the liberation of Jerusalem. In this way attention was drawn away from the immediate consequences of the occupation, both for a neighbouring Arab country called Kuwait, and for Iraq and its population. Religious rhetoric may also have been motivated by the internal situation. Iraq's Shi'a majority had to be convinced that the occupation could be legitimate through religion and that being attacked from Mecca was not the ultimate proof that Iraq was doing something wrong in taking on this confrontation. As to Iran, the Iraqi leadership had concluded a peace agreement with Tehran during the early phase of the conflict, and had little reason to expect Iranian intervention on the side of the Shi'a majority in the south.

The dominant position and frequent use of religious rhetoric during the Gulf conflict may seem to contradict Saddam Hussein's own statement, 'our party is not a religious party'. But even if the core of Ba'athism is secular pan-Arabism, the founder of the Ba'ath Party, Michel Aflaq, defined Islam as an inseparable part of Arab nationalism and the Arab nationalists as the only true defender of Islam. Islam is also an indispensable part of the Iraqi national identity, and deeply rooted sentiments are ascribed to historic places and incidents rich in religious connotations, such as Holy Jerusalem and the Battle of Qadisiyya (around the year 637 as part of the expansion of Islam, when the Arab Muslims defeated the Persian army). Historic-religious rhetoric could therefore be employed to achieve non-religious goals. The congruence between the rhetoric, Iraqi cultural traditions and the ideology of the Iraqi regime makes the rhetoric used by the regime suited both for vitalizing the feeling of shared identity among the peoples of Iraq and for mobilizing the Iraqis behind their leaders.

The Ba'athi regime presented the conflict within its own ideological framework. Only in the earliest days was the occupation of Kuwait explained in terms of Kuwaiti refusal to negotiate on unsettled bilateral matters. Soon the spotlight focused on the immoral, non-solidarian character of the Kuwaiti regime instead. Ultimately situational explanations were replaced with structural explanations; the conflict was presented as one between the Arab world and the imperialist West and its agents, between the true believers and the infidel. Iraq was fighting to maintain its role as the defender of the Arab world and the dignity of Muslims everywhere. Thus, the arguments became more and more

Ba'athi in content. After all, 'freedom from imperialism' is the chief Ba'athi motto, its rallying symbol of identity.

The *Baghdad Observer* gave a coherent picture of the Gulf conflict: Iraq was right, as say the many friends of the country; the USA and the allies were wrong; Saddam Hussein was set to fight a legitimate war; George Bush's intention was to crush the Arab world as part of an imperialist strategy. There were no discussions of alternative actions or reactions on the Iraqi side. The views of the other side – Kuwait, the USA or the other members of the anti-Iraqi coalition -were hardly presented. There were no stories describing the situation inside Kuwait after the invasion. George Bush was never cited in the sample, and his photograph was never shown. There was no elaboration on the steps taken by the UN. Analysis of the actual debate and adoption, content and the consequences of the resolutions was absent, except for brief pieces on countries opposing the UN moves. One exception to this picture was a report on the Aziz-Baker talks in Geneva in January 1991, where Baker was quoted as saying that the Iraqis appeared to be steadfast. No direct criticism of the Iraqis could be found. Also worth mentioning was the main story on 14 January 1991. Parts of a letter from the Syrian President Hafez al-Assad to Saddam Hussein, which had been read on Damascus radio, were quoted. In the letter Iraq was not criticized, but was urged to 'defuse' the crisis by withdrawing from Kuwait; here reference was made to 'the dangerous situation that threatens Iraq'.

Beneath this portrayal of the conflict we can sense a centralized power structure where political deliberations and decisions are made in secret. The total lack of open political dialogue gives to the press the role of messenger. In Iraq, the press is but a tool for the Ba'athi leadership. The rule that whatever injures the President may never be written about was followed without any exception.

But the *Baghdad Observer* was not only a messenger, it was also a 'mobilizer'. In times of crisis both these roles must be performed with utmost perfection. Propaganda and rhetoric operated side by side, in order to persuade the readers of the regime's objective truth and to get them to think and act accordingly.

## Notes

1. The *Baghdad Observer* was founded in 1967. Its circulation was 22,000 in 1995, according to the *Europa Year Book*, p. 1570. To what extent the *Baghdad Observer* deviates from the Arabic-language dailies is probably a question of degree. According to Article 19 International Center on Censorship, the news content in Iraqi dailies is said to be the same, "because it is taken directly from the state news agency INA". *Information, Freedom and Censorship*. World Report 1991, Library Association Publishing, London, 1991, p. 365.
2. When the paper was back on the streets again on 1 May 1991, it sometimes would have only four pages.
3. See chapter 1 for information about these methods.
4. When only dates are given, the reference is to *Baghdad Observer*.



## New World Order Rhetoric in US and European Media

Wilhelm Kempf, Michael Reimann & Heikki Luostarinen

### Introduction

One of the most persistent and most alluring slogans in Western political rhetoric of the 20th century has been the promise of a ‘new start’. Winning political parties often come to power by campaigning for a fresh and renewed way of governing, by promising to change – forever – the ‘old’ and spoiled ways of politics.

For various reasons, the popularity of ‘novelty’ has been especially typical of the political culture of the United States. For one thing, ‘progress’ is the central concept in the US political philosophy and popular mythology, and newness has become a synonym of progress. The USA is a state with revolutionary traditions, and in the rhetoric of figures like Samuel Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin the meaning of ‘New World’ was enlarged from geographical content into an ethical and political characterization (Jowett & O’Donnell 1986, pp. 51–59). More recently, Woodrow Wilson even viewed the United States as ‘a virgin continent’, totally different from the old and spoiled Europe (Ambrosius 1987, p. 9).

Secondly, the United States is a two-party democracy in which administrations (if not policies) change, regularly and completely, according to the outcome of elections. This personified and strict on-and-off system of government acts to sharpen political rhetoric, compared with states with multi-party systems and coalition governments.

Third, the methods of commercial advertising and promotion – with the leitmotif the need to replace old products with new ones – have long influenced political campaigning in the USA. Indicative was the television campaign of Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1952 presidential race against the Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson. In one TV spot an anonymous woman asks: ‘The Democrats have made mistakes, but aren’t their intentions good?’. Eisenhower replies: ‘Well, if the driver of your school bus runs into a truck, hits a lamppost,

drives into a ditch, you don't say his intentions are good. You get a new bus driver.' (Spero 1980, pp. 36–37)

No wonder that the modern history of 'New World' politics has witnessed a series of administrations with slogans of 'newness' the most famous being Wilson's 'New Freedom', Roosevelt's 'New Deal' and Kennedy's 'New Frontier'. Such concepts as 'New Leadership' and 'New Hope' have been used as well. A logical counterpart to this political talk of big hopes and promises has been the rhetorical use of fear and uncertainty, with dire predictions of crisis just around the corner. This tendency reflects the apocalyptic tradition of US public speaking, a mixture of religious Free-Churchism, populism in political life and the heritage of the Red Scare and the Cold War years. The early development of the 'medialization' of the US politics must be noticed here as well. In the absence of class-based mass parties and their organizational publicities, the central political publicity of US politics has for long been the media. The commercial and generic demands of the media have shaped the forms of US political speaking and promoted a sharp, shocking and black-and-white style of political argument.

The demands of the media and the mixture of hope and fear, with its religious undertones, can be seen clearly in the political appearances of Ronald Reagan. Throughout his political career Reagan depicted politics as a choice between good and evil, always predicting an immediate crisis (Erickson 1985). The very title of his famous speech 'A Time for Choosing' (1964) refers to the hard core of his message: The whole Western civilization is at stake now. Our next actions are decisive, time is running short:

Already some of the architects of accommodation have hinted what their decision will be if their plan fails and we are faced with the final ultimatum... 'Better red than dead' If we are to believe that nothing is worth the dying, when did this begin? Should Moses have told the children of Israel to live in slavery rather than dare the wilderness? Should Christ have refused the Cross? [...] You and I have a rendezvous with destiny. We can preserve for our children this, the last best hope of man on earth, or we can sentence them to take the first step into a thousand years of darkness. (Reagan 1983, p. 57)

In 1985 Reagan warned in his speech on terrorism: 'these terrorist states are now engaged in acts of war against the government and people of the United States'. When dealing with tiny Nicaragua, Reagan used the following expressions: 'totalitarian communism on the mainland of this hemisphere', 'communism on our doorstep', 'a dictatorship that threatens this entire hemisphere', 'a Russian foothold on the American mainland', 'a threat to the open border on our south' (Luostarinen 1986).

When this extremist tradition of political rhetoric is combined with international missionaryism and hegemonic aspirations, slogans like 'The New World Order', as used by President Bush in the Gulf War, are created. They are transformations of the culture of US domestic politics into the international context, based on the assumption that other nations share the American myth of the

USA as being the 'last best hope of man on earth'. Such promise of a better future is especially characteristic of political propaganda in times of war and crisis. War efforts must be legitimized, and the stereotypical ethos is a perspective of a future which is worth the sacrifice: fair, prosperous, free, democratic, etc. In its typical form, The Promise is a simple transformation of religious and family values: patience and sacrifices today will be rewarded by manifold compensation in the future.

The most famous predecessor of the New World Order slogan was used by US President Woodrow Wilson (in office 1913–1921) who, while asking the Congress to approve the US to join World War I, promised 'to make the world safe for democracy'. In his '14 point' programme of January 1918 Wilson promised independence for the nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. He – as Harold D. Lasswell puts it – 'declared war upon autocracies everywhere, and solemnly adhered to his distinction between the German people and the German rulers' (Lasswell 1927, p. 216). In the popular media discourse, Wilson's ideas took the following form: This war will be the last war, the war to end all wars.<sup>1</sup> When the despots are dethroned, a purely democratic system will be established. (See Ambrosius 1987; Knightley 1982, pp. 97–119; Taylor 1990, pp. 173–174.) Wilson has been praised for his skills – Lasswell calls him 'the great generalissimo of the propaganda front' – and not without reason.

A similar kind of propaganda manifesto, the Atlantic Charter, was declared by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1941. The 8-point Charter stated that Britain and the United States respected the right of every people to choose its own form of government, and wanted sovereign rights and self-government restored to those forcibly deprived of them. After the destruction of 'Nazi tyranny' they would look for peace under which all nations could live safely within their boundaries, without fear or want. Churchill and Roosevelt promised general security through the renunciation of force and disarmament of potential aggressors.

The same principles – expressions of altruism, drawing a distinction between the people and their rulers, and the promise of a new, fair and constant world order – have been used since then several times, with great success.

This is not to imply that promises of a fresh start have not always been empty rhetoric without any practical and positive consequences, as the idealism typical of the founding periods of the League of Nations and the United Nations shows. However, the way in which George Bush employed the concept 'New World Order' proved more of a purely rhetorical trick than any start of a serious and constant new policy in international relations. When launching the concept in the US Congress on 11 September 1990 the US President stated:

We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward a historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times ... a New World Order can emerge – a new era, freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace, an era in which the nations of

the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony (Ramsbotham 1994, p. 511).

Key expressions here:

- ‘a unique and extraordinary moment’ (*urgency; we must act immediately*),
- ‘The crisis ... as grave as it *is*’ (*fear of catastrophe*),
- ‘A New World Order can emerge’ (*promise of a bright future*).

This is an almost classical formula for a war speech. Bush also introduced a few variations on the theme:

What is at stake [in the war] is more than one small country. It is a big idea. A New World Order where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind – peace and security, freedom and the rule of law. (30 January 1991) (quoted from Ramsbotham 1994, p. 511)

In his speeches, George Bush compared Saddam Hussein with Adolf Hitler. He openly scorned ‘appeasement’: as the case of Hitler has proven, dictators like Saddam Hussein must be stopped as soon as possible, otherwise they get encouraged and use the time for further armament. According to Dorman & Livingston (1994, p. 74) the US press ‘merely replayed the highly personalized Saddam-as-Hitler analogy that was so thoroughly tested and refined by Hill and Knowlton research’. By doing so uncritically, the press helped the Bush Administration to ‘specify the origins of conflict in the simple villainy of a lone individual, rather than as the logical outcome of the foreign policy of the Reagan and Bush Administrations’ (*ibid.*, p. 73).

Originally, appeasement as a policy was followed by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain from 1937 to 1939 to avoid war, by agreeing to transfer the Sudeten German areas of Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany as Hitler demanded. Since then, it has become a synonym for soft, weak and ‘dovish’ policies with good intentions but catastrophic consequences.

Nazi Germany and Adolf Hitler are perhaps the most widely known villains of modern Western history, familiar to the public, and enduringly used as legitimizing symbols of interventions – as in the case of the Suez crisis by the British and French governments, who labelled Nasser ‘the Hitler of Egypt’. Such metaphorical use of the arch-villain Hitler as a legitimization of unbending policy indicates that the consequences of any other approaches would be on an apocalyptic scale. In the current study, this ‘German factor’ is used as one contextual dimension indicating the penetration of the ‘New World Order’ logic and argumentation in the media discourse.

The second contextual dimension in which Bush embedded the concept of ‘New World Order’ was the acute and demanding international political situation. The Berlin Wall went down in November 1989, and subsequently the Communist regimes of the Eastern Bloc collapsed like dominoes. The Cold War was declared over, and disarmament progressed with astonishing speed. The Soviet Union, having had the public initiative in international relations during



the first years under Gorbachev, was now retreating on all fronts. Gorbachev's 'common European home' found itself swept into oblivion by the winds of history. It was a splendid moment for the Bush government to raise its visibility, to grasp the initiative and to leave its permanent mark into history. The time was ripe for new slogans like 'New Europe' and 'New Atlanticism'. (Ramsbotham 1994, pp. 512–514)

The US government emphasized the urgent need to act fast and decisively to capture the right moment before it was gone. According to the logic of the argumentation, there exist crucial moments, turning points in the history of humankind, in which development dramatically changes for better or worse. With the horrors of the Cold War and ideological division of the world over, it became the responsibility of this generation to act 'now or never'. On the level of day-to-day events this urgency was enforced by referring to the political and military dangers of too-slow action, the inefficiency of economic sanctions and the nuclear armament of Iraq.

The third contextual dimension of the concept 'New World Order' was its content, a revitalization of the idea of international community which protects the rights of smaller nations. Long before the early 1990s, postwar hopes concerning the role of the United Nations had turned into scepticism and even cynical doubts about the competence of the world organization to fulfil its great tasks and commitments. Just as the League of Nations had proved powerless to keep peace during the interwar period, the authority and respect of the UN had been challenged by the 'Realpolitik' of superpower conflicts and intrigues. In the Gulf War the United States promised to 'serve together with Arabs, Europeans, Asians and Africans in defense of principle and the dream of a New World Order', as George Bush put it in November 1990 (quoted from Ramsbotham 1994, p. 512). The principle of 'fair play' was to guide international life again – and if the UN should prove too bureaucratic and slow, it would be surpassed by more decisive forces.

In the following empirical analysis, these three contextual dimensions or arguments are used as variables in analysing the impact and influence of the New World Order rhetoric in the media discourse:

1. *The 'Germany' factor* – lessons from the past: dictators must not be encouraged by signals of weakness; and/or reference is made to history (appeasement policy/Hitler) in order to suggest that conclusion.
2. *The 'right moment' factor* – where we are now: the moment for a new start must not be missed; and/or reference is made to the present historical situation (end of Communism / victory of democracy / reutilization of the UN) in order to suggest that conclusion.
3. *The 'fair play' factor* – where we are headed now: the aim of the new policy is that justice and ethical principles should rule international relations; and/or reference is made to the rights of small nations in order to suggest that the fruits of violence must not be accepted, etc.

## Method

### Sampling

In a comparative study of 4,096 news items from US, European and some Third World media (Kempf, 1996) only 136 items were found to make use of New World Order rhetoric, as defined by allegation (+) or query (–) of one or several of those three arguments mentioned above.

Even 3.3% of news items containing New World Order rhetoric still is a rather high share. This is mostly due to uncommented quotations from political leaders who employed this kind of rhetoric in their speeches and public statements. It is, however, in the editorials that we should expect to find both a more extensive and more detailed presentation of the vision of a New World Order, and a more reserved and critical approach to this slogan.

In order to test this conjecture, all editorials which appeared in the US and European print media from our sample were analysed by Kempf (1996) during the prewar phase (2 August 1990–16 January 1991),<sup>2</sup> as well as all editorials that appeared there during any of the following time-spots:

- 17–19 January 1991 (beginning of air raids against Iraq)
- 13–15 February 1991 (bombing of the al-Amirya bunker: Iraqi civilian victims)
- 21–23 February 1991 (last peace proposals before ground offensive starts)
- 27–28 February 1991 (military defeat of Iraq)
- 26–27 April 1991 (Coalition measures to protect Iraqi Kurds)
- 25–27 August 1992 (Coalition measures to protect Iraqi Shias)
- 14–15 January 1993 (bombing of Baghdad to force Iraq to fulfil ceasefire conditions).

In these media, a total of 187 editorials were found which contained New World order rhetoric.

**Table 1.** National origin of news items and editorials analysed

Country	News items	Editorials	Total
Finland	13	8	21
Germany	64	59	123
Norway	13	35	48
Sweden	20	70	90
USA	24	15	39
Iraq	0	—	(0)
Ethiopia	2	—	(2)
Total	136	187	323

As Table 1 shows, it was especially the German media that employed the ‘New World Order’ concept in order to stimulate support of the Gulf War, both in news items and in editorials. Considerable New World Order rhetoric was found in Swedish editorials also – but not in news items.

### Quantitative analysis

The aim of the quantitative content analysis of this material was to investigate whether the three contextual dimensions of New World Order constituted a homogeneous rhetorical pattern. Accordingly, the method of Latent Styles Analysis (Kempf, 1994) was applied. Emphasizing Kracauer’s (1952) argument, according to which it is not the frequency of style characteristics (variables of the quantitative content analysis) but their pattern of combination which determines the direction of the overall text, this method assumes that the overall distribution of the variables may be a mixture of different styles of coverage, which combine the variables into different patterns. Since the style used in a given text is only loosely linked to the manifest properties of the source from which that text stems, however, these styles of coverage cannot be constructed from any a priori definition. They are latent to the probability distribution of the style characteristics; and in order to reveal these latent styles, the mixture distribution will have to be un-mixed by use of the statistical method of Latent Class Analysis (LCA) (see Lazarsfeld, 1950).

The number of styles latent to the overall distribution of the data can be identified by using the AIC criterion (Akaike, 1987), which is a joint function of the likelihood of the data and of the number of probability parameters to be estimated. That number of latent classes which has the lowest AIC will provide the most adequate description of the data.<sup>3</sup>

In order to investigate whether the same rhetorical pattern(s) were used in news items and editorials, separate and joint analyses of the two types of texts were performed, and qualitative differences between the rhetorical patterns that were identified in the two types of texts were tested by means of a likelihood ratio test. Finally, a chi-square test was applied to test whether the identified rhetorical patterns were used with different frequency

- in different types of texts (news items and editorials),
- in different types of media (TV news, prestige papers, tabloids and regional papers),
- in different countries (Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, USA), or
- at different time-spots.

### Qualitative analysis

Latent Styles Analysis may serve to describe *what* is reported by the media and how this is combined into patterns of argumentation. In order to reveal *how*

these patterns are presented, however, in-depth analysis is necessary. Only qualitative analysis can give insights into the rhetorical means by which the argumentative patterns of New World Order rhetoric were presented to the public, which arguments were emphasized and which de-emphasized, and how this was done.

Qualitative analysis is time-consuming, so this can be done for a rather small sample of items only. Working on the assumption that editorials are more refined in terms of rhetoric than are news articles, and taking into account the fact that German media put particularly high emphasis on New World Order rhetoric, the present study focused on German editorials. Moreover, since the aim of qualitative analysis was to highlight differences and similarities between styles and not to undertake multinational comparisons, it was practical to use German material which could be analysed without translations.

Since LCA makes it possible to identify precisely those texts that most clearly represent the different latent styles, it may serve as the basis for sampling texts for a subsequent qualitative content analysis. One major difficulty of qualitative content analyses – the problem of representativeness – can thus be solved by a two-step procedure in which a Latent Styles Analysis is performed on representatively chosen material, and then those texts are identified that are most typical of the various styles (see Kempf, 1994).

Applying this procedure, finally, for each of the identified styles, editorials from the German prestige paper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* were chosen for qualitative analysis (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Editorials from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* chosen for qualitative analysis. g = Style No.

Style	Title	Author	Date
1	Bestrafen, nicht beschwichtigen	J. Joffe	6 Aug. 1990
2	Zurückhaltung in der Doppelkrise	D. Schröder	1 Jan. 1991
3	Noch kein Frieden am Golf	D. Schröder	8 Dec. 1990
4	Das Ultimatum läuft	J. Joffe	30 Nov. 1990

Quantitative analysis was merely based on coding whether or not certain arguments were used in an article. Thus, a typical editorial will not necessarily contain a particularly ‘rich’ argumentation on the issue which is described by the respective pattern. Only qualitative analysis can reveal what the editorial is really all about. The theory foundations and methodological details of the qualitative method used to accomplish this are described in Kempf, Reimann & Luostarinen (1996).

## Latent Styles Analysis

### Analysis of news items

The analysis of news items showed that all style characteristics of New World Order rhetoric were frequently approved. Only rarely were they denied or questioned (see Table 4).

**Table 3.** Analysis of news items: Goodness of fit statistics

Nclass	LOG-Like.	Npar.	AIC
1	-317.055	6	646.110
2	-285.898	13	597.795
3	-266.078	20	572.156
4	-253.103	27	560.205
5	-251.302	34	570.605

*Abbreviations:* Nclass = number of latent classes, LOG-Like = logarithmic likelihood of the data, Npar = number of parameters, AIC = Akaike's information criterion

According to Latent Class Analysis, four latent rhetorical patterns could be identified (cf. Table 4). These latent styles of New World Order rhetoric can be described as follows:

1. Style 1 (43.3%): 'Lessons from the past' rhetoric
  - As a rule (98.1%) the Germany factor is used for argumentation: dictators must not be encouraged through signals of weakness; and/or reference is made to history (appeasement policy/Hitler) in order to suggest that conclusion.
  - Only rarely (5.1%) are these arguments denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Occasionally (8.6%) the argumentation is supported by the fair play factor (where are we going now).
2. Style 2 (27.9%): 'Right moment' rhetoric
  - As a rule (96.2%) the right moment factor is used for argumentation: It is stated that the moment of a new start must not be missed; and/or reference is made to the present historical situation in order to suggest that conclusion.
  - Only rarely (7.9%) is this argument denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Sometimes (20.6%) the argumentation is supported by the fair play factor (where are we going now).
  - Sometimes (16.3%) it is supported by the Germany factor (lessons from the past).
3. Style 3 (24.4%): 'Fair play' rhetoric
  - Without exception (100.0%) the fair play factor is used for argumentation: It is stated to be the aim of the new policy that justice and ethical principles should rule international relations; and/or reference is made

to the rights of small nations in order to suggest that fruits of violence must not be accepted, etc.

4. Style 4 (4.4%): ‘Refutation of fair play rhetoric’

- Without exception (100.0%) the fair play factor is denied, doubted or questioned.

**Table 4.** Analysis of news items: Latent styles and overall distribution of style characteristics

g	pg	1+	1–	2+	2–	3+	3–
1	0.433	0.981	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.017
2	0.279	0.163	0.000	0.962	0.079	0.206	0.000
3	0.244	0.000	0.000	0.013	0.000	1.000	0.000
4	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.000
Total	1.000	0.471	0.022	0.272	0.022	0.338	0.051

*Abbreviations:* g = style number, pg = style frequency

Within these patterns (cf. Table 4) the different dimensions of New World Order rhetoric appear more or less independently of each other. Only in style 2, which is dominated by the right moment factor, are the other dimensions included to reasonable degree as well. Systematic refutation of the New World Order rhetoric was mainly directed against the fair play rhetoric (Style 4), but did not doubt the Germany factor nor the right moment factor.

**Analysis of editorials**

The overall distribution of style characteristics (cf. Table 6) shows that the editorials were slightly more critical to the New World Order than were the news items. Both doubt/denial of the Germany factor and doubt/denial of the fair play factor occurred more frequently in the editorials than in the sample of news items.

With respect to all other style characteristics, no significant differences were found between editorials and news items, however. In particular, doubt/denial of the right moment factor occurs in the editorials as seldom as in the news items. This indicates that the end of the Cold War was indeed seen as the ‘right moment’ – and the USA wanted to use the historical moment to establish its new hegemony.

As in the analysis of news items, Latent Class Analysis identified this distribution to be a mixture distribution of four latent styles (cf. Table 5).

**Table 5.** Analysis of editorials: Goodness of fit statistics

Nclass	LOG-Like.	Npar.	AIC
1	-549.602	6	1111.203
2	-520.544	13	1067.088
3	-499.357	20	1038.714
4	-485.725	27	1025.451
5	-483.747	34	1035.494
6	-481.688	41	1045.376

*Abbreviations:* Nclass = number of latent classes, LOG-Like = logarithmic likelihood of the data, Npar = number of parameters, AIC = Akaike's information criterion

From Table 6 we see that these latent styles of New World Order rhetoric were quite similar to those found in the analysis of news items.

**Table 6.** Analysis of editorials: Latent styles and overall distribution of style characteristics

g	pg	1+	1-	2+	2-	3+	3-
1	0.383	1.000	0.102	0.208	0.000	0.134	0.001
2	0.176	0.000	0.030	1.000	0.121	0.029	0.000
3	0.302	0.060	0.020	0.250	0.035	1.000	0.230
4	0.139	0.270	0.331	0.000	0.154	0.000	0.652
Total	1.000	0.439	0.096	0.332	0.053	0.358	0.160

*Abbreviations:* g = style number, pg = style frequency

- Style 1 puts the Germany factor in the foreground and corresponds to the 'lessons from the past' rhetoric found in the analysis of news items.
  - It is used slightly less frequently in the editorials (38.3%) than in the news items (43.3%).
  - Moreover, the argument does not stand as isolated as in the news items, but is
    - sometimes supported by the right moment factor (20.8%), which does not occur at all in the 'lessons from the past' rhetoric as presented in the news items (0.0%)
    - sometimes supported by the fair play factor (13.4%), which is less important in the news items (8.6%).
    - The Germany factor, however, is also viewed more critically in the editorials (10.2% doubt) than in the news items (5.1%).
- As was seen in the analysis of news items, Style 2 puts the focus on the 'right moment' factor. This occurs less often (17.6%) than in the news items (27.9%), however.

- In contrast to the news items, the right moment factor stands quite isolated here. It is not supported by the Germany factor at all (0.0%) and only rarely by the fair play factor (2.9%).
3. Style 3 puts the fair play factor in the foreground and corresponds to the fair play rhetoric as used in the news items. This style is used more frequently in the editorials (30.2%) than in the news items (24.4%).
- Again, the argument stands less isolated; it is
  - often supported by the right moment factor (25.0%), which occurs only rarely (1.3%) in the news items.
  - Again, the fair play factor is viewed more critically (23.0% doubt) than in the news items (0.0%)
4. Style 4 'Criticism of New World Order myth' corresponds to the refutation of fair play rhetoric as found in the analysis of news items. As compared with the news items
- criticism of the New World Order myth occurs much more frequently (13.9%) in the editorials than in the news items (4.4%)
  - argumentation against the New World Order is much more complex as well:
  - While the news items based their criticism of the New World Order rhetoric solely on doubt and denial of the fair play factor (100.0%), in the editorials the fair play factor is doubted less frequently (65.2%)
  - quite often (33.1%) the criticism of the New World Order myth questions the Germany factor, and it
  - sometimes (15.4%) questions the right moment factor as well.
  - In contrast to the news items, in their criticism of New World Order rhetoric the editorials present not only negative arguments, but also concur with the Germany factor quite often (27.0%).

#### Joint analysis of editorials and news items

In order to test whether the difference in styles within editorials and news items is statistically significant, a joint Latent Class Analysis of editorials and news items was computed. This again led to the identification of four latent styles (cf. Table 7).



**Table 7.** Joint analysis of editorials and news items: Goodness of fit statistics

Nclass	LOG-like.	Npar	AIC
1	-877.709	6	1767.418
2	-820.250	13	1666.500
3	-793.179	20	1626.358
4	-757.143	27	1568.285
5	-753.912	34	1575.825
6	-748.253	41	1578.507

*Abbreviations:* Nclass = number of latent classes, LOG-Like = logarithmic likelihood of the data, Npar = number of parameters, AIC = Akaike's information criterion

Comparing the joint analysis of editorials and news items with their distinct analyses by means of a likelihood ratio test showed that the styles of New World Order rhetoric in editorials and in news items do not differ significantly from each other (chi-square = 36.63, df = 27,  $p > 0.10$ ). The latent styles identified in the joint analysis (cf. Table 8) thus give the best description of the complete data. They are characteristic of the New World order rhetoric in both editorials and news items.

**Table 8.** Joint analysis of editorials and news items: Latent styles and overall distribution of style characteristics

g	pg	1+	1-	2+	2-	3+	3-
1.	0.349	1.000	0.058	0.067	0.000	0.009	0.000
2.	0.200	0.117	0.019	1.000	0.093	0.001	0.000
3.	0.347	0.169	0.033	0.240	0.018	1.000	0.125
4.	0.105	0.201	0.280	0.000	0.148	0.000	0.680
Total	1.000	0.452	0.065	0.307	0.040	0.350	0.115

*Abbreviations:* g = style number, pg = style frequency

A chi-square test revealed that the different types of texts (editorials vs. news items) also did not differ with respect to preference of the various styles (chi-square = 5.34, df = 3,  $p > 0.10$ ).

*To summarize:* Both qualitatively and quantitatively, news items and editorials alike produced the same rhetorical patterns. In doing so, 89.5% of the relevant news items and editorials supported the New World Order concept, either focusing on 'lessons to be learned from the past' (34.9%), or on the 'fair play' promise (34.7%), or on the 'right moment' to do so (20.0%). Only 10.5% of the news items and editorials were critical to the concept of a New World Order.

## Rhetorical Patterns

### 'Lessons from the past'

Style 1 (34.9%), 'lessons from the past', puts the Germany factor in the foreground. Thereby, the Germany factor stands similarly isolated as in the news items analysis, and

- is only rarely supported by the right moment factor (6.7%);
- in some cases (5.8%) the Germany factor is doubted or denied.

An example of this style with the Germany factor in the foreground is the editorial 'Bestrafen, nicht beschwichtigen' ('Punish, not appease') written by Josef Joffe. It dates from 6 August 1990 and comments on recent developments in the emerging conflict. Even at this early stage, the author constructs the conflict as a competition between 'bad' and 'good', or between Saddam Hussein (Iraq) and the 'rest of the world':

- The 'good side' is described as having good intentions, but being a bit too hesitant with (military) action. It until now has made the mistake of living in a 'beautiful dream of the postwar era', and it therefore has been too soft with Saddam, not taking him seriously. The author ascribes this partly to fear ('trembling Saudis and hesitating Turks'), to the diversity of nations and interests that have to be unified, and to the tendency of using 'money and friendly words' as a means for conflict resolution.
- The 'bad side' is described with plainly disparaging, so that there may be no doubt about its bad character, its evil intentions and its crimes. Saddam is the 'dictator of Baghdad' who has 'drawn the sword and gained the victory', who is terrorizing the Saudi empire, who is now 'sitting' on one-fifth of the world's oil resources, and who has brought a 'Soldateska' (a rabble of soldiers) to Kuwait.

This construction of the conflict as a competitive process (win–lose model) pervades the text, and as a seemingly reasonable consequence of this binary image of the conflict the editorial supports military means of conflict resolution. The militaristic message is made clear even in the title: 'Bestrafen, nicht beschwichtigen' – 'Punish, not appease'. Peaceful means of conflict resolution are rejected as appeasement, or as defeat. The whole editorial appeals for military, not merely economic, intervention, which makes it a piece of escalation-oriented journalism or war propaganda.

Moreover, in terms of war propaganda this really is 'hard stuff': it is not only *what* is said – after all, Saddam Hussein and the invasion in Kuwait got bad press nearly everywhere, and calls for military solutions of the conflict could be heard all around – it is *how* it is said that makes the editorial a highly (war-) propagandistic piece of journalism:<sup>4</sup>

- it is written in a demagogic and occasionally ironic style;
- it makes use of two-sided messages<sup>5</sup> and of double-bind communication;<sup>6</sup>

- it employs other rhetorical means as well – metaphors, allusions, and references to historical figures as well as to pop songs;<sup>7</sup>
- it conveys a very clear, straightforward message, unaffected by doubts or disturbing moral considerations.

These characteristics do make it quite entertaining to read the editorial. And this entertainment-value contributes to its effectiveness as piece of propaganda.

In this propagandistic context, Saddam Hussein is called a ‘descendant of the Hitlers and Mussolinis’, and any kind of appeasement policy is rejected. Still, the editorial refers to ‘lessons from the past’ in a much broader sense: it goes back to the ‘Old Fritz’ (King Friedrich II of Prussia) and to Thomas Hobbes, and cites them as seemingly indisputable historical witnesses of the necessity to use violence as a means in international relations.

The reference to ‘Old Fritz’ is crucial, because it in a few words summarizes the argumentation, while also revealing the tendency to employ two-sided messages and double-bind communication. The quotation reads: ‘Diplomacy without violence is like music without instruments’. This may be clearly identified as a two-sided message. ‘Two-sided messages’ are characterized by two features:

- The anticipation of (possible) criticism of one’s own side or of arguments that may question one’s own point of view,
- and the rejection of the anticipated criticism or argumentation. (See Kempf, Reimann & Luostarinen, 1996; Reimann 1997.)

The anticipated information is rejected not by counter-arguments, but by turning the criticism into a reason for believing and being confident in one’s own side, in its strength, correctness, leadership etc., by turning the criticism of one’s own side into criticism of the other side, or by devaluating the subversive information and/or conclusions to be derived from it.

In the present case, the author does make explicit mention of one alternative way to settle the conflict by other than military means: ‘diplomacy without violence’. This notion, if taken seriously, might have had critical significance for the actual policy. Here, however, the possibility of nonviolent diplomacy is rejected by making it ridiculous. It is paralleled with a self-contradiction obvious even to a child: ‘music without instruments’, of course, is no music at all. Yet, according to Collins’ *English Dictionary and Thesaurus* (1995), diplomacy is ‘the conduct of the relations of one state with another by peaceful means’. Therefore, the ‘Old Fritz’ quotation is in fact comparings ‘pears with apples’ – it compares things that cannot be compared: violence is not a precondition for diplomacy in the same way as instruments are for music. The only purpose of such statements is to prevent the public from reflecting too much about alternatives to the policy supported by this editorial.

All in all, the editorial is a demagogic piece of war propaganda with a clear militaristic message: ‘Punish, not appease’. It polarizes by depicting the parties in conflict in an antagonistic way, by demonizing the enemy, his actions and

intentions, and by pushing one's own side to military action. 'Lessons from the past' are referred to, both, by describing Saddam as a 'descendant' of Hitler, and – in a broader sense – as more general lessons from history, as witnessed by reference to historical figures like King Friedrich II of Prussia and Thomas Hobbes. These historical allusions fit in neatly with the author's militaristic ideology, providing his reflections on the level of the actual conflict with an 'Überbau' on a quasi-mythological level: violence has always been a part of international relations, so there is no point in hesitating and being too soft with dictators like Saddam Hussein, who is branded the 'descendant of the Hitlers and Mussolinis'.

### Right moment rhetoric

Style 2 (20.0%), 'right moment rhetoric', puts the focus on the right moment factor. Thereby, the right moment argument stands less isolated than in the analysis of editorials, but more isolated than in the analysis of news items.

- It is sometimes (16.9%) supported by the Germany factor,
- but nearly never (0.1%) by the fair play factor.
- Only rarely (9.3%) is the right moment factor doubted or denied.

This style is represented by an editorial of 15 January 1991 called 'Zurückhaltung in der Doppelkrise' ('Reserve in the double crisis'), written by Dieter Schröder. Much of the editorial is not about the Gulf conflict. There are also comments on the ongoing crisis of the Soviet Union and on the Soviet intervention in Lithuania. Still, it is an interesting fact that the date of issue of this editorial and its focus on the 'right moment' aspect coincide: the very start of 'Desert Storm' seems to need some support by 'right moment' rhetoric. In this, the editorial bears a likeness to President Bush's speech on the night the Gulf War started, during which the US President anticipated possible criticism: 'Some may ask, why act now? Why not wait?'<sup>8</sup> As we will see, the editorial gives an answer similar to that of Bush: 'The world could wait no longer.'

On the other hand, this text is far from being as war-propagandistic as Bush's speech or as the text representing style 1. In fact, from the point of view of German interests and politics it rather appeals for 'reserve'. To support this the editorial presents several de-escalation-oriented arguments:

- the two World Wars in this century are remembered very well in Germany, and this memory also involves 'fear of the harm and the terror of a war' into which Germany might be dragged;
- the motivation for the war and the aims pursued by the Coalition are not understandable 'for many';
- the war might cause more problems than it is able to solve;
- it will have too many innocent victims; and
- the war might have unfavourable economic consequences.

The text – at least in this part – relies heavily on de-escalation-oriented elements, namely questioning of military force as necessary, suitable and/or effective and description of common sorrow caused by the war and common benefit from its termination.

Yet, according to this particular editorial, this applies only for Germany, or the German public. As a part of the alliance against anti-Saddam, Germany is still obliged to support the Coalition and its decisions. When describing the conflict between the USA and Iraq in particular, and apart from the situation in Germany, the author switches to using escalation-oriented elements of journalism: he constructs the conflict as a zero-sum game, and tries to ward off social identification with the élite of the enemy by labelling Saddam Hussein ‘the Iraqi despot’ and explaining his behaviour by ‘lust for power and bedazzlement’.

Taking the US point of view the author never doubts that this is ‘the right moment’ for (military) action and for being resolute – in this the editorial very much resembles President Bush’s argumentation. The possible critical argument referred to by Bush as well – ‘why not wait?’ – is deflected off by a two-sided message. The author states: ‘It is easy to say that not all possibilities of diplomacy have been exhausted.’ Here, possible criticism on the actual war policy is rejected by devaluation. By classifying such criticism as ‘easy’, – and thus shallow and cheap – the author imputes either ignorance, dishonesty or missing courage to those who support the criticism.

On the whole, the editorial is only in part a propagandistic piece of journalistic work. Much of it does not concern the Gulf crisis, and in about half of those paragraphs actually commenting on the Gulf, de-escalation-oriented arguments are put forth: military force is questioned as a necessary, suitable or effective means for conflict resolution, and common sorrow caused by the war and common benefit from the termination of the war are described. However, the other half of the paragraphs on the Gulf war take over the US point of view, presenting the conflict as a competition between ‘good and evil’. The military option is presented as being the right way at the right time, and possible doubts are rejected by use of a two-sided message.

### Fair play rhetoric

Style 3 (34.7%) ‘fair play rhetoric’ puts the fair play factor (100.0%) in the foreground. Thereby, the fair play factor stands less isolated than in the news items analysis.

- It is often (24.0%) supported by the right moment factor.
- Sometimes (16.9) it is supported by the Germany factor.
- Sometimes (12.5%) the fair play factor is doubted or denied.

The editorial ‘Noch kein Friede am Golf’ (‘Not yet peace in the Gulf’) – again written by Dieter Schröder (cf. Style 2), and dating from 8 December 1990 – is a typical representative of this style.

The background to this editorial is the announcement of the release of hostages in Iraq. This event is taken as an occasion to stress that, despite this promising development, peace has not yet come to the Gulf region. The author presents a mixture of fear and hope as described above; his purpose is to warn the audience against hoping too much and being too euphoric. In this, he relies heavily on such escalation-oriented elements of news coverage as:

- stirring up mistrust against the enemy,
- emphasizing the dangerousness of the enemy, and
- warding off social identification with the élite of the other side.

Furthermore, the author clearly votes for a military solution to the conflict, rejecting peaceful alternatives as ‘appeasement’.

‘Fair play’ rhetoric is presented in this context of fear and hope, as well. The fair and peaceful co-existence of nations are described as being endangered by Saddam Hussein, but also by the tendency of (some of) his opponents to be irresolute and to adhere to appeasement politics. Only if that tendency can be overcome will there be hope that a ‘New World Order’ – including fair play among nations – might get a chance. The following paragraph, in which the author summarizes his argumentation, shows how he creates an atmosphere of conflicting emotions:

The ‘new world order’ announced by Bush, in which conflicts are resolved peacefully by cooperation, can only survive when the fourth condition<sup>9</sup> is fulfilled: regional stability. This would be out of the question, however, in the case of an appeasement-peace, which would give Saddam the chance to pose as the hero of the Arabic world and to further improve his potential for warfare ...

All in all, the logic of this editorial can be described as a double-bind situation (see Kempf, Reimann & Luostarinen, 1996; Reimann, 1997), into which the reader is dragged. Double-binds consist of

- contradictory or logically inconsistent messages, and
- incentives for social identification or personal entanglement, that make it more difficult to keep at a distance from the content of both contradictory messages, and to decide independently which of the contradictory messages is to be believed.

The editorial leaves the public with such a contradictory emotional constellation: Is there hope or is there not? What do we have to be afraid of? How dangerous is Saddam? Are our leaders clever enough to see through Saddam’s political tricks, or are they too soft? At first glance, the editorial seems to raise more questions than it answers; yet, throughout there is a clear tendency towards military means of conflict resolution, and at the end of his argumentation the author proposes determination and timely (military) action as a way out of the dilemma:

‘(Saddam) is playing to gain time. To join into this game means postponing the conflict.’

The emotionally stressful double-bind situation is thereby resolved into a seemingly easy solution: do not play the game offered by Saddam, do not delay the conflict, but act now.

### Criticism of the New World Order myth

Style 4 (10.5%) ‘Criticism of the New World Order myth’ never supports the right moment factor nor the fair play factor. Also here the argumentation against the New World Order is more complex in the editorials than in the analysis of news items. While the news items based their criticism of the New World Order myth solely on doubt and denial of the fair play factor,

- the fair play factor is doubted less frequently (68.0%), while
- the criticism of the New World Order myth questions the Germany factor quite often (28.0%), and
- sometimes (14.8%) the right moment factor as well.
- As in the analysis of editorials and in contrast to the analysis of news items, criticism of the New World Order myth is not solely a matter of negative arguments, but sometimes concurs with the Germany factor (20.1%).

Although news items and editorials which follow this rhetorical pattern put great emphasis on critical arguments, this does not mean that they necessarily support the criticism. An example for this is the editorial ‘Das Ultimatum läuft’ (‘The ultimatum runs’), again written by Josef Joffe, (cf. Style 1), and published on 30 November 1990. Although this editorial presents criticism of both the fair play factor and of the Germany factor, this criticism is strongly reduced in its potential.

The editorial comments in particular on the public debate in the United States, noting that ‘in these days, George Bush ... is more successful abroad than at home’. The argumentation of the editorial as a whole is quite undecided: on the one hand criticism is explicitly mentioned and style characteristics oriented towards de-escalation are used, on the other hand the author dissociates himself from the criticism – and employs some escalation-oriented arguments as well.

On the de-escalation-oriented side this editorial

- questions military force as necessary, suitable and/or effective,
- offers a (self-)critical and realistic evaluation of the intentions of the anti-Saddam coalition,
- recognizes the price that has to be paid for military victory,
- and, at least at one point, tries to reduce the feeling of being threatened, by realistically evaluating how dangerous Saddam Hussein actually is.

On the other hand these de-escalation-oriented arguments are counter-balanced by several escalation-oriented arguments, such as:

- the construction of the conflict as a competitive process,
- the construction of military force as (the only) suitable and necessary means for conflict resolution,
- emphasis on the enemy threat by describing how own intentions are endangered by the actions of Saddam Hussein, and
- stirring up mistrust against Iraq.

This contradictory argumentation is reflected in the author's relationship towards the fair play factor and the Germany factor of New World Order rhetoric. At a first glance, both factors are doubted:

- Concerning the fair play factor, several examples are cited to show that the United States seems to have two standards of what is 'fair play': e.g. the choice of partners like Syria or China that not long ago were accused of violating international law and rules by financing terrorism or by terrorizing their own population, and the US support of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that 'systematically oppress women'.
- Concerning the Germany factor, the editorial voices doubts as to whether Saddam Hussein can be compared to Hitler: 'Those perspectives are missing, of course, which traditionally used to legitimate the American use of force: (... or) a dreadful ideological antagonist like Hitler and Stalin, which incarnates an existential threat at the same time'.

On the other hand, the author dissociates himself from some of the criticisms: these are criticisms that are not made or proposed in the editorial – they are merely *described*. Furthermore, he does that by using (slightly) disparaging expressions: 'the public at home is beginning to grumble', 'critics admonish', 'the national women's organization complains'.

We can find a solution to this – at a first glance rather confusing – mixture of pros and cons by paying attention to the sequencing of arguments. Then we see that the whole string of argumentation is made part of a two-sided message which employs a framing technique (see Reimann, 1997). The controversial picture painted in this editorial is framed by a very clear message:

- The title states: 'The ultimatum runs',
- and the final sentence reads: 'After the consent of the Security Council Mikhail Gorbachev will probably be right in the end: "Time is running out" – unless Saddam recovers consciousness after all.'

Thus, the whole description of the public debate in the USA is contextualized by the assurance that there will be an end to all these uncertainties, these pros and cons. Time is running out, and as the Security Council of the United Nations has delivered an ultimatum and has allowed a military solution of the



conflict, 'the clock' and not the US public will decide about peace or war. Moreover, the comment on Saddam Hussein's responsibility for the further course of the events already prepares an argument that was to be used later on in the conflict and that rejected possible criticism of the Coalition's war policy by allocating guilt to Saddam: it was up to him to decide and it was he who chose war.

### Differences Between Types of Media, Time-spots and Countries

As regards different types of media (chi-square = 12.88, df = 9,  $p > 0.10$ ) and time series (chi-square = 14.42, df = 9,  $p > 0.10$ ), no significant differences in style usage could be found. As in the news items analysis (Kempf, 1996), there were, however, significant differences in style usage regarding the various countries (cf. Table 9).

**Table 9.** Joint analysis of editorials and news items: Style usage in different countries. (Chi-square = 55.07, df = 12,  $p < 0.001$ )

Country	FIN	D	N	S	USA	Total
Style 1	0.3323	0.3990	0.4854	0.1626	0.4539	0.349
Style 2	0.2381	0.1033	0.3009	0.1940	0.3591	0.200
Style 3	0.3776	0.4022	0.0610	0.4967	0.1776	0.347
Style 4	0.0520	0.0955	0.1528	0.1467	0.0094	0.105
1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.000	

*Abbreviations:* FIN = Finland, D = Germany, N = Norway, S = Sweden, USA = United States of America

- The media in Germany, Finland and the Sweden media deviated from those of the other countries in putting more focus on fair play rhetoric (style 3) than on the right moment aspect (style 2).
- The Norwegian and US media, on the contrary, made scant use of fair play rhetoric (style 3), focusing instead on lessons to be learned from the past (style 1) and on the right moment to do so (style 2).
- While extremely little criticism of the New World Order myth was found in the US media (style 4 hardly occurred at all), however, Norwegian media were more critical about the New World Order than all other countries but Sweden (style 4).

Thus, all four rhetorical patterns were used with the same (relative) frequency throughout the entire period from August 1990 until January 1993. This is true of all types of media (TV news, prestige papers, tabloids and regional papers) as well as in both types of texts studied (news items and editorials). The only

statistically significant difference was the difference between the various countries.

Among the various elements of New World Order rhetoric, the Germany factor proved to be the most prominent. Positive reference to the Saddam/Hitler comparison was present in each of the rhetorical patterns that supported the idea of a New World order, and even in the minority pattern that was critical of the New World order concept. Against the background of threat to Israel, the declared parallel between Saddam Hussein and Adolf Hitler was obviously such a strong metaphor that it could not be ignored by the media discourse.

## Conclusions

Although the styles that we have identified present different patterns of New World Order rhetoric, qualitative analysis revealed certain common features which made them powerful instruments of Coalition propaganda.

All styles – including the one which presents criticism of the New World Order concept (style 4) – constructed the conflict as a competitive process. This binary image of the conflict (win–lose model) and the clear differentiation between ‘bad’ and ‘good’ served as a basis on which to build New World Order rhetoric, of whatever kind. Even doubts or criticisms of some aspects of New World Order rhetoric never dared to question this basic construction of the conflict.

As a consequence, all styles employed other escalation-oriented elements of conflict coverage as well, which served to consolidate this binary image: in particular, the enemy – Saddam Hussein personally – was dehumanized nearly without exception, and social identification with the Iraqi side was warded off by negative expressions like ‘descendant of the Hitlers and Mussolinis’, ‘Saddam might ... directly come from the school of dictatorship’, ‘the Iraqi despot’, ‘Soldat-eska’. Furthermore, mistrust against Iraq was spread, its dangerousness was stressed and its intentions were demonized. As a seemingly ‘logical’ further consequence, military force was usually described as the one and only acceptable way to peace, and alternative ways of conflict resolution were rejected.

All four styles are open to incorporate some criticism. However, whenever a criticism was explicitly mentioned in the editorials analysed here, it was either rejected by means of a two-sided message, or it was part of a double-bind communication. The use of these rhetorical means shows how much the respective journalists took sides in the conflict, and how much they incorporated the New World Order concept into their own way of thinking.

In order to understand the use of the slogan ‘New World Order’ in both the US and the European media, we must bear in mind the special features of the US political discourse, as noted in the introduction to this chapter. And here we may assume that there are certain factors which either tempt journalists to use this rhetoric or make them hesitate.

**Siren song.** The ‘New World Order’ owes much to the United Nations Charter and many other positively valued international resolutions: these have made the whole concept more alluring, more difficult to resist and more capable of penetrating the basic cynicism of journalism. Moreover, the existence of several fundamental and undeniable facts, like the brutality of the Iraqi government and the illegitimacy of the occupation of Kuwait, made it easier for journalists to accept the rest of the argumentation as well – including the claimed necessity of employing military power in order to confront the Iraqi aggression. It must also be remembered that the status of the United States as the world’s sole superpower automatically makes the statements of its leaders news all over the globe. Likewise, the rhetoric used in US politics becomes a part of the media discourse everywhere. This process is naturally helped by the powerful position of the US media in international news industry.

**Vestigia terrent.** On the other hand, the New World Order rhetoric also carries at least an echo of the rather flamboyant and ostentatious US style of public speaking so different from the political culture of Northern Europe. It is also the kind of a superpower slogan (implicit is the understanding that this new order is to be led by the USA) that would seem unlikely to get unquestioned support in smaller nations. The recent history of Europe has seen various different kinds of ‘orders’ implemented; even Hitler promised a new and better European order. Additionally, the New World Order slogan belongs to the genre of well-worn, grandiose one-liners and wartime propaganda manifestos which have so often proven themselves empty and misleading. Journalists with historical understanding could be expected to handle it with a certain scepticism. Where indeed do those tracks lead?

The results of our study show how much the New World Order slogan was accepted by the journalists. We found neither a qualitative nor a quantitative difference in the rhetorical patterns that were used in news articles and in editorials:

- the same rhetorical patterns quoted from political leaders in the news items were repeated in the editorials,
- nor did the editorials differ with respect to their relative preferences for the various styles of New World Order rhetoric.

Although the ‘New World Order’ has been very much an American political concept and thus might be expected to have only limited success in the European media discourse, our study would suggest that New World Order rhetoric was aimed not so much at the US public as at the international public. Especially in Germany, where there was a strong anti-war movement, and in Sweden, with its long tradition of political neutrality, editorials jumped at the idea of a ‘New World Order’ far more often than was the case in the USA. Only the Finnish media were quite reserved towards the ‘New World Order’ slogan and made little use of this kind of rhetoric at all.

As regards different styles of New World Order rhetoric, the German, Swedish and Finnish media proved particularly receptive to the notion that justice and ethical principles were to rule international relations, whereas the Norwegian media followed the US example by putting the focus on lessons to be learned from the past and on the right moment for action.

On the other hand, the European media proved much more critical of the 'New World Order' than the US media, where scarcely any criticism could be noted at all. It was apparently easier to get the European media accept the demonization of Iraq and Saddam Hussein and the use of military power than it was to create enthusiasm for this new world order. In that sense, then, we may conclude that the US propaganda was only in part successful.

## Notes

1. This catch phrase is most well known as the title of a pamphlet by H. G. Wells *The War that will End War*.
2. Including the timespots
  - 2-7 August 1990 (Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait)
  - 28-30 November 1990 (UN Security Council's ultimatum to Iraq)
  - 12-14 January 1991 (US-Congress vote for a military intervention)
3. For statistical details of Latent Styles Analysis see Kempf (1994).
4. The authors wish to thank Dorothea Lurk for her assistance with the empirical work.
5. 'Two-sided messages' refers to a form of propaganda presentation which anticipates possible criticism and thus makes the propaganda more resistant against counter-propaganda (Lumsdaine and Janis, 1953). The critical point with two-sided messages, however, is that the counter information must not be accepted by the public. This can be achieved by means of social identification with the carrier of the propaganda message and, at the same time, social devaluation of the carrier of the counter message.
6. 'Double-bind communication' refers to a form of communication pathology that was first described by Bateson et al. (1956) in the context of clinical psychology and introduced into propaganda research by Kempf (1986). It is characterized by inherent contradictions of the propaganda message and the lacking of a chance, either to react to both of the contradictory messages, or to withdraw from the situation. As a result of emotional involvement with both contradictory messages it becomes difficult for the audience to query either of them.
7. 'Don't worry, be happy'
8. Quoted after *The New York Times*, 17 January 1991.
9. Besides: 'release of the hostages, withdrawal from Kuwait, reestablishment of the legitimate government'.

## News Media and Conflict Escalation

### *A Comparative Study of Gulf War Coverage in US and European Media*

Wilhelm Kempf

#### Introduction

Experiences from the Gulf War and other post-Cold War military conflicts have stimulated an ongoing discussion of the role of the media in modern warfare and conflict situations. Some media critics – such as the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung (1997) – have even claimed that, because of the way media operate in reporting on war and violence, they not only serve as catalysts to unleash violence, but are violent in and by themselves.

The current discussion among journalists and scholars in media research and peace studies focuses on how the media can become vehicles for conflict prevention and for constructive, nonviolent, conflict transformation, including the problem of reporting on how to repair war-torn societies – in material, social and human terms. Proposing a critical peace journalism as an alternative to traditional war reporting does not mean suggesting that violence should not be reported, or that what are reported as facts should not be empirically correct. What it does stress, however, is that the *form* in which they are reported may contribute either to the escalation or to the de-escalation of the conflict.

Escalating conflicts entail systematic distortions of how the parties in the conflict view themselves, their opponents and impartial third parties who try to mediate in the conflict; how they evaluate their goals and actions, etc. The more a society is involved in a conflict, the more will its public and its media be susceptible to such distortions. Even propaganda does not invent an outright false, propagandistic view of the conflict: it simply takes up and fosters these natural processes (see Kempf, 1996a). Therefore, if a piece of journalism looks like propaganda, this does not necessarily mean that it was systematically constructed for propagandistic purposes. It may look that way because the journalist himself fell victim to a heated public atmosphere. One task for critical peace journalism is thus to take these processes into account, in order to break the propaganda trap.

## Method

This chapter presents the results of a multinational content-analytical study of coverage of the Gulf War in US and European media. Emphasizing that distortions of the conflict perception will be stronger, the more a society is involved in the conflict itself and the closer it is to the conflict region (in historical, political, economic or ideological terms), this study compares media from the USA, Germany and Scandinavia. Additionally, some Third World media have been included.

The content analysis covered a total of 31 dates pertaining to 10 time-spots between 2 August 1990 and 15 January 1993. Gulf War coverage in nationwide prestige papers, tabloid papers, regional papers and in non-commercial television channels for those 31 dates was analysed. Altogether a total of  $n = 4096$  news items was included in the sample.<sup>1</sup> Statistical analysis of the data was based on the method of Latent Styles Analysis.<sup>2</sup>

## Media Construction of the Conflict

### Explanation of the conflict

Explanations of the conflict involving the allegation or query of one or several of the following causes were presented in a total of  $n=167$  (4.1%) of the news items analysed:

1. The interest of Iraq in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening its power and dominance.
2. The interest of the Coalition (or some of its members) in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening their power and dominance.
3. Iraq's claims of historical right to the territory of Kuwait.
4. Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq about the border dispute and/or the level of oil exports.
5. US (or other coalition member's) misleading diplomacy.

According to the AIC Criterion (Akaike, 1987), the overall distribution of these variables could be identified as being a mixture distribution of 5 latent classes, or patterns for explaining the conflict.

1. Style 1, the most frequently found pattern, is characteristic of 36.6% of the explanations given. Here the main cause of the conflict is seen as being the Iraqi desire to control oil resources and to dominate the region:
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) Iraq's interest in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening its power and dominance is mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
  - Only rarely (4.9%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.

- Sometimes (4.9%) Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq about the border dispute and/or the level of oil exports is mentioned as an explanation of the conflict.
  - Sometimes (4.9%) the Coalition's (or some of its members') diplomacy and/or misleading of Iraq is mentioned as the explanation of the conflict.
2. Style 2 is characteristic of 26.3% of the explanations and focuses on Iraq's historical claims:
- Unequivocally (100.0%) Iraq's claims of historical right to the territory of Kuwait are mentioned as an explanation of the conflict.
  - Only rarely (4.6%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Often (29.4%) Iraqi interest in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening its power and dominance is mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
  - Only rarely (4.6%) is the interest of the Coalition (or of some of its members) in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening their power and dominance mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
  - Occasionally (4.5%) Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq about the border dispute and/or the level of oil exports is mentioned as an explanation of the conflict.
3. Style 3 is characteristic of 24.6%; it explains the conflict in terms of the Coalition interest in controlling oil resources and strengthening its hegemony.
- Unequivocally (100.0%) the interest of the Coalition (or some of its members) in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening their power and dominance is mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
  - Only rarely (2.4%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Occasionally (7.3%) Iraqi interest in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening its power and dominance is mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
4. Style 4, which is characteristic of 11.4%, attributes the cause of the conflict to Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and/or the Coalition's misleading diplomacy:
- Often (47.4%) Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq about the border dispute and/or the level of oil exports is mentioned as an explanation of the conflict.
  - Often (42.1%) the Coalition's (or some of its members') diplomacy and/or misleading of Iraq is mentioned as the explanation of the conflict.
  - Only rarely (5.3%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - The interest of the Coalition (or some of its members) in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening their power and dominance is never stated positively, but is sometimes (10.5%) denied, doubted or questioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
  - Iraqi interest in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening its power and dominance is never stated positively as cause(s) of the conflict, though it is occasionally (5.3%) denied, doubted or questioned.

5. Only 1.2% follow the pattern of the 5th style, which gives a comprehensive explanation of the conflict by presenting Iraq as the aggressor, but without mentioning any misleading diplomacy on the part of the Coalition.
- Unequivocally (100.0%) Iraqi interest in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening its power and dominance is mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict.
  - This is never denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) Iraq's claims of historical right to the territory of Kuwait are mentioned as an explanation of the conflict,
  - but these are always (100.0%) denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq about the border dispute and/or the level of oil exports is mentioned as an explanation of the conflict,
  - but often (50.0%) this is denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Often (50.0%) the interest of the Coalition (or some of its members) in controlling oil resources and/or strengthening their power and dominance is mentioned as cause(s) of the conflict,
  - but equally often (50.0%) this is denied, doubted or questioned.
  - The Coalition's diplomacy and/or misleading of Iraq are neither mentioned positively (0.0%) nor negatively (0.0%) as an explanation of the conflict.

As Table 1 shows, this comprehensive explanation was found only in German media. As compared to other Western countries, the German media left the conflict unexplained (style 0) least frequently. They most often explained the conflict as a 'war for oil', citing either Iraqi (styles 1 and 5) or the Coalition's (style 3) interest in controlling oil resources or dominating the region as causes of the conflict.

**Table 1.** Explanation of the Gulf conflict: Style usage in Western media (chi-square = 40.84, df = 20, p < 0.01)

	FIN	D	N	S	USA	Total
Style 0	0.9712	0.9401	0.9633	0.9512	0.9676	0.9599
Style 1	0.0155	0.0215	0.0152	0.0150	0.0120	0.0156
Style 2	0.0066	0.0107	0.0101	0.0176	0.0084	0.0105
Style 3	0.0022	0.0215	0.0089	0.0149	0.0048	0.0097
Style 4	0.0044	0.0031	0.0025	0.0014	0.0072	0.0038
Style 5	0.0000	0.0031	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0005
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*Abbreviations:* FIN = Finland, D = Germany, N = Norway, S = Sweden, USA = United States of America

While the Finnish media made the fewest efforts to explain the conflict, the Norwegian media come closest to the mean, i.e. they followed the general



pattern when explaining the conflict: 'Iraq is to blame'. The Swedish media, in contrast, assumed a position of some relative distance to this explanation. They tended to mention Iraq's historical claims (style 2) and also the Coalition's oil dependency and hegemonic interests (style 3) more often than the media in most of the other countries.

The US media did not make great efforts to explain the conflict. On the other hand, they – more than all other countries – took up self-critical topics like Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy (style 4).

Analysing the style usage in different types of media (cf. Table 2) we notice that the prestige papers left the conflict unexplained (style 0) least often. Especially style 4 (Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy) and style 3 (Coalition's oil and hegemonic interests) were used far more frequently than the average. Moreover, prestige papers were the only ones to make use of style 5. (Since this style occurred in German media only, it can be concluded that the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was the only medium which contained news items that gave such a comprehensive explanation of the causes of the conflict.)

**Table 2.** Explanation of the conflict: Style usage in different types of media (chi-square = 34.39, df = 15,  $p < 0.01$ )

Media	TV	Prestige	Popular	Provinc.	Total
Style 0	0.9693	0.9458	0.9761	0.9613	0.9592
Style 1	0.0169	0.0153	0.0152	0.0121	0.0149
Style 2	0.0107	0.0130	0.0043	0.0133	0.0107
Style 3	0.0015	0.0175	0.0022	0.0093	0.0100
Style 4	0.0015	0.0073	0.0022	0.0040	0.0046
Style 5	0.0000	0.0011	0.0000	0.0000	0.0005
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

Although the provincial papers represent roughly the mean distribution of style usage, they blamed the Iraqi oil and power interests as causes of the conflict (style 1) less frequently than all other media. More often than all other media, they took up Iraq's historical claims (style 2).

The latter were most heavily neglected by the tabloids. They followed the TV news in neglecting style 3 (the Coalition's oil and hegemonic interests) and style 4 (Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy) almost completely, thus presenting a one-sided interpretation of the causes of the conflict causes, placing the blame exclusively on Iraq.

The greatest efforts to explain the conflict were made at its very beginning when Iraq invaded Kuwait (time-spot 1). During this phase of the conflict, the dominance of style 1 (Iraqi oil and power interests) was striking. Then, starting with the US Congress vote for military intervention (time-spot 3), the interests

of the Coalition (style 3) became emphasized more strongly; indeed, they were outnumbered by references to Iraq's historical claims (style 2) only during time-spot 5 (bombing of the al-Amirya bunker) and time-spot 7 (military defeat of Iraq). While no explanations of the conflict were presented after the end of the war during time-spots 8 and 9, it is again Iraq's historical claims (style 2) which were used to explain the conflict at time-spot 10 (bombing of Baghdad in January 1993).

### Coalition motives for involvement

The motives of the Coalition (or some of its members) for being involved in the conflict were described in a total of  $n=412$  (10.1%) of the news items analysed. This took the form of allegation or query of one or more of the following aspects:

1. the liberation of Kuwait
2. the reduction of Iraqi power
3. the Coalition's peace concern
4. the reduction of Iraq's nuclear power
5. the containment of Arab and/or Islamic influence
6. securing oil supply and/or stable oil prices.

Latent Class Analysis revealed the joint distribution of these style characteristics to be a mixture distribution of 5 latent styles.

1. Style 1 (52.7%) describes the Coalition's motive (nearly exclusively) as being the liberation of Kuwait.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) is said to be the liberation of Kuwait;
  - only rarely (4.2%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
2. Style 2 (22.7%) focuses on the reduction of Iraqi power.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) is said to be the reduction of Iraqi power;
  - only rarely (2.1%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Often (30.7%) the motive is also said to be the liberation of Kuwait;
  - only rarely (4.3%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
3. Style 3 (12.5%) presents the desire to secure oil supplies and stable oil prices as the aim of the Coalition.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) is said to be securing oil supplies and/or stable oil prices;
  - occasionally (9.6%) this is denied, doubted or questioned.

4. Style 4 (7.0%) describes the Coalition's motive as being the containment of Arab or Islamic influence and reduction of Iraq's nuclear power, rather than the liberation of Kuwait.
  - Often (39.3%) the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) is said to be the containment of Arab and/or Islamic influence;
  - only rarely (3.5%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Sometimes (21.0%) the motive is said to be the reduction of Iraq's nuclear power;
  - occasionally (6.9%) this is denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Only rarely is the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) said to be securing oil supplies and/or stable oil prices (6.3%);
  - likewise, this is rarely denied, doubted or questioned (3.7%).
  - While this is never stated directly, it is often (41.6%) denied, doubted or questioned that the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) is the liberation of Kuwait.
  - While it is never stated directly, the motive is occasionally denied, doubted or questioned as being a concern with peace.
  - While it is never stated directly, the motive is occasionally denied, doubted or questioned as being the reduction of Iraqi power.
5. Style 5 (5.1%) states peace concern as the Coalition's main motive, also involving the liberation of Kuwait and the Coalition's oil interests
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the motive of the Coalition (or some of its members) is said to be their concern for peace.
  - Often (42.8%) the motive is said to be the liberation of Kuwait.
  - Sometimes (19.0%) the motive is said to be securing oil supplies and/or stable oil prices.

Table 3 shows that the Scandinavian media were rather silent about the motives of the Coalition (style 0), including the goal of liberating Kuwait (style 1), which was the main propaganda motive from the US side. The Swedish media, who maintained the greatest silence on this question, went to some lengths to avoid giving the impression that the Coalition's oil interests could be their motive for being involved in the war: styles 3 and 5 are not found in the Swedish media at all.

Both the German and the US media put much more emphasis on explaining the Coalition's motives than did the media in Scandinavia. In doing so, they specifically tended to idealize the Coalition's intentions by presenting these as being the liberation of Kuwait (style 1) and/or the Coalition's peace concern (style 5). In both Germany and the USA, the media also tended to demonize the intentions of the enemy, although by different means: while the US media most strongly tended to legitimate the Coalition's motives through the need to reduce Iraqi power (style 2), the German media most often saw the Coalition's motives as lying in the containment of Arab or Islamic influence (style 4).

**Table 3.** Coalition's motives for involvement in the conflict: Style usage in Western media (chi-square = 107.64, df = 20, p < 0.001)

	FIN	D	N	S	USA	Total
Style 0	0.9246	0.8433	0.9253	0.9376	0.8403	0.8957
Style 1	0.0366	0.0800	0.0279	0.0394	0.0938	0.0548
Style 2	0.0120	0.0291	0.0246	0.0163	0.0388	0.0239
Style 3	0.0118	0.0228	0.0157	0.0000	0.0161	0.0131
Style 4	0.0083	0.0156	0.0040	0.0068	0.0025	0.0071
Style 5	0.0067	0.0092	0.0025	0.0000	0.0084	0.0054
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*Abbreviations:* FIN = Finland, D = Germany, N = Norway, S = Sweden, USA = United States of America

Though there is little difference with respect to the presentations of the Coalition's motives in different types of media (cf. Table 4), this topic was taken up most often by the TV news. Here more weight was given to the liberation of Kuwait (style 1), and particularly to the reduction of Iraqi power (style 2), than in any other types of media.

**Table 4.** Coalition's motives for involvement in the conflict: Style usage in different types of media (chi-square = 28.13, df = 15, p < 0.05)

Media	TV	Prestige	Popular	Provinc.	Total
Style 0	0.8694	0.8928	0.9262	0.9080	0.8994
Style 1	0.0663	0.0576	0.0434	0.0427	0.0531
Style 2	0.0411	0.0211	0.0108	0.0259	0.0228
Style 3	0.0123	0.0132	0.0108	0.0135	0.0125
Style 4	0.0078	0.0080	0.0044	0.0073	0.0070
Style 5	0.0031	0.0073	0.0043	0.0027	0.0051
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

When the conflict started, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (time-spot 1), two patterns of motivation were given equal emphasis: the liberation of Kuwait (style 1) and the Coalition's oil interests (style 3). In the third place came the reduction of Iraqi power (style 2).

Of these, the liberation of Kuwait (style 1) was used as the main propaganda motive, being used increasingly until the military defeat of Iraq (time-spot 7), after which it was no longer of any account. The reduction of Iraqi power (style 2) played a minor role during the prewar phase. Then, during the phase of military action (time-spot 4 until time-spot 7), this motive became recognised increasingly, until it diminished again during time-spot 8 (Coalition measures to protect Iraqi Kurds). Finally, during the last two time-spots (August 1992 and January 1993), it was the only motive presented in order to explain the Coalition's involvement.

The Coalition's interest in securing oil supplies and stable oil prices (style 3) was mentioned primarily at the start of the conflict (time-spot 1), and (even more so) in connection with the US Congress vote for military intervention (time-spot 3). During the phase of military action, it began to fade from sight, until it was no longer referred to during time-spot 7 (military defeat of Iraq) and afterwards. In the context of the UN ultimatum (time-spot 2), almost no mention was made of the Coalition's oil interests (style 3). If they were mentioned at all, this was in the context of the Coalition's peace concern (style 5), which peaked in prominence at this point of the conflict.

The containment of Arab or Islamic influence (style 4) was present as a background motivation throughout the entire conflict until the victory of the Coalition (time-spot 7).

### The UN role in the conflict

In a total of  $n=236$  (5.8%) of the news items analysed, the role of the UN in the conflict was described, by allegation or query, along one or more of the following dimensions:

1. the United Nations as the forum and/or voice of the world community,
2. the United Nations as an instrument for peaceful solutions,
3. the United Nations' task as to uphold international laws and/or to punish crimes against the right of national sovereignty,
4. the USA and/or Coalition as acting in the name of the United Nations,
5. the United Nations as influenced and/or dominated by the USA and/or the UK,
6. the US offer to pay its debts to the UN mentioned in connection with the UN declaration(s).

Latent Class Analysis describes the joint distribution of these style characteristics as the mixture distribution of 5 latent styles.

1. Style 1 (38.7%) deals with the USA and the Coalition as acting in the name of the UN.
  - As a rule (97.2%), the USA and/or Coalition are described as acting in the name of the United Nations.
  - Sometimes (10.9%) this is denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Sometimes (11.2%) the United Nations is described as an instrument for or aiming at peaceful solutions.
  - Occasionally (7.8%) the role of the United Nations is described as being to serve as the forum and/or voice of world community.
  - Only rarely (6.7%) is the United Nations described as being influenced and/or dominated by the USA and/or the UK.

2. Style 2 (18.5%) describes the UN as dominated by the USA and/or the UK.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the United Nations is described as being influenced and/or dominated by the USA and/or the UK.
  - Sometimes (13.7%) the United Nations is described as an instrument for peaceful solutions.
  - Only rarely is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Though the United Nations' role is never directly described as being to serve as forum and/or voice of the world community, this is occasionally denied, doubted or questioned.
3. Style 3 (17.6%) describes the UN as an instrument for peace.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the United Nations is described as an instrument for peaceful solutions.
  - Occasionally (4.7%) the United Nations' role is described as the forum and/or voice of the world community.
4. Style 4 (15.6%) discusses the UN's role as an instrument to uphold international law.
  - As a rule (92.0%), the task of the United Nations is described as to uphold international laws and/or to punish crimes against the right of national sovereignty.
  - This is only rarely (5.4%) denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Sometimes (14.6%) the United Nations' role is described as being to act as the forum and/or voice of the world community.
  - Sometimes (14.5%) the United Nations is described as an instrument for peaceful solutions,
  - only rarely (2.7%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Occasionally (5.8%) the USA and/or Coalition are described as acting in the name of the United Nations.
  - Occasionally (5.8%) the United Nations is described as being influenced and/or dominated by the USA and/or the UK,
  - Occasionally (2.7%) this is denied, doubted or questioned.
5. Style 5 (9.5%) describes the UN as a forum of the world community.
  - Unequivocally (100.0%) the role of the United Nations is described as being to serve as the forum and/or voice of the world community.
  - Sometimes (17.7%) the United Nations is described as being influenced and/or dominated by the USA and/or the UK,
  - Only rarely (4.4%) is this denied, doubted or questioned.

Table 5 shows gross national differences concerning attention paid to the role of the UN in the conflict. The German media took up this topic more than 5 times as often (11.83% of the German news items) as the US ones (2.28% of the US news items).

The discussion within the *German* media was quite controversial. While the frequent use of style 1 (USA and Coalition acting in the name of the UN) and style 5 (UN as forum for the world community) points towards using the

UN for the legitimization of the Coalition involvement, the frequent use of style 2 (UN dominated by the USA and/or the UK) and the rare use of style 3 (UN as instrument for peace) point in the opposite direction, indicating critical distance from the Coalition involvement.

The UN role was also clearly important in the *Swedish* media, where the UN was idealized (more often than in all other countries) as an instrument for peace (style 3) and (nearly as often as in Finland) as an instrument for the enforcement of international law (style 4). Though the UN role plays a relatively smaller role in the *Finnish* media, there is a tendency similar to that of the Swedish media: the UN was idealized (nearly as often as in Sweden) as an instrument for peace (style 3) and (more often than in any other country) as an instrument for the reinforcement of international law (style 4).

The *Norwegian* media paid nearly as little attention to the UN role in the conflict as the US media did. Particularly low frequencies of style 1 (discussion of USA and Coalition as acting in the name of UN) and style 2 (UN dominated by the USA and/or the UK) indicate that arguments that might be seen as critical to the USA were largely avoided.

**Table 5.** The UN role in the conflict: Style usage in Western media (chi-square = 135.35, df = 20,  $p < 0.001$ )

	FIN	D	N	S	USA	Total
Style 0	0.9468	0.8817	0.9646	0.9281	0.9772	0.9425
Style 1	0.0156	0.0707	0.0089	0.0286	0.0037	0.0233
Style 2	0.0066	0.0229	0.0050	0.0122	0.0024	0.0091
Style 3	0.0131	0.0045	0.0050	0.0187	0.0106	0.0106
Style 4	0.0124	0.0081	0.0090	0.0111	0.0049	0.0092
Style 5	0.0054	0.0120	0.0075	0.0013	0.0012	0.0053
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

Abbreviations: FIN = Finland, D = Germany, N = Norway, S = Sweden, USA = United States of America

A similar pattern can be found in the popular press (cf. Table 6), which seems to be most inclined to transmit the US view on the UN's role in the conflict.

While the TV news presented an undifferentiated picture of the USA and Coalition acting in the name of the UN (style 1) – which is seen as forum for the world community (style 5) – it was the regional press who tried to keep some critical distance. Provincial papers particularly often took up the topic of the UN as an instrument for peace (style 3), which, however, is seen as dominated by the USA and/or UK (style 2). Very rarely did they feature the USA and Coalition as simply acting in the name of the United Nations (style 1).

The prestige papers put the greatest emphasis on the role of the world organization. They reported on it with less critical distance than the regional press (cf. style 2), however, and more than all other papers they saw the UN as an instrument for upholding international law (style 4).

**Table 6.** The UN role in the conflict: Style usage in different types of media (chi-square = 50.46, df = 15, p < 0.001)

Media	TV	Prestige	Popular	Provinc.	Total
Style 0	0.9416	0.9306	0.9707	0.9373	0.9426
Style 1	0.0354	0.0289	0.0055	0.0162	0.0223
Style 2	0.0076	0.0112	0.0054	0.0185	0.0107
Style 3	0.0030	0.0122	0.0064	0.0158	0.0101
Style 4	0.0033	0.0138	0.0045	0.0069	0.0088
Style 5	0.0090	0.0033	0.0074	0.0052	0.0055
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

At an earlier stage of the conflict, during time-spot 2 (UN ultimatum), the UN had been mainly described as being dominated by the USA and/or the UK (style 2). However, the UN was primarily featured as an instrument for peace (style 3) during time-spot 3 (US Congress vote for military intervention). During the war (time-spots 4-7), and even more so during the postwar military actions in 1992 and 1993 (time-spots 9 and 10), style 1 – the USA and Coalition acting in the name of the UN – became the dominant description of the UN role in the conflict.

#### Alternative ways to settle the conflict

Alternative ways to settle the war are among those themes that have been discussed most extensively in the media. A total of n=740 (18.1%) of the analysed news items dealt with this topic by allegation or query of one or several of the following arguments:

1. Force against Iraq is the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict.
2. Economic embargo on trade with Iraq should be given or should have been given more time to be effective.
3. Iraq takes the initiative for negotiations or peace talks.
4. Coalition or some of its member-states (excluding UN) takes initiatives for negotiations or peace talks.
5. UN takes initiatives for negotiations or peace talks.
6. Third-parties or neutral countries take initiatives for negotiations or peace talks.

According to Latent Class Analysis these arguments were combined into 9 latent styles.

1. Style 1 (29.0%), the most frequently used style, discusses third-party initiatives.



- Nearly without exception (99.9%) a third-party or neutral initiative for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq is mentioned.
  - Sometimes (14.1%) this initiative is doubted, denied, questioned or relativized.
2. Style 2 (16.7%) can be described as pure military logic.
    - Nearly without exception (99.9%) force against Iraq is described as the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict.
  3. Style 3 (14.3%) is characterized by the discussion and denial of military logic.
    - Nearly without exception (99.9%) force against Iraq is doubted, denied or questioned as being the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict, but
    - this statement is also corroborated quite often (38.0%).
  4. Style 4 (11.4%) discusses (and often refutes) Iraqi initiatives.
    - Though (as a rule: 97.0%) Iraqi initiatives for negotiations or peace talks are mentioned,
    - these initiatives are often (41.0%) doubted, denied or questioned, however.
    - Sometimes (13.4%) force against Iraq is described as being the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict, and
    - sometimes (13.3%) a third-party or neutral initiative for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq is mentioned.
  5. Style 5 (10.1%) argues in favour of economic rather than military means.
    - Though (as a rule: 98.2%) it is said that the economic embargo on trade with Iraq should be given or should have been given more time to be effective,
    - this is often (25.3%) doubted, denied or questioned.
    - Sometimes (20.2%) force against Iraq is doubted, denied or questioned as being the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict; sometimes (13.0%) is said to that force is the most effective or even the only possibility.
  6. Style 6 (7.8%) reports about UN and third-party initiatives.
    - As a rule (98.2%) UN initiatives for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq are mentioned,
    - sometimes (10.2%) also third-party or neutral initiatives are mentioned.
  7. Style 7 (6.3%) reports about Coalition and third-party initiatives.
    - Nearly without exception (99.9%) the initiatives of Coalition or member-state (excluding UN) for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq are mentioned;
    - often (31.0%) mention is also made of third-party or neutral initiatives.

8. Style 8 (2.3%) deals with third-party initiatives, either presenting arguments pro and contra, or two-sided messages.
  - Though (as a rule: 92.0%) third-party or neutral initiatives for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq are mentioned positively,
  - these initiatives are doubted, denied or questioned nearly without exception (99.0%).
  - While it is often (40.6%) doubted, denied or questioned whether force is the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict,
  - this is more often (49.7%) stated to be so.
9. Style 9 (2.0%) presents a comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives.
  - Nearly without exception (99.9%) UN initiatives for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq are mentioned;
  - often (50.0%) these initiatives are doubted, denied or questioned, however.
  - In most cases (79.8%) also third-party or neutral initiatives for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq are mentioned;
  - sometimes (13.5%) these are doubted, denied or questioned.
  - Often (38.2%) the initiatives of Coalition or member-states (excluding the UN) for negotiations or peace talks with Iraq are mentioned also;
  - sometimes (20.3%) they are doubted, denied or questioned.
  - Though often (39.2%) force against Iraq is described as the only possible or most effective way to settle the conflict,
  - this is often (29.3%) denied, doubted or questioned as well.
  - Often (38.2%) Iraqi initiatives for negotiations or peace talks are mentioned;
  - only occasionally (8.4%) are they denied, doubted or questioned.
  - The economic embargo does not play any role in this discussion (corroboration: 0.1%; denial etc. 0.1%).

Table 7 reveals gross national differences with respect to style usage.

In the *US* media, the presentation of alternative ways to settle the war was clearly determined by the strategic interests of the USA. UN and third-party initiatives (styles 1, 6 and 8) were accorded much less attention than in the European countries. There was little discussion or denial of military logic (style 3) and no comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives at all (style 9).

The most extensive and controversial discussion of alternative ways to settle the war was presented by the *German* media, who took up the topic more than three times as often as the average Western media. While the picture painted by the German media followed the pattern of military logic (style 2) three times as often as the average, criticism of military logic (style 3) was presented even five times as often as the average of the Western countries, and a comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives (style 9) was presented three times more frequently.

In the *Scandinavian* countries, military logic (style 2) was less important than in the USA and Germany. In the Finnish media, considerable attention was directed to UN and third-party initiatives (styles 1, 6 and 8). A comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives (style 9) was presented more often than in all other Western countries except Germany. Similarly, in the Swedish media the topic was also taken up more in connection with third-party and UN initiatives (styles 1 and 6). Moreover, the Swedish media focused on economic sanctions (style 5) more than the media of any other country did. The Norwegian media were the least prone to discuss how to settle the conflict. Third-party initiatives (styles 1 and 8) and alternative solutions (style 9) were – as in the USA – mentioned rather seldom. Again, as in the USA, there was a low frequency of style 3 (discussion and denial of military logic) as compared to the mean.

**Table 7.** Alternative ways to settle the war: Style usage in Western media (chi-square = 544.20, df = 36,  $p < 0.001$ )

	FIN	D	N	S	USA	Total
Style 0	0.8259	0.6114	0.8886	0.8440	0.8691	0.8155
Style 1	0.0693	0.0459	0.0421	0.0634	0.0398	0.0525
Style 2	0.0178	0.0917	0.0147	0.0169	0.0271	0.0313
Style 3	0.0119	0.1319	0.0029	0.0046	0.0027	0.0267
Style 4	0.0214	0.0377	0.0158	0.0113	0.0229	0.0214
Style 5	0.0176	0.0249	0.0119	0.0257	0.0160	0.0188
Style 6	0.0107	0.0171	0.0160	0.0203	0.0068	0.0138
Style 7	0.0131	0.0124	0.0065	0.0107	0.0155	0.0117
Style 8	0.0068	0.0152	0.0009	0.0008	0.0000	0.0044
Style 9	0.0054	0.0118	0.0005	0.0023	0.0000	0.0037
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*Abbreviations:* FIN = Finland, D = Germany, N = Norway, S = Sweden, USA = United States of America

In terms of different types of media (cf. Table 8), the topic was most extensively dealt with in the TV news, which often followed a pattern of military logic (style 2) and also focused on the discussion and refusal of Iraqi initiatives (style 4) more often than any other type of media did. The tabloid papers put the least emphasis on different ways to settle the conflict. When this was discussed, they followed the pattern of military logic (style 2) more often than all other papers did. Iraqi initiatives (style 4) were almost completely ignored.

**Table 8.** Alternative ways to settle the war: Style usage in different types of media (chi-square = 105.08, df = 27,  $p < 0.001$ )

Media	TV	Prestige	Popular	Provinc.	Total
Style 0	0.7296	0.8335	0.8547	0.8200	0.8193
Style 1	0.0665	0.0398	0.0531	0.0691	0.0524
Style 2	0.0359	0.0259	0.0351	0.0293	0.0302
Style 3	0.0393	0.0234	0.0214	0.0250	0.0258
Style 4	0.0538	0.0195	0.0063	0.0126	0.0207
Style 5	0.0191	0.0230	0.0087	0.0179	0.0183
Style 6	0.0206	0.0151	0.0086	0.0130	0.0141
Style 7	0.0168	0.0141	0.0075	0.0053	0.0114
Style 8	0.0117	0.0024	0.0023	0.0045	0.0042
Style 9	0.0068	0.0033	0.0022	0.0032	0.0036
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

Style 5 (comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives), which had played a dominant role in the prewar phase (time-spots 2–3), was no longer of any significance once the war had started (time-spot 4–10). Discussion and denial of military logic (style 3) was most frequently found during time-spot 3 (US Congress vote for military intervention) and time-spot 4 (beginning of air raids against Iraq) as well as during time-spot 9 (Coalition's measures to protect Iraqi Shias) and time-spot 10 (bombing of Baghdad to force Iraq to fulfil ceasefire conditions). While style 3 was dominant during time-spot 3 and even during time-spot 9, the presentation of different ways to settle the conflict switched towards the approval of military logic (style 2) during the following time-spots 4 and 10. Once the military machine was in action, there seemed to be little room for critical discussion in the media, and military logic predominated. Discussion of third-party initiatives (style 1) was predominately used during time-spot 5 (bombing of the al-Amirya bunker) and time-spot 6 (final peace proposal before the start of the ground offensive).

#### Refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks

Refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks was covered in a total of  $n=256$  (6.3%) of the news items analysed, through allegation or query of one or several of the following statements:

1. Iraq is described as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks.
2. The Coalition (or some of its members) is/are described as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks.

Following Latent Class Analysis, these style characteristics were combined into 3 latent patterns of argumentation:

1. Style 1 (53.0%) blames Iraq for refusing negotiations (etc.).
  - Without exception (100%) Iraq is described as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks.
  - Only rarely (9.6%) is this description denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Occasionally (7.1%) the Coalition (or some of its members) is/are described as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks.
2. Style 2 (38.3%) accuses the Coalition of refusing negotiations (etc.).
  - Without exception (100.0%) the Coalition (or some of its members) is/are described as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks.
  - Very rarely (4.0%) is this description denied, doubted or questioned.
3. Style 3 (8.7%) describes readiness for negotiations etc. (particularly on the Iraqi side).
  - In most cases (88.9%) descriptions of Iraq as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks are denied, doubted or questioned.
  - Descriptions of the Coalition as not being (or not having been) willing to take up negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks are denied (27.4%), doubted or questioned somewhat more often than they are corroborated (19.6%).

**Table 9.** Refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks: Style usage in Western media (chi-square = 112.13, df = 12,  $p < 0.001$ )

	FIN	D	N	S	USA	Total
Style 0	0.9601	0.8602	0.9557	0.9362	0.9532	0.9366
Style 1	0.0188	0.0628	0.0392	0.0285	0.0228	0.0329
Style 2	0.0199	0.0553	0.0039	0.0271	0.0240	0.0248
Style 3	0.0012	0.0217	0.0013	0.0082	0.0001	0.0057
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*Abbreviations:* FIN = Finland, D = Germany, N = Norway, S = Sweden, USA = United States of America

From Table 9 we can once again note considerable national differences in style usage. While the German media covered the topic more than twice as often as the average, the US media paid scant attention to it. Whereas (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations (style 3) was reported in the German media even four times as often as the average, the US media made no mention of it whatsoever. Finnish and Norwegian media were also quite silent. While the Finnish media show a similar picture as the US media do, however, the Norwegian media reported on the refusal of negotiations even more one-sidedly, putting the blame exclusively on Iraq (style 1).

**Table 10.** Refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks: Style usage in different types of media (chi-square = 61.27, df = 9, p < 0.001)

Media	TV	Prestige	Popular	Provinc.	Total
Style 0	0.8833	0.9402	0.9696	0.9387	0.9375
Style 1	0.0597	0.0349	0.0205	0.0213	0.0331
Style 2	0.0431	0.0203	0.0076	0.0359	0.0239
Style 3	0.0140	0.0046	0.0022	0.0042	0.0055
Total	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

Comparison of different types of media (cf. Table 10) shows that the TV news paid the most attention to the topic of negotiations (etc.), and that they also reported on (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations (style 3) more often than did the print media. The tabloids painted a picture similar to that offered by the Norwegian media. The Coalition's refusal to negotiate (style 2) and (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations (style 3) were rarely reported. In contrast to this, it is again the regional press that sought to develop some critical distance from Coalition propaganda. While the Coalition's refusal to negotiate (style 2) was reported more often than the average of all media types, the provincial papers wrote of Iraqi refusal of negotiations (style 1) less frequently than did other types of media. As regards the time series of style usage, blaming the Iraqi side for not being willing to take up negotiations (style 1) was dominant from the start of the conflict (time-spot 1) until the end of the war. Only during time-spot 2 (UN ultimatum) and time-spot 7 (military defeat of Iraq) was more attention paid to the Coalition's refusal to negotiate (style 2). (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations (style 3) was hardly reported at all during the prewar phase (time-spots 1–3), nor at time-spot 4 (start of air raids against Iraq). At time-spot 5 (al-Amirya bombing) and afterwards, relatively more attention was paid to it.

## Comparative Analysis

### News media

Comparison of different types of media can reveal the role which television channels and the popular press played as instruments of war propaganda. We see how nationwide prestige papers and the provincial press were far more critical about the war and – sometimes – even displayed a tendency towards peace journalism.

*Television News:* TV news presented a one-sided interpretation of the conflict causes, putting the blame exclusively on Iraq. The Coalition's oil interests as well as Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy were almost totally neglected. The Coalition's motives for being involved in the conflict were explained by TV news more often than by the other media, and with more emphasis on the liberation of Kuwait and particularly on the reduction of Iraqi power. Describing the role of the UN in the

conflict, the TV news presented an undifferentiated picture, idealizing the USA and Coalition as acting in the name of UN, which was described as the forum for the world community.

Though the topic of different ways to settle the conflict was most extensively dealt within the TV news broadcasts, they often followed a pattern of military logic, however, and focused on the Coalition's refusal of Iraqi initiatives for negotiations more often than any other type of media did. On the other hand, the TV news paid most attention to the topic of negotiations, cease-fire or peace talks, however, and also reported on (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations more often than the print media did.

*Tabloid papers:* The popular press painted an even more one-sided picture of the conflict than the television channels did. In their explanations of the conflict, they not only neglected the Coalition's oil interests as well as Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy, they also told less about Iraq's historical claims than all other types of media did. The result was an interpretation of conflict causes that put the blame exclusively on Iraq.

As regards the UN role in the conflict, the tabloids seemed to be most inclined to transmit the US view, which did not give much significance to the United Nations. Moreover, the tabloid papers put the least emphasis on different ways to settle the conflict. If they took up this topic, they followed the pattern of military logic more often than all other papers. Iraqi initiatives were almost completely ignored; likewise, the Coalition's refusal to negotiate and (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations were rarely reported.

*Prestige Papers:* The prestige papers put most emphasis on explanations of the conflict. Especially Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy as well as the Coalition's oil interests were taken into account much more frequently than the overall media average. Moreover, prestige papers are the only ones in which a comprehensive explanation of the conflict was to be found. On the other hand, this style was found only in German media; thus, in our sample it occurred in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and nowhere else. The prestige papers also put the greatest emphasis on the role of the United Nations in the conflict. They reported on it with less critical distance than the regional press, however, and more than all other papers they portrayed the UN as an instrument to uphold international law.

*Provincial Papers:* The regional press made remarkable efforts at maintaining distance and objectivity. As regards the explanation of the conflict, the provincial papers blamed Iraqi oil interests less frequently than all other media, and more often than all other media they took up Iraq's historical claims as an explanation. Moreover, the regional press tried to keep some critical distance with respect to the role of the UN in the conflict. Though provincial papers particularly often took up the topic of the UN as an instrument for peace, they often portrayed the organization as being dominated by the USA and/or UK. Only rarely did they feature the USA and Coalition as simply acting in the name of the United Nations.

As regards refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks, it is again the regional press that tried to develop some critical distance from Coalition propaganda. While Coalition's refusal to negotiate was reported more often than in the average, the provincial papers also accused the Iraq of refusing negotiations less frequently than other types of media did.

### International comparison

Although the Gulf war coverage had been orchestrated to a high degree by measures of censorship, the implementation of a pool system and the transnational influences of US media on coverage in other countries, cross-national comparison of style usage unveils notable national differences. These can be ascribed both to historical and political traditions and to the position of the various nations within the conflict.

*US Media:* The USA, as the leading nation of the Coalition, clearly tends to make its own policy. While there was not so much need for the US media, therefore, to explain the causes of the conflict, they were also more open to taking up self-critical topics like Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy, than were the European media.

On the other hand, the US media made great efforts to explain the Coalition's motives for being involved in the war. Here they strongly tended to idealize the Coalition's intentions as being the liberation of Kuwait and/or the Coalition's peace concern.

More than the European countries, the US media also explained the Coalition's motives by the need to reduce Iraqi power. Thus taking hegemonic interests and the struggle for power as legitimate, the US media paid hardly any attention at all to the role of the UN in the conflict. Featuring the USA and the Coalition as acting in the name of the UN played no role at all. US-critical arguments, like the UN being dominated by the USA and/or the UK, were largely avoided. Portraying the UN as an instrument for peace was found to be the only style which was used as frequently in the US as in the European media.

The presentation of alternative ways to settle the war was clearly determined by the strategic interests of the USA. UN and third-party initiatives were far less in focus than in the European media. There was little discussion or denial of military logic, and no comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives at all. Scant attention was paid to the topic of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks. In particular, the US media said nothing about (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations.

*German Media:* The German situation is quite different from the US one. While warfare would seem to be legitimate to the USA, this is not so much the case in Germany, where (at least at the start of the war) there was still a strong peace movement highly conscious of the lessons of World War II: no more war, no more fascism. Germany did not take part in the Gulf War Coalition, but did provide considerable financing. Gulf War coverage was much more controver-



sial than in any other nation studied here, and there was a greater need to explain the conflict to the German public.

While the German media explained the conflict as a 'war for oil', either blaming Iraqi or the Coalition's interests to control oil resources as causes of the conflict much more often than other Western media, Germany was the only country in which a comprehensive explanation of the conflict was presented as well. Like the US media, the German media made great efforts to explain the Coalition's motives and often idealized the Coalition's intentions as being the liberation of Kuwait and/or overriding peace concerns. Moreover, the German media tended to see the Coalition's motives in the containment of Arab or Islamic influence more strongly than any of the other countries did. In order to make the war plausible to the audience, the German media put great emphasis on the UN role in the conflict. In doing so, the discussion within the German media was quite controversial, however. Both the frequent description of the USA and its Coalition as acting in the name of the UN, and the recurring descriptions of the UN as a forum for the world community, point towards using the UN to legitimize the Coalition involvement. On the other hand, the frequent description of the UN as dominated by the USA and/or the UK, as well as the scant emphasis given to the UN as an instrument for peace, point in the opposite direction, indicating a more critical distance to the Coalition.

The German media also presented the most extensive and the most controversial discussion of alternative ways to settle the war. While the picture painted by the German media followed the pattern of military logic three times as often as in the average, criticism of military logic was presented even five times as often as in the average of the Western countries, and a comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives was found three times as frequent as the average. Similarly, the German media also covered the topic of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks more extensively than all other nations, reporting about (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations even four times as frequently as the average.

*Norwegian Media:* Among the Scandinavian countries studied here, Norway was the only NATO member: it also emerged as the most inclined to produce acceptance of the war. In contrast to the situation of the German media, however, there was in Norway no strong anti-war opposition. Accordingly, the Gulf War coverage was much less controversial than in Germany, and the Norwegian media could follow a strategy of keeping rather silent about many of the critical topics.

In their explanation of the conflict the Norwegian media were found to be closest to the mean; they tended to follow the general pattern: 'Iraq is to blame'. Like other Scandinavian media, the Norwegian were rather silent about the Coalition's motives, also as regards the goal of liberating Kuwait – the main propaganda motive from the US side. The Norwegian media also paid nearly as little attention to the UN role as the US media did. We found particularly low frequencies of describing the USA and its allies as acting in the name of UN, and of describing the UN as dominated by the USA and/or the UK; this may

show that the Norwegian media preferred to avoid potentially US-critical arguments.

The Norwegian media were also the least prone to discuss how to settle the conflict. Third-party initiatives and alternative solutions were – as in the USA – mentioned rather seldom. Again, as in the USA, there was dramatically little discussion and denial of military logic. On the other hand, Norway is that nation whose media supported military logic the least often. Like the US, the Norwegian media were quite silent about the refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks. If they did, they reported on the refusal of negotiations even more one-sidedly, however, placing the blame exclusively on the Iraqi side.

*Swedish media:* Sweden has a long tradition of neutrality and peace. Since 1815 Sweden has stayed outside military conflicts; throughout both world wars that was a successful foreign and security policy from the Swedish point of view. Sweden also has a clear pro-UN policy as a small and non-aligned country. A prominent UN Secretary-General was a Swede – Dag Hammarskjöld. And Ingvar Carlsson, the former prime minister, has chaired a UN commission mandated to reconsider the UN organization. To this may be connected a long humanitarian tradition – at least in the self-conception of Swedes – connected with Red Cross aid in the Korean War and in other conflicts like Biafra. Some of this world-view is also reflected in the Swedish coverage of the Gulf War.

To a certain degree, the Swedish media took the position of relative distance to the usual explanation of the conflict, according to which Iraq is solely to blame. They – more than most of the other countries' media – also took up the historical claims on the side of Iraq and also the Coalition's oil dependency. Among the Scandinavian media, who were generally rather silent about the Coalition's motives for being involved in the conflict, the Swedish media were the most silent. In particular, they seemed definitely eager to avoid giving the impression that the Coalition's oil interests could be their motive.

On the other hand, the role of the UN role was clearly important to the Swedish media. More often than in all other countries, the UN was idealized as an instrument for peace and (nearly as often as in Finland) as an instrument for the reinforcement of international law. The topic of how to settle the conflict was also taken up more in connection with third-party and UN initiatives. Moreover, the Swedish media focused on economic sanctions more than did the media in all other countries in our study. As in the other Scandinavian countries, there was scant mention of military logic.

*Finnish media:* The Finnish media clearly tended to keep away from the conflict. They made the least efforts to explain the conflict and – like the media elsewhere in Scandinavia – were rather silent about the Coalition's motives. Though the UN role played a relatively smaller role in the Finnish media, the tendency was similar to that found for Sweden: the UN was idealized (nearly as often as in Sweden) as an instrument for peace and (more often than in any other country) as an instrument for the enforcement of international law.

As in the other Scandinavian countries, military logic played a smaller role in Finnish coverage of different ways to settle the conflict than it did in the USA

and Germany. UN and third-party initiatives were given great attention, and a comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives was presented more often than in all other Western countries but Germany. Although they generally showed a picture similar to that produced by the US media, the Finnish media paid the least attention to the refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks.

## Conclusions

### Explanation of the conflict

Obviously, the media were not prepared for the conflict. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, this triggered a desperate search for possible explanations of the conflict. The most obvious explanation, Iraqi oil and power interests, was the most frequently used. It impressed itself on the perception of the conflict, singling out Iraq as the party at fault. Not until the Coalition intervention was agreed upon did other conflict causes that might qualify this simple image come to the fore: the Coalition's own interests and Iraq's historical claims.

The supposed compulsion to give simple explanations (see Mahr, 1995) prevailed particularly in the television news and in the tabloid papers. Throughout the whole course of the conflict, these two types of media scarcely touched upon the topic of the Coalition's interests at all, nor on Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq, or on the Coalition's misleading diplomacy. The tabloid papers went even further, reporting less on Iraq's historical claims than all other types of media did. A comprehensive explanation of the conflict was given by one single prestige paper only, Germany's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Among all types of media, the prestige papers made the greatest efforts to explain the conflict. They reported both about the Coalition's own interests and about Kuwait's refusal to negotiate with Iraq and the Coalition's misleading diplomacy more often than the average media did.

The German media put the greatest emphasis on explaining the conflict. In doing so, they portrayed the Gulf War mainly as a 'war for oil', thereby maintaining some distance to the war. Though the US media made the fewest efforts to explain the conflict, they discussed self-critical topics like the Coalition's misleading diplomacy more often than any other of the Western media did. As the leading nation of the Coalition, the USA could be said to be able to afford to be self-critical. By contrast, its allies seemed perhaps less entitled to criticism of a policy so clearly dominated by the USA.

### The coalition's motives for being involved in the conflict

When the conflict started with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, two main motives for the Coalition's involvement were put forward with equal weight: the liberation of Kuwait, and the oil interests of the Western world. Much less emphasis was put on the need to curb the power of Iraq, which was presented as a third motive.

The further course of the conflict was found to be characterised by an opportunistic use of motives:

- The liberation of Kuwait was favoured as a propaganda motive and increasingly used throughout the war until the military defeat of Iraq was a fact.
- Only after the enemy image of Iraq had become sufficiently stable did the reduction of Iraqi power start to play a comparable role. In order to avoid the delegitimization of the war as a mere struggle for power and hegemony, the reduction of Iraqi power was mentioned as a Coalition motive quite rarely during the prewar phase. As soon as the war had started, however, its importance increased continuously until the defeat of Iraq. At this point it diminished immediately in importance, but was the only pattern of Coalition motivation which returned on stage during the Coalition's attacks on Iraq in 1992/93.
- While it was functional to hide the Coalition's oil interests behind their alleged peace concern in order to get the UN involved in the conflict, the Coalition's own interests were important for gaining the consent of the US Congress.
- During the war it was helpful to avoid the impression that people had to die for oil, however. There was less and less mention of the Coalition's oil interests, until they were no longer quoted at all at the time of the Coalition's victory and afterwards.

Particularly the German and the US media put great emphasis on explaining the Coalition's motives, and tended to idealize the Coalition intentions as being the liberation of Kuwait and/or the Coalition's abiding concern with peace. In both countries the media also tended to demonize the enemies' intentions – albeit by different means: while the US media legitimated the Coalition's motives by the need to reduce Iraqi power, the German media referred to the containment of Arab or Islamic influence. This motivation, with its clear racist undertones, played hardly any role at all in the US media, which took struggle for power as a natural thing for which no (seemingly moralizing, but in the end racist) justification was needed.

### The UN role in the conflict

At the time of the UN ultimatum, the critical discussion of the UN as dominated by the USA and/or the UK was still very much in focus. On the other hand, it made sense to portray the UN as an instrument for peace when it came to gaining the approval of the US Congress. Afterwards, throughout the whole war and even more so during the postwar interventions in 1992/93, the USA and the Coalition could be seen as acting in the name of the world organization. Such misuse of the United Nations for the purpose of making the war

acceptable (see Meder, 1994) is particularly characteristic of the European media.

As to the US media, they had no need to feature the USA and the Coalition as acting in the name of the UN. However, they generally tended to avoid US-critical arguments like the UN being dominated by the USA and/or the UK.

### Alternative ways to settle the conflict

The media coverage of alternative ways to settle the conflict demonstrated how armed propaganda (see Kempf, 1990) works: as soon as accomplished facts had been created, critical voices turned silent and military logic became dominant. Peaceful alternatives played a significant role only during the prewar phase, when it was essential to justify the war by depicting it as an *ultima ratio*. The discussion of third-party initiatives was orchestrated for the purpose of defence against (possible) criticism of the war (in the context of Iraqi civilian casualties and the forthcoming ground offensive) and thus served the escalation of the conflict as well.

Particularly in the US media, the presentation of alternative approaches was clearly determined by the strategic interests of the USA. Far less attention was paid to UN and third-party initiatives than in the European countries; there was little discussion or denial of military logic, and no comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives at all.

By contrast, German coverage was involved in a discourse with a strong peace movement (see Liegl & Kempf, 1994). They presented the most extensive and the most controversial discussion of alternative ways to settle the conflict. Both military logic and criticism of military logic were presented significantly more often than in the other Western media, and there was more of a comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives than in any other country.

### Refusal of negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks

The significance of the German peace movement is also reflected in the great attention which the German media paid to initiatives for negotiations, ceasefire or peace talks. They dealt with this topic more than twice as often as the other Western media did and put great emphasis on reports about (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations.

Unlike the German media, which thus displayed some tendency towards peace journalism, the US media followed a line of strategic propaganda. While the Coalition's refusal to negotiate was covered to a normal amount, there were no reports of any (mainly Iraqi) readiness for negotiations at all.

The Norwegian media reported on initiatives for negotiations even more one-sidedly than the USA did. Both the (Iraqi) readiness for negotiations and the Coalition's refusal of negotiations were rarely covered. To the US public it was obviously self-evident that one should not negotiate with the Iraqi despot. Accordingly, Baghdad's readiness for negotiations was no topic for them. To the Norwegian public, however, Norway's involvement in the war would not

have been acceptable if Iraqi readiness for negotiations and the Coalition's refusal to search for a peaceful solution of the conflict should have become known.

## Notes

1. For details of the media sample see the introductory chapter of this book. For details of the statistical results see Kempf (1996b).
2. For a brief introduction to the method of Latent Styles Analysis, see chapter 6 in this book.

## US Dominance in Gulf War News?

### *Propaganda Relations Between News Discourses in US and European Media*

Stig A. Nohrstedt

#### Introduction

The Gulf War was not only a historical event of significant proportions, but also a global media event unique in kind. Never before has an international conflict been subjected to such intensive media attention, with the breakthrough for satellite, around-the-clock television news and an all-time high in the number of journalists present in the conflict region (Hachten 1996; Nohrstedt 1992; Swanson & Smith 1993). If there ever was a global media event, this was certainly one. It is therefore of particular interest for media researchers to study how this war was covered in different parts of the world.

Several studies of the news from the Gulf War have been published, but most of them have been restricted to an analysis of news content in single countries. Although such case-studies are valuable, they are not sufficient for understanding the current international media situation and the changed conditions for journalism, in light of the advanced propaganda activities in post-Cold War international conflicts. The most dramatic events on the international political scene in the past decade have been the end of the Cold War and the emergence of the USA as the sole remaining superpower, with all the propaganda advantages that this entails. New media technologies have also radically changed the global media situation and the working conditions for journalists and propaganda strategists alike. Particularly the advent of 24-hour news television channels, with instant, real-time coverage, has made it possible for political and military actors to have direct media access to a worldwide audience.

Moreover, increased news and feature flows between media in different countries tend to globalize the coverage, in the sense that a greater variety of material is available for news editors around the world. This globalization of news flows does not necessarily entail homogeneity and global dominance by one single view, however. As in other globalization processes, a dual perspective, which pays attention both to homogenizing and heterogenizing processes,

is also important with respect to globalization of news journalism (cf. Robertson 1992; see also Chapter 1). Globalization theory points up the need for new perspectives beyond the polarization between the cultural imperialism view of Western (mainly US) dominance, and the pluralistic-postmodern view with its emphasis on heterogeneity and cultural hybridization. These conflicting interpretations – or rather hypotheses – make the challenges to media research in international communication even more important and interesting when it comes to transnational media influences.

Chapter 10 elaborates on the more general implications, with respect to globalization of news coverage and its importance for international politics and opinion formation, of the theoretical approach suggested here. In this chapter I will concentrate mainly on the relations between propaganda and news discourses, and offer some comments on these.

The analysis in this chapter differs from previous studies in its focus on how news coverage changes in different countries over time. To my knowledge there is no other study of the diachronic tendencies and patterns of convergence during the Gulf War. The same is the case with other studies that – at least partly – intend to address questions about dominance and convergence in international news communication (Cohen et al., 1996; Hjarvard, 1995; Swanson & Smith, 1993). It is, however, difficult to draw firm conclusions about the power relations in the transnational flows of news unless proper attention is paid to the trends in the coverage. Cross-national comparisons of news contents at a single point in time – synchronically – cannot provide the answers unless repeated and used for diachronic analyses.<sup>1</sup> Ideally, studies of power and dominance in transnational news flow should combine diachronic content analysis (both quantitative and qualitative), participant news-room observations and reception analysis. This is of course easier said than done, and in the present project we have been restricted to content analysis – although we have combined traditional content analysis, latent class analysis and discourse analysis in order to improve the validity and relevance of the results.

What is then the relation between war propaganda and news? With the possible exception of extreme totalitarian regimes, *news* is not identical with *propaganda*. News journalism is here understood as an institutionalized genre of communication with its special objectives, narrative rules and credibility claims. To the extent that news carries propaganda – and in wartime it certainly does – it is generally contextualized and understood within the particular expectations that this institution is associated with; expectations that the news will provide its audience with reasonably correct and objective information about important events and developments in the social, political, economic and ecological areas, etc. Thus, when propaganda appears in news it is both constructed and received *as news*. From the point of view of the propaganda strategist, this is a great advantage: when propaganda is not regarded as such, it avoids some of the credibility problems that obstruct the impact of ‘open’ propaganda like leaflets, advertisements, political speeches and the like. The public expects from the news media a balanced, accurate and relevant picture of the actual



events. Moreover, the public expects that any propagandistic intentions linked to information, statements, etc. delivered by the parties will have been disarmed by the journalists. This is of course not to say that the public always believes in these institutionalized claims, but is meant simply to indicate the general advantages for those propaganda actors who have wide access to the news as conveyor of messages.

Equally important as being aware of the distinct differences between news and propaganda is being able to see the similarities. The characteristic features of news and propaganda messages are in fact apparently alike. Both are rather simple in cognitive terms, often one-dimensional, and polarized along dimensions of good vs. bad, us vs. them, etc. To some extent this has to do with the basic conditions for capturing the attention of the audience. The use of long-established and traditional narrative rules for story-telling helps to encourage the intended decoding on the part of the audience. More important here is that the various similarities between news and propaganda lower the threshold for strategists seeking to penetrate the media. The most extreme cases would be when the news reports of an international conflict and its involved parties are totally polarized into black-and-white images.

In this chapter the characteristics of propaganda messages will be adapted to a quantitative content analysis of propaganda influences on the news coverage from the Gulf War. As a general framework the news will be understood as a special genre of communication surrounded by other discourses, propaganda activities in particular. Now, quantitative content analysis is not well suited for detailed textual inquiries, but rather constructed for the purpose of scanning vast amounts of material to identify basic characteristics in the material. Compared to qualitative methods like semiotic and discourse analysis, quantitative content analysis gives a more superficial comprehension of the news content and therefore a weaker base for interpretations. Its strengths lie in its capacity to manage huge amounts of empirical data and the potentials for statistical analysis. Precisely because quantitative content analysis lacks sensitivity and depth with respect to textual formats and meanings, it is important to clarify the exact analytical purposes and the interpretative assumptions when applying this method, in the following referred to as traditional content analysis method (TCA). In the following, I will, firstly, comment on the contextual deliberations underlying the analysis, and secondly, present how the dataset is utilized in this study.

War news is a discourse embedded in propaganda. In analysing how this symbolic environment affects the news we have to consider the forms and content of the actual propaganda. What, then, can be said about the propaganda setting in the case of the Gulf War?

The USA took a firm grip on the development of the conflict immediately after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. This leader position was also evident on the propaganda field. To a large extent the initiative in the symbolic warfare was on the side of the USA, both because of its early determination on a military policy and because of the leading international position of the US media.

The US propaganda strategy has been thoroughly studied by Laurien Alexandre (see Chapter 4) and others (e.g. Dorman & Livingston, 1994; Haines 1995, Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992; Kellner, 1992; MacArthur, 1992/1993; Ramsbotham, 1994). Basically, it involved reducing the conflict to a simple matter of law enforcement: Saddam Hussein had violated international law by the annexation of Kuwait; for that he should be punished and also prevented from further aggression against neighbouring countries. This core theme was supported by demonization of the Iraqi president as a new Hitler, by refutations of any signs of willingness to negotiate on the Iraqi side as well as third-party initiatives for peaceful resolution of the conflict and by downplaying of the USA's own interests in the region and cooperation with Saddam Hussein in the Iran–Iraq war in the 1980s. Later, when the actual fighting had started, came massive glorification of the sophisticated weapons, 'smart bombs', etc., the Coalition's military successes – and 'no comments' about the sufferings of the civilian population. Also casualties amongst the US and Coalition troops were to be kept in the background, particularly with respect to visual exposure, due to a fear of negative effects on the 'home front' opinion. This strategy was not totally without pitfalls, but generally it was a success.

Iraqi propaganda, to the extent that it was directed towards an international audience, had of course major difficulties in penetrating the transnational news system. But from Hanne Mathisen's analysis of the *Baghdad Observer* (Chapter 5) and other sources we may deduce that from the Iraqi point of view this conflict originated from the Kuwaiti regime's refusal to take responsibility for the damages its oil policy had caused the Iraqi people. The 'involvement' of Iraqi troops in Kuwait came in response to the request for military aid from revolutionaries who had taken over the government from the Sabah family, a corrupt and immoral regime that also had collaborated with the US and Western finance circles. The USA was depicted as the main enemy of the Arab people; its interference in the region was motivated by the desire to control energy resources. Thus, in the autumn 1990 period, this view saw the conflict as the result of Western imperialism.

I will now comment on the key data and the way they are utilized in the following analysis. It is in relation to the propaganda context composed of contradictory images of the conflict that the content of the news articles will be analysed in this chapter. On the basis of this propaganda context combined with knowledge about the critical aspects of the sequence of events and how these were covered in the media (as documented also in other studies) it is possible to make reasonable interpretations even from the rather superficial TCA data. This will be accomplished in the following way.

Firstly, a distinction will be made between variables that are regarded as indexes of the interdiscursive relations of news coverage, and variables that will be utilized for estimating the propaganda tendencies in the reports. The first group of variables will be referred to as 'contextual' since they indicate interdependencies between the news and the political setting of this conflict. The relevant variables are *sources*, *location* and *actors*. With the source-variable

manifest reference to news sources in the material have been coded in terms of concrete names or labels of news agencies, broadcast or television channels, newspapers, etc. The sources have also been registered as to their affiliation with either side in the conflict. Location is operationalized as the country where the main event takes place. Actors have been coded both in terms of main individual figures (for example, President George Bush, President Saddam Hussein, Prime Minister John Major) and in terms of collectivities (organizations and nation-states).

Together these variables will provide data from which we can analyse different priorities set by the news media: How do they select information, considering that the news flow is heavily influenced by propaganda? In such a situation, it is not easy for journalists to decide who should be regarded as authoritative and relevant supplier of news. With the comparative approach employed here, the purpose is primarily to explore how these priorities vary between media from different countries. The same applies to the location and actor data. As to location: in what places are the relevant actions supposed to happen? That the major part of the news is about events in the Gulf region is to be expected, but to what degree the coverage is concentrated to the US scene is a more open issue for empirical study. And with regard to actors, we need to see whether media in different countries direct their attention to different actors; for example whether the balance of US and UN actors is the same in a German or Swedish view as in an US view of the conflict. Of course, US actors can be expected to be very much in evidence, due to general routines in news journalism, but it is worth looking into the variations between media operating within different national political and cultural contexts, not least from a globalization perspective (see Chapter 1).

The second group of variables can be regarded as indicators of propagandistic influences on the news. As will be developed later in conjunction with the results, this does not mean that the analysis is based on assumptions about direct, linear and mechanical effects from propaganda to news content. On the contrary: the 'propaganda variables' are conceived as indicators of the degree to which the media applied professional defence strategies against the war propaganda. These variables refer to thematic focus and evaluative elements in the news texts, and they enable us to study deviations between the news coverage and the purely or ideal-typical propagandistic image of the conflict. These variables are as follows: *attitudes* toward the involved actors, *topics*, and values and responsibility in relation to *aggression*. It should be underlined that quantitative analysis of the correlating data set does not conclusively substantiate propaganda content in the news discourses. In order to draw definite conclusions, we need more detailed analyses of specific propositions and/or qualitative analysis of textual elements and narrative structures (cf. Chapters 6, 7 and 9). But the TCA method can provide spotwise indications based on frequencies of contextual, thematic and evaluative elements which – together with the results from the other analyses in this book – make it possible to study variations with respect to propaganda consistency between different groups of media. By

the concept 'propaganda consistency' I mean the levels of correspondence between the propaganda content, as documented in previous contributions in this volume and summarized above, and the quantitative patterns produced by the TCA analysis.

For example, the attitude balance between the protagonists as depicted in the media is regarded as an index of the propaganda impact. The coders were instructed to note only clear cases of attitudes in the news items towards the actors (for more details see below). The more pro-Bush and anti-Hussein the attitude scores, the more reasonable it is to conclude that the US and Coalition propaganda has been effective and influenced the news reports. Here, however, we should bear in mind that it is comparative data, i.e. the relative balances found in comparisons between groups of media, that are used in measuring propaganda influences. It is not assumed that a certain imbalance score is indicative of propaganda impact but not scores below that level. The conclusions are, however, founded on the widely shared conception of propaganda as a polarized view of the subject matter (cf. Hellspong, 1992; Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992). But even if a very one-sided and polarized image in terms of attitude balance is found, that is not a conclusive evidence of propaganda – other explanations are in principal always possible. On the other hand, given the war propaganda context of the news coverage in this case, it seems reasonable to consider such a finding an indicator of propaganda impact on the news.

Obviously, some of the objectives for US and Coalition propaganda strategists were to downplay the effectiveness of the economic sanctions and negotiation propositions that threatened to weaken support for the hard US policy line, and to avoid extensive coverage of casualties, both on one's own side and in particular among civilians on the Iraqi side. From that perspective, attention to topics like negotiations and civilian casualties will be utilized as indicators in the assessment of propaganda impact on the news.

Of special relevance in this context is the topic 'media', here used to refer to such aspects as information about media coverage of the conflict, working conditions for journalists, propaganda activities towards the media, etc. A focus on this topic is interpreted as an indicator of 'immunization' against war propaganda and an attempt from the media to make the audience aware of the credibility problems involved.

The 'aggression' variable catches acts of aggression in relation to specific actors. Thus the dataset is utilized to provide statistics about the degree to which the main actors, President Bush and President Hussein, but also nation-states as actors, are associated with violence and physical force in the news. We will also study attitudes to aggression from the respective side and whether this is depicted as a response to earlier actions by the enemy. The aim is to assess the 'aggression balance' between the main antagonists in the conflicts as an indication of the level of propagandistic polarization in media coverage.

Taken together, these analyses will contribute to answering the question whether the propaganda strategists on the Coalition side succeeded in globally orchestrating the media construction of the conflict. The results will be inter-

preted in the light of globalization theory in an attempt to reach a conclusion about the potentials of war propaganda in 'the New World Order'.

Studies of the media coverage of the Gulf War in different national contexts have been pursued in many countries. Several of these studies have analysed the media content from a propaganda perspective and also discussed media management and orchestration of news coverage. (e.g. Kellner, 1992, and Taylor, 1992; see also contributions in Bennett & Paletz, 1994, and Mowlana et al., 1992). These studies have shown that the personification of the conflict – the focus on President Saddam Hussein and his record of crimes and cruelty, as well the historical parallel to Hitler – was a key to achieving the propaganda goal. Part of the reason why this strategy was chosen is that it fits well into the dramaturgy of popular media like television and tabloid journalism, being easy to understand, emotional and therefore effective for propaganda purposes.

The central question in relation to the general aim of this project is to what extent this propaganda strategy succeeded in making the US public convinced of – or at least not opposed to – the rationality of the White House policy in the conflict, while also having a 'rallying effect' in other countries as well (McLeod, et al., 1994, p. 29). Did the same strategy fit as well into the media discourses and political cultures in other Western countries as it did in the USA?

There is no simple answer to this question. Arguments can be found that point in either direction: on the one hand, it can be argued that it is not plausible to expect US propaganda to have had the same effects in other countries because of different national cultures and political traditions.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand there are reasons to believe that although there were national variations in news media coverage, the US propaganda could still have an important effect on the news coverage in other countries as well. In particular the following factors seem to support this assumption:

- the dominant position of the US media in the transnational news exchange;
- the routinized journalistic priorities that ascribe top news value to the actions by superpowers like the USA and to the dramatic war material – often visual – produced and distributed by the US forces;
- the time reduction for analysis in the news production process because of real-time television and instant reporting.

The state of the art in the international communication research field actually reveals contradictory but nonetheless reasoned assumptions (see the overview in Chapter 1). The way out of this situation seems to be comparative studies as an approach for explorations of transnational news flows. More than purely scholarly considerations call for that, and not least concerning the ethical implications for the professionals in the 'global news-room' (Cohen et al., 1996) makes this an urgent task: To what extent is it realistic to expect that news coverage of military conflicts will be fair, accurate and independent under the current integrated system for news exchange of the so-called New World Order?

The results presented in this chapter should be seen in relation to the findings from the other studies in the multi-methodological approach of this project. In this chapter I analyse the available TCA data in order to test the following hypotheses which emanate from an assumption that US propaganda did have a substantial impact on the media coverage globally:

- The media generally show a heavy dependency on the USA and the other members of the Coalition.
- Coverage in the US media is more influenced by propaganda for US policy in the conflict than is the case with the European media<sup>3</sup>.
- Over time, coverage in the European media becomes increasingly pro-USA in views on the conflict.

In this study I have chosen to apply a propaganda approach, as this seems natural considering the nature of the research object. Some findings might have other explanations than those observed in such a perspective, but that is probably unavoidable in empirical research. In any case, I have in this study concentrated on testing the explanatory value of the propaganda approach as a contribution to the search for a comprehensive theory of propaganda and war journalism. More concretely my aim is to test whether an institutionalistic interpretation of the propaganda approach, in which the foreign and security policy traditions in the actual media countries are regarded as a major explanatory factor of propaganda impact on the media coverage, is confirmed by the results. It has, however, not been possible to control statistically, e.g. by factor analysis, whether in specific instances other possible explanations have less explanatory power. Rather the purpose has been to look for a theoretically motivated *Gestalt* and in that respect the analysis here pursued is indeed a hermeneutic project based on quantitative data. Let me also underline that the findings from the quantitative content analysis in this chapter are complemented with the results from the other studies presented in this volume. I have restricted the report of results to those findings that are relevant to what emerges in the other studies where different methods have been applied. With this cross-validity foundation, the conclusions should be reasonably safe. The comprehensive results are presented in the final chapter.

## The News Sample

In the introduction we presented the sample for the quantitative analyses in the project in terms of media and time-spots. The total sample consists of more than 4,000 news items from different types of media in seven countries: from prestige, provincial and popular papers as well as from prime-time television programmes. The period covered includes ten time-spots, two to six days each, from the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in August 1990, till the joint Coalition attacks on Iraqi forces in January 1993 aimed at enforcing the no-flight rules for the north and the south of Iraq.

## Overview of Material and Distribution

The composition of the total material in terms of number of news items is presented in Table 1.

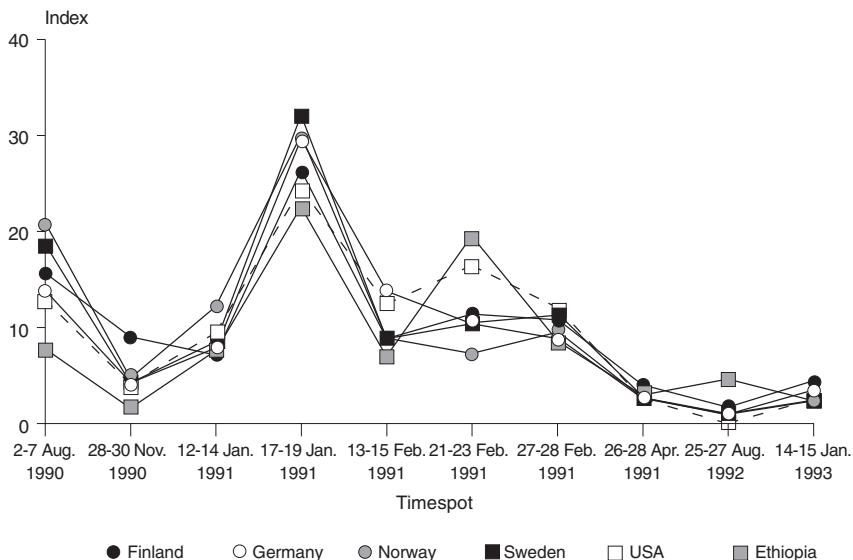
**Table 1.** News material in the comparative content analysis: number of items

	Ethiopia	Finland	Germany	Iraq	Norway	Sweden	USA	Total
Prestige	128	336	262	57	211	316	433	1743
Popular	–	161	133	–	243	169	241	947
Provincial	–	281	133	–	211	127	–	753
TV	–	128	147	–	130	129	121	655
Total	128	906	675	57	796	741	795	4098

In the following analyses, I will concentrate on comparisons between media in Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the USA, commenting on the coverage in the Ethiopian and Iraqi papers only when this is appropriate and relevant for the overall picture. In comparing the five main national media groups I will comment on differences between types of media only when such specifications have consequences for the interpretation of the data.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the news material in the five ‘main countries’ plus the Ethiopian papers, but not the Iraqi paper, for different time-spots (see Chapter 1 for details about the timespots).

**Figure 1.** Relative amount of coverage over time; percentage of total in each timespot, by national media group





Obviously, Gulf War events are hot news in all the media dealt with here. An average of six news items per day and per medium (newspaper or television programme) appeared during the research periods. Top priority is given to the time-spot where dramatic combat events occur, particularly time-spots one and four. There are only two time-spots in which the general pattern of relative priority conformity between the groups is broken: the first and the sixth time-spots, i.e. the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and Gorbachev's peace negotiation proposal. In both cases, the Ethiopian group deviates from the others: in the first time-spot, with its relatively low attention, and in the sixth time-spot with the relatively high degree of attention paid.

## Sources

The clearest indicator of the contextual relations of the news reports is probably the source references. In this analysis the concept 'source' has been defined as professional and institutional suppliers of material to the media – news agencies, other media and spokespersons. The news texts are often far from complete and sometimes selective in indicating sources; this may be for various reasons, for example contractual relations, credibility objectives or news-room routines. But there is no reason why these possible variations between the media practices with respect to source notification should jeopardize the validity of the results from comparisons on the aggregated level, i.e. between media groups.

The source variable is primarily relevant in studies of the news media's dependency on one particular side in the conflict. We had expected coverage in the European and US media to rely heavily on sources from the Coalition countries.<sup>4</sup> This is also confirmed in the findings. In the total material, slightly more than every second noted source, or 54%, is from the Coalition countries. Sources from 'supporting countries', i.e. countries which support the Coalition, are mentioned in 25% of the cases. Iraqi sources are 10% of all, Israeli sources 4%, neutral country sources 6% and alternative sources, i.e. peace movements or other similar NGOs less than 1%.

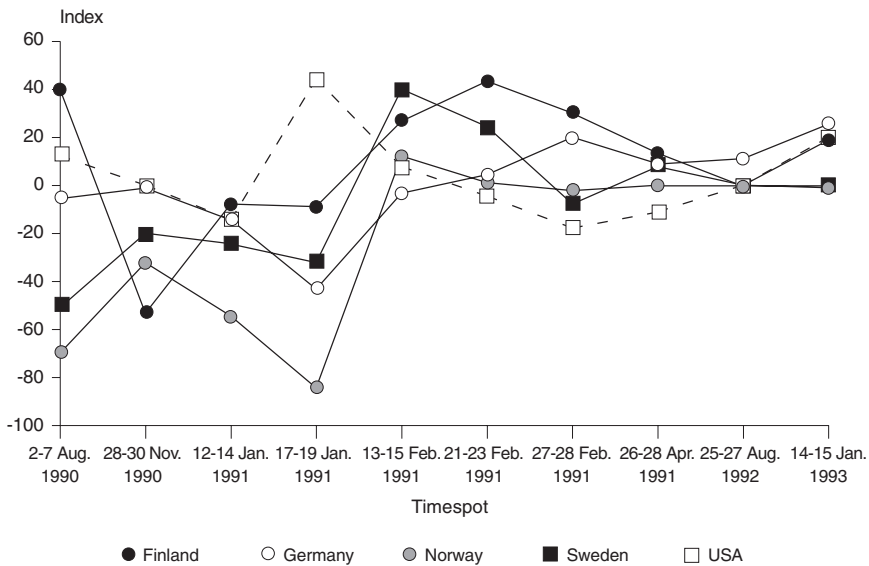
Comparisons between the national media groups reveal (a) that the US media rely more on (or refer more often to) Coalition sources than do the media in the other countries; (b) that in the *Baghdad Observer*, which is represented here only for the autumn 1990, Coalition sources are referred to as often as the domestic ones; (c) that over time and calculated in terms of number of different sources for three periods (first period = time-spots 1–3; period 2 = time-spots 4–7; period 3 = time-spots 8–10) the concentration to sources from the Coalition countries increases continuously: period 1: 48%, period 2: 55% and period 3: 64%.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 2 indicates the levels of concentration to sources in Coalition countries for different time-spots through an index calculated for each media and time-spot from the sum total of different Coalition sources in each item, minus



the number of items without any Coalition source. Thus this index shows a positive value when the sum total of Coalition sources is higher than the number of items in which Coalition sources are missing, and a negative value when the latter sum is higher than the former. In this way the index is sensitive not only to the number of Coalition sources referred to, but also to the number of items in which Coalition sources are not mentioned. Therefore it is regarded as better indicator of concentration to Coalition sources in the media than other alternatives, for example the average or the pure sum total of numbers of different Coalition sources.

**Figure 2.** Coalition sources; index



The graphs show increased concentration to Coalition sources after time-spot 4 for all media groups, with the exception of US media because they reveal this trend more than the other groups already in the first four time-spots. The conclusion is that Coalition sources dominate the reporting from time-spot 5 and during the later part of the conflict in most countries' media. The turning point comes with the initial days of Operation Desert Storm. For the first four time-spots the concentration to Coalition sources is most evident in the US media, especially in time-spot 4. Before this time-spot, the media in the other countries generally have negative index values, except for Finland in time-spot 1. But from time-spot 5 until time-spot 10, the concentration to Coalition is steady.

When we specify different types of sources and break down the relation between the number of US and Iraqi sources respectively, we find that the dominance of US sources is – not surprisingly – much higher in the US media

than elsewhere. This pattern is generally evident for all types of sources, but most clearly for news agencies, newspapers and spokespersons. The proportions<sup>6</sup> between US sources to Iraqi sources specified for different types of sources in European media (E) compared to US media are as follows: news agencies E:16.6, US: 39.0; radio/TV E:1.1, US: 1.6; press: E:3.3, US:31.0; spokesperson E:5.1, US:20.9. Thus whereas, for example, in the US media US news agency sources are almost 40 times more frequent than Iraqi news agency sources; by contrast, in the European media on average, US agency sources are only 17 times more common than Iraqi agency sources.

The general conclusion is that the source references indicate a considerable US grip over the coverage. This is particularly obvious for agencies and spokespersons, which probably are the most relevant as indexes of institutionalized professional connections, where the average figures for all media in the sample are 7.2 and 6.5 respectively: in other words, US sources are seven times more frequent than Iraqi sources.

But this general US dominance is not the same in all media groups. With regard to news agencies and official spokespersons the Swedish media place themselves opposite to the US group, with less US dominance than any other group.

The CNN played a particular role in the Gulf War. This satellite TV channel managed to achieve a position similar to that of the news agencies, or television news agencies like EVU and Visnews, with its extensive round-the-clock news transmission. The CNN was one of the very few media to report from Baghdad continuously during the war; in some cases the channel's reporters were offered privileged access to political and military news. That the CNN had its breakthrough on the international news market during the Gulf War is evident from our results. This is particularly the case as source for television reports and during the actual war period from time-spot 4 till time-spot 7. Indeed, in Nordic television news, for every third news in connection with the initial stage of 'Operation Desert Storm' CNN is referred to as a source. But even the prestige papers to some degree can be seen to depend on the channel; for instance, every tenth article in *The Washington Post* and the *Dagens Nyheter* mention CNN as source in time-spots 4 and 5 respectively.

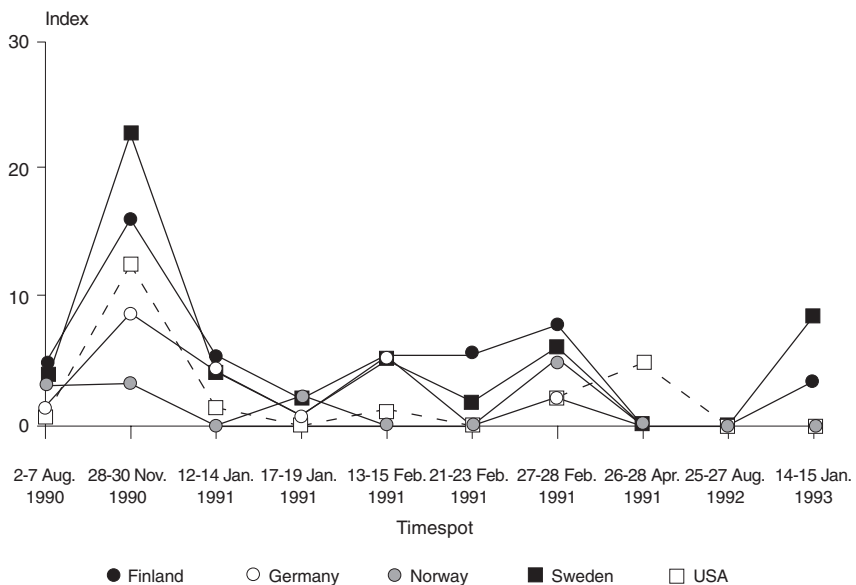
## Location

The second variable which refers to the news coverage's contextual relation is *location*, which indicates where the conflict is situated geographically as constructed by the news media. According to Giddens (1990), globalization means decreased importance for the time and space dimensions in several respects. Still, there are reasons for believing that national perspectives are far from extinguished. This is confirmed when media from different countries are compared. Naturally, some locations, such as Iraq, are generally more frequent than others in all national media systems, but otherwise the geographical focus varies among the groups. The following findings are indicative of the pattern: (a) the USA as a location of Gulf War news is almost twice as usual in the US media

as in the total material; (b) Iraq is less frequently the location in the US media than in the other groups; (c) the two Scandinavian media groups – Norway and Sweden – focus much more on news from Kuwait than do the media from other countries – this difference can mainly be explained by the relatively high attention which these media paid to the situation of civilians in occupied Kuwait (see below); (d) the US media also have a slightly greater concentration of news located in Saudi Arabia than the average, and less than the average for the Soviet Union and the UN; (e) Israel as a location is mentioned more frequently in the German media than in the other groups; and (f) the Finnish and Swedish media direct more attention to the UN than do the other media groups, while the US media show the lowest figure for this location.

A closer look at how the different media groups focus on various locations over time reveals that the conflict is increasingly located to Iraqi territory. For the first time-spot, an average of some 15% of the news items have this location, whereas by the final three time-spots the figure is close to 60%. On the other hand, the concentration on events in the USA gradually decreases from the first to the ninth time-spot, increasing again in the last time-spot. This reduced attention to the US scene is especially pronounced in the US media.

**Figure 3.** Primary location UN; percentage of total (location) in each timespot, by national media group; excl. provincial press



The US media thus differ from all other groups with respect to their predominantly US perspective throughout most of the conflict. Only in the second time-

spot do any of the other media groups pay anything like this attention to news about events in the USA. In this case the German media resemble the US counterparts in their focus on the US political arena. Whereas the Nordic media generally pay modest attention to the US events during the first eight time-spots, in the final two time-spots they shift their focus to the USA – a change especially apparent for the Finnish and the Swedish media.

The Coalition against Iraq was alternately called ‘the US Coalition’ or ‘the UN Coalition’. However, as has already been mentioned the world organization for collective security was not very much in the news focus. Only in connection with the Security Council’s decision to legitimize military steps against the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait did the UN become a major actor in the news.

The UN as location is as frequent as is the Soviet Union: 3% of the items. During the main part of the conflict, media interest in the UN is rather limited, with the exception of the second time-spot. In seven out of ten time-spots, the US media show less than average interest in what is happening within the world organization. Moreover, media from the smaller neutral nations put more emphasis on the UN than the others – note the position of the Finnish and the Swedish media in eight out of ten time-spots.

## Actors

In news texts, coders were instructed to note the ‘main actors’, i.e. those actors that in headlines, leads or in terms of space appear most important in the report. This variable is regarded an important indicator of the orientation of news coverage attention, and should thus be useful as an instrument for a comparative analysis. In focusing attention on differing actors, the media reveal implicit assumptions about the power structure and which actors are seen as influential for the development of the conflict.

Main actors of different categories have been noted separately in the coding process: individuals, countries and other collectives.<sup>7</sup> In all three respects, the overall focus in the media is on the USA and the Coalition. But it is also clear that the two main figures, President George Bush and President Saddam Hussein, are placed in the centre. For all media taken together, these leaders are main actors in 12% of the items, followed by President Mikhail Gorbachev, UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar, and then General Norman Schwarzkopf with 2%. In terms of country actors, the USA predominates, appearing as main actor in 30% of the items, followed by Iraq with 21% and Israel with 4%. Among the collective actors the Alliance/Coalition is coded as main actor in 18% and the UN in 12% of the total material.

Not surprisingly, the focus on the US President and the USA as main actor is most marked in the US media. Whereas in the European media groups Saddam Hussein is registered as main actor more often than George Bush, in the US media Bush appears as main actor almost twice as often as does Hussein (18%, 10% respectively). In the Iraqi paper the figures point in the opposite direction, with Saddam Hussein as main actor in 18% of the items, as against only 2% for the US President.

The same US focus in the US media is evident with respect to country actors. The USA is main actor in 65% of the items in that group, but rarely in more than half of that in the other groups.

The US media show less interest than the other media in other collective actors. Both for the Coalition and for the UN as main collective actor the US group has significantly lower figures than the other media. In the case of the Coalition the US media group's percentage figure is between 18 and 5 units below the comparable figures for the European media groups, and for the UN the difference varies between 15% and 2%. The Iraqi paper, which was issued only during the first part of the sample period, i.e. autumn 1990, has even lower figures for collective actors. *The Baghdad Observer* never depicts the Coalition as main actor, and the UN only in one of its thirteen articles.

Consequently, the US media in comparison with the European colleagues put more attention on the US actors and less on the structures for collective security as the UN and the Coalition against Iraq. This type of concentration on the domestic aspects of the conflict is certainly not unique to the US media – but nowhere else is this tendency so strong as in the US media.

#### UN as collective actor

Besides individual leaders and nation-states also other 'collective' subject actors have been coded separately, as noted above. Approximately every second news item mentions a collective actor of this kind. The Coalition and the UN are the two collective actors most frequently mentioned in the material. Together they comprise over half of all mentioned actors of this kind. As we can see from Table 2, the media of various countries differ considerably in their attention to these two main collective actors.

**Table 2.** Coalition and UN as actors; percentage of items in each category

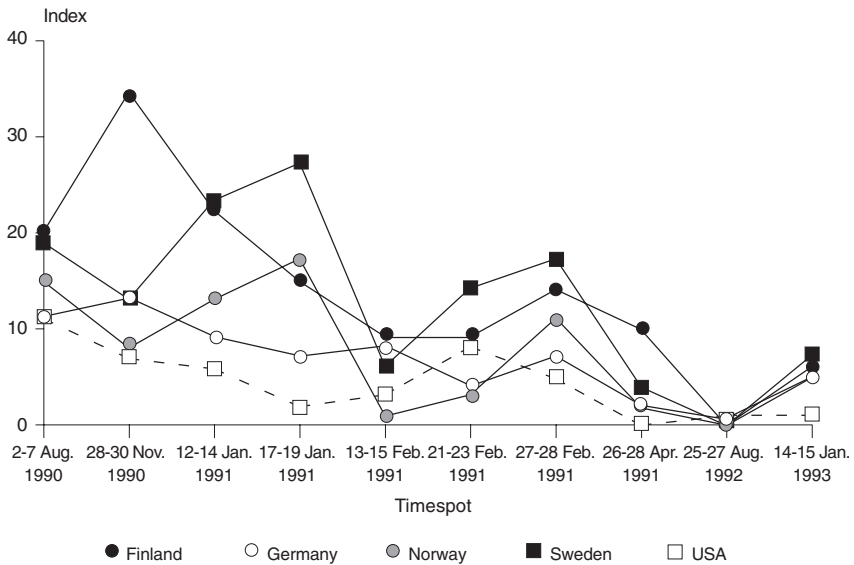
	Ethiopia	Finland	Germany	Iraq	Norway	Sweden	USA	Total
Coalition	36	48	38	–	39	35	30	39
UN	40	29	21	8	23	34	19	26
Other	25	23	41	92	38	31	52	35
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
n =	73	483	328	13	330	392	248	1867

The Ethiopian papers show more interest in the UN than do any other media group. Among the five Western media groups the Swedish media come closest to this level, while the US media pay less attention to UN than any other group. If we, for the sake of maximal matching of the compared media, concentrate on the prestige papers from each of the Western countries, the figures are even more dramatic. Figures for relative amounts of news items with the UN as collective actor in prestige papers from each country are: Finland 15%, Ger-

many 9%, Norway 9%, Sweden 21% and USA 3%. In other words, media from small countries outside NATO tend to focus relatively more on the UN as actor in the conflict than do media from member-countries in the North Atlantic Alliance.

Over time the other media groups converge towards the low coverage in the US media, as illustrated in Figure 4. From the initial stage of the conflict, several of the other media groups direct more attention to the UN than the US media. Later, however, this gap closes, and eventually they join the US media on the same low level.

**Figure 4.** UN as collective actor by timespot and national media group



This ends the report of the results concerning the contextual dimensions of the Gulf War news discourse. The findings will be summarized later together with the results from the analysis of the propaganda dimensions, which will be taken up next.

**Attitudes towards George Bush and Saddam Hussein**

To what extent is the news affected by propaganda? And can it be determined whether coverage in various countries is interdependent, to the degree that it is relevant to talk about convergence or orchestration? These are the main questions for the following paragraphs.

Before presenting the results from the analysis based on the "propaganda variables", I will briefly remind the reader about how these variables are con-

ceived in relation to the general problem of propaganda influences on the news. A more elaborate discussion about the theoretical foundations for conclusions about the propaganda effects on the news flow is pursued in the final chapter.

It is almost impossible to avoid the impression that by using expressions as 'propaganda impact/effects/influences' one assumes a linear effect model in which the propaganda is the direct cause to propagandistic elements or features in the news. Conventional thinking invites to such theoretical assumptions, from which it follows that journalists are unconsciously manipulated to contribute to the war propaganda. This is, however, not the way I understand the relation between propaganda and news in this analysis. The symbolic environment that surrounds war journalism is not a reality composed of accurate information, on the one hand, and propaganda, on the other. On the contrary, everything in this symbolic environment should be conceived of as permeated by images, comments and interpretations that the involved actors are anxious to circulate as widely as possible in order to protect their stakes in the conflict. In other words, the entire symbolic environment is constituted by propaganda.

That in turn means that journalists and media do not have an actual choice between non-propagandistic and propagandistic pieces of information: what they have is a choice between different strategies for handling the intensive propaganda flow in the coverage of the war. Such strategies involve in part the selection of sources and attention priorities with respect to location of reported events and the focus on specific actors, as noted above. Another element of these strategies concerns the journalists' approach to emotional and thematic dimensions of the propaganda flow. Do journalists aim at and succeed in defusing the most intensive appeals – for example by balancing the messages from opposite sides or refusing obviously biased expressions and images of the propaganda? This does not imply that I assume that there will ever exist an 'objective' news coverage, a coverage not at all influenced by propaganda or, even less so, that there exists a complete and 'true' news picture of the Gulf War. What can be studied in the news content are indications of the degree to which various media coverage has applied such propaganda defusing strategies or not. And that is what I will do next, by utilizing the "propaganda variables".

I will start with the attitudes towards the opposite sides in the conflict. Attitudes towards political leaders, nation-states and other collective actors respectively have been coded and will be analysed separately in the following. One of the most common news typifications that have been commented on in studies of the media coverage of the Gulf war is the personification of the conflict as a fight between the two leaders, President George Bush and President Saddam Hussein (cf. Johannesson 1992; Manheim 1994). Therefore it seems relevant to concentrate on the attitudes to the two main figures as a first step in the attitude analysis. From a propaganda analysis perspective the normative-emotional tendency in the depiction of the two leaders is central; in this study it has been operationalized as 'manifest expressions or words, which clearly

and distinctively favour or disfavour an actor'. Coders were furthermore instructed to omit those cases where they felt uncertain about the attitude.

A clear majority – 67% – of the news items have at least one attitude noted for 'main individual subject actor'. Of these items 84% are balanced (equal number of positive and negative attitude notation, incl. items) in terms of attitudes, while the share of items dominated by positive and negative attitudes respectively is exactly the same, 8%.

Table 3 shows attitude distribution for some of the leading figures in the conflict. Only items where a main individual actor was noted are included. Positive and negative items have an overweight for positive respectively negative attitudes, whereas the balanced category includes both cases where positive and negative attitudes equalize and cases where no manifest attitudes were shown towards the individual actor.

**Table 3.** Attitudes towards leaders; row percentage of items

	Positive	Negative	Balance
George Bush	20	4	76
Saddam Hussein	4	34	62
Mikhail Gorbachev	12	4	84
UK Prime Minister	13	0	87
Francois Mitterrand	8	8	84
J. Perez de Cuellar	10	0	90
Norman Schwarzkopf	40	1	58
Bill Clinton	17	17	67

The relative high amount of balanced items indicates the practical importance – even in war news – of the journalistic rule of objectivity, in the sense of avoiding obviously biased reporting. Here it should also be kept in mind that the coders were instructed to note only clear cases of negative or positive attitudes.

Obviously, Coalition General Norman Schwarzkopf has received the most positive coverage of all leaders. The opposite holds for the Iraqi leader, who clearly is the villain in the news. A more mixed picture emerges when we specify for types of media. It is mainly in prestige and popular papers that Schwarzkopf is the main hero, while President Bush is the most positive figure in the provincial press and on television. Anti-Hussein coverage is typical of the popular press and television.

As mentioned above, one of our aims has been to test the hypothesis of orchestration due to US dominance, i.e. whether the US media took the lead in framing and construction of the war image as a corollary to the US success in organizing the military alliance against Iraq. One way to use the material in order to test this hypothesis is to analyse attitude trends in the coverage. Attitudes towards the two main figures – Bush and Hussein – will now be used for this purpose.



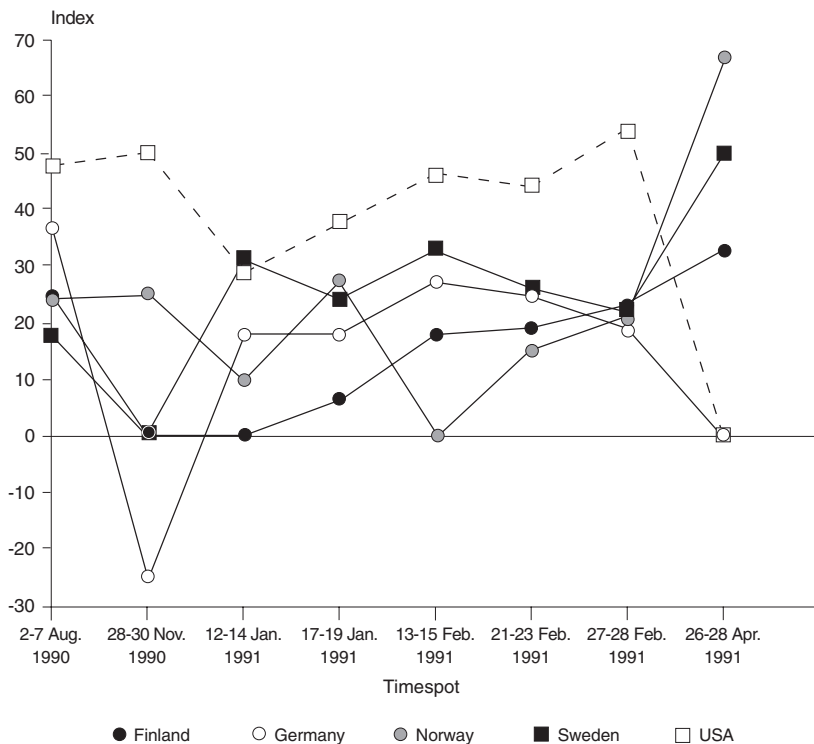
In Figure 5 all news items with either George Bush and/or Saddam Hussein coded as 'main individual subject actor' in the Finnish, German, Norwegian, Swedish and the US media have been utilized for construction of an index which shows the tendency towards these two leaders in the coverage specified for media groups. Positive, negative and balanced or neutral attitudes on four different dimensions (leadership, military qualities, mental ability and humanitarianism) in relation to Bush and/or Saddam have been included in the calculation of the index (I) according to the formula:

$$I = \frac{(B_{pos}+H_{neg}) - (B_{neg}+H_{pos})}{B_{pos}+H_{neg}+B_{neg}+H_{pos}+BN} \times 100$$

*Abbreviations:* B<sub>pos</sub> = Positive attitude towards Bush; B<sub>neg</sub> = Negative attitude towards Bush; H<sub>pos</sub> = Positive attitude towards Hussein; H<sub>neg</sub> = Negative attitude towards Hussein; BN = Balanced or neutral attitude towards Bush and/or Hussein, including items with Bush or Hussein as main individual subject actor but without showing any manifest attitude.

The index varies between -100 and +100, where the extreme minimum indicates only anti-Bush/pro-Hussein attitudes and the maximum only pro-Bush/anti-Hussein attitudes.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 5.** Attitudes toward Buch and Hussein related to timespots; index



The graphs show the trends in the media from each country related to the first eight time-spots, i.e. the period from Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in August 1990 till the end of April 1991 when the Coalition forced the Iraqi airforce not to fly over Kurdish territory. For time-spot 9 no relevant attitudes have been noted, and in time-spot 10 Bush is no longer president, so these time-spots are not included.

As shown in Figure 5, the US media have the highest index scores for all time-spots, except for time-spot 8 (and time-spot 3, when this position is shared with the Swedish media). This means that the US media have the strongest pro-Bush/anti-Hussein attitude of all the media groups most of the time. Furthermore during the middle period (time-spots 3–7), when the actual war between the Coalition and Iraq dominates news reporting, the trend in most media is either a steady increase of pro-Bush/anti-Hussein attitudes (Finnish, German and US media) or a stable and relatively marked position on the same side of the scale (Swedish media). The Norwegian media react strongly to the civilian casualties in connection with the bombing of the Amirya shelter in time-spot 5, but then approach the same level of pro-Bush/anti-Hussein attitudes as the other European media. During the war period there seems to be a general trend of convergence towards the more decidedly pro-Bush/anti-Hussein position of the US media in the other European media, at the same time as the US media move to even higher pro-Bush/anti-Hussein scores.

Specified for each country there are some variations in the pattern. In the first time-spot, as generally, the US media have the clearest pro-Bush coverage, followed by the German media. The Nordic media are more restrictedly pro-Bush, the Swedish media taking a position with the lowest pro-Bush score. This rank order shifts over time, sometimes with quite dramatic fluctuations depending on the character of the main events in focus in each time-spot (see list in Chapter 1). For example, in connection with the UN Security Council decision to sanction the 'use of all necessary means' (UN resolution 678) for the purpose of liberating Kuwait (time-spot 2) only the US and the Norwegian media show any pro-Bush attitudes; the German media even exhibit an anti-Bush attitude.

The pro-Bush trend is also shorter in the German media – only between time-spot 2 and time-spot 5 do they approach the US media, followed by a widening gap between the German and the US media for the rest of the period. The Finnish media show a steady pro-Bush trend from time-spot 2 and throughout the period. The trend in the Norwegian media oscillates within the upper half of the scale in the first four time-spots; only from time-spot 5 is the pro-Bush attitude clearly on the increase. In the Swedish media there are also some fluctuations over the three first time-spots, but by and large the pro-Bush attitude remains rather stable and relatively strong.

The conclusion seems to be that in the intensive period of the war, with the Coalition operating in concert, support was quite strong, also from media in countries outside the Coalition. Not even the Coalition's bombing of the Amirya shelter, which took a death toll of hundreds of Iraqi civilian lives, seems to have

initiated less pro-Bush reporting – with the exception of the Norwegian media. The mobilization strategy to support the Coalition and its leader in the White House must be regarded as quite successful also in this respect.

### Attitudes to main country actor

As mentioned above, coders also noted attitudes for nation-states as actors. Approximately 11% – 464 – of all news items express an attitude towards ‘main country’ actors. Based on these items the following general conclusions can be drawn from comparisons between the national media groups with regard to attitudes towards the main Gulf conflict antagonists:

- Right from the beginning of the conflict, the US media clearly take a more pro-US position than the European media, a pattern most apparent in the two first time-spots and during the actual war between the Coalition and Iraq, i.e. time-spots 4 to 7
- The European media are relatively reluctant to show an unequivocal attitude towards Bush and the USA as main country actor (distribution over time-spots for the latter variable not included here) until the start of ‘Operation Desert Storm’ in time-spot 4.

### Attitudes to the UN

As noted above, the United Nations is not often a major actor in this war when it comes to media coverage. Especially the US media take relatively little notice of the world organization. But when it comes to the *attitudes* toward the UN, the picture changes. Here we find that the US media are the most pro-UN of all measured in relative figures. Almost every fourth item, or 22%, with the UN as main collective actor in the US media has a pro-UN tendency, while the comparable figure for the Norwegian media is 8% and for the Finnish, German and Swedish groups between 1% and 2%. Media groups with more intensive coverage of the UN do not necessarily have a more positive image of the organization than media with less intensive coverage. The explanation of this finding emerges when we integrate the correlation between tendency and time in the analysis. Eight of a total of ten positive items with pro-UN attitude in the US media were published during the first two time-spots. By comparison, in the Swedish media the UN-positive items are presented at a later stage – during time-spots 3 and 4. The explanation for the attitude pattern in relation to the UN will be explored further in the next paragraph in connection with the thematic content of the news. But the findings so far indicate that media interest in the UN varies over time between the US and some of the European media, which may indicate different ways of describing the role of this organization in the conflict process.

## Topics

A much-debated question in connection with the Gulf War was to what extent the coverage in the media managed to 'show the real face' of the warfare and avoided being an instrument for the propaganda of the 'surgical war'. The topical emphasis in the coverage may give an indication of the degree to which other, more humanitarian aspects were brought to the fore in the media.

Here we see that the relative emphasis on military matters, which not surprisingly has paramount importance in all media except the Iraqi paper, varies somewhat among media groups. Because the variations depend on the type of media, and there is a sufficient database, results will be specified for media type when appropriate.

In Table 4, data for the quality press are in focus, because that makes it possible to include also the Iraqi and Ethiopian papers. Again we should recall that the Iraqi *Baghdad Observer* was available only for the autumn 1990.

**Table 4.** Primary topics by nationality of prestige papers; percentage of items in each category\*

	Ethiopia	Finland	Germany	Iraq	Norway	Sweden	USA	All
War/mil.	33	27	31	12	26	25	26	30
Politics	4	16	12	21	5	16	9	11
Negot.	20	10	12	21	10	11	7	11
Econ./oil	7	8	11	2	10	15	10	8
Civ.sit.	4	5	2	5	13	9	5	8
Opinion	4	4	8	11	3	5	7	5
Casualt.	6	3	3	–	1	3	5	4
UN	9	5	3	7	3	4	3	4
Media	2	2	1	2	2	2	5	2
Sanct.	1	3	1	4	2	3	2	2
Int.sec.**	2	1	2	2	1	0	3	1
Other	7	14	16	14	24	7	16	14
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

\* Topics presented in the Table are merged categories from an original list of 21 different topics.

\*\* International security.

The dominant impression from the table is the consistent pattern of thematic priorities throughout the media groups, with the exception of the Iraqi paper. Also the Ethiopian quality press seems to differ to some extent from the Western media groups, and particularly so with respect to their emphasis on negotiations and the UN.

Almost one third or 30% of all news items have war and military matters as their main topic. If we draw a distinction between actual warfare and other military matters, the first category is found in every eighth item and the other in every sixth. The two second largest main topics, each with a share of 11% of all news items, are politics, including reports from parliamentary debates, and ne-

gotiations, including meetings, demands and peace proposals. Fourth and fifth in rank come the situation of civilians and economic matters, including oil, with 8% each. Opinions and demonstrations reports are main topic in 5% of all items, and slightly less coverage is devoted to casualties and to the UN.

Some typical patterns for different types of media deserve mention. The prestige and provincial newspapers represent traditional news journalism with relatively more political and economic news, whereas the popular papers carry relatively more material about the actual warfare, casualties and the situation of civilians. Television news differs particularly through its greater emphasis on negotiations, meetings and peace proposals.

The most relevant topics are negotiations, casualties, the UN, situation of civilians, and media matters. These topics are related to some of the most central issues with a bearing on the propaganda effects on the media coverage – whether the alternatives to a military solution were seriously considered, to what extent the coverage managed to reveal the human sufferings in the war, and if the public was informed about the restrictions placed on journalists and the media management policies applied by the involved parties.

For better perspective I will first mention that in general the relative amount of items with war and military matters as primary topics increases over the studied time-spots. They can be divided into three periods: (1) prewar, (2) war, and (3) postwar. By the ‘war period’, I refer to the most intensive phase of hostilities between the Coalition and Iraq, time-spots 4–7. Consequently, the ‘prewar period’ consists of time-spots 1-3, and the ‘postwar period’ of time-spots 8-10. In average for all media, including the Ethiopian and Iraqi papers, and calculated for the time-spots in each period, the military topic is the main theme in 27%, 48% and 56% of the news in the three periods.

Media from different countries vary over time with respect to the military emphasis in their coverage. The US media concentrate clearly more than the other media on these aspects in connection with the UN Security Council’s decision on resolution 678 (time-spot 2: 25%) and the liberation of Kuwait (time-spot 7: 54%), as well as putting relatively high emphasis on the military aspects in some other time-spots (time-spots 3, 8, 9 and 10). The Norwegian group concentrates on military aspects in the later part of the war period (time-spots 6–7) and in the postwar period (time-spots 9–10), whereas the Swedish media in the same periods pay comparatively less attention to this topic.

In the following I compare the media from the five major countries in the sample, concentrating on the prestige papers since that should yield the most exact comparisons. I will also take advantage of the fact that not only the primary topic was coded for each news item, but also a second and a third topic when relevant. This makes it possible to study whether in some media a certain topic which not featured as main topic may frequently be referred to as a complementary aspect, and be important as such.

The category ‘*negotiations*, including meetings and peace proposals’, is a topic to which the US prestige paper, *The Washington Post (WP)*, gives less priority than its European counterparts, whether coded as primary, second or

third topic. The distribution over time-spots of articles with negotiations as primary topic shows that the US prestige paper concentrated its coverage to the first six time-spots (the results are confirmed also when popular papers and television are included).

In general, negotiations as main topic are particularly important in two time-spots in 1991: 21–23 February in connection with the Soviet peace initiative, and 26–28 April, when the Kurds were attacked by Iraqi air forces and the USA, the UK and France proclaimed the no-flight zone for Iraqi aircraft. But in the latter time-spot the negotiations topic is focused on only by the European papers, and notably in the German and Swedish quality papers. *The Washington Post* is consistently found among the papers that put relatively little emphasis on these aspects of the conflict through all periods.

The *situation of civilians*, including civil defence, is coded as first topic in every twelfth article in the prestige papers. These differ in their relative emphasis on this topic, with the Norwegian and Swedish papers paying more attention to it than the average. This becomes particularly evident when also second and third topics are included. Norway's *Aftenposten* stands out as having the most intensive coverage of the civilian situation. *The Washington Post* as a rule shows relatively low interest in this topic, and when the coding of second and third topic is included it emerges with the lowest score of all quality papers.

To see whether identification with the suffering civilians is selectively facilitated in the conflict, and differently in the various national news discourses, we need to know which civilian populations are mentioned by the prestige papers. Table 5 presents the data for first, second and third topics combined. We can conclude that Iraqi civilians get attention especially in the German and the Swedish media, while the sympathies of readers in the USA and in Norway are directed primarily towards Kuwaiti civilians, and – in the US media – secondly to the situation of US civilians.

**Table 5.** Civilians' situation and location; percentage of items in each category

Location	Finland	Germany	Norway	Sweden	USA
Kuwait	8	14	20	17	33
Iraq	25	36	13	35	19
Israel	4	7	8	12	14
USA	–	14	3	10	24
n =	24	14	40	52	21

We cannot say that the US prestige paper ignores the civilians in Iraq in its reporting – after all every fifth item which address this topic is about civilians in Iraq, which is more than for civilians in Israel. But *WP* concentrates on civilians in Kuwait and Israel (and the USA) more than the other prestige papers. In terms of absolute figures, this selectiveness is even more apparent: the US paper, which is represented in the material with more articles than any other

paper and twice as many as for example Norway's *Aftenposten*, still does not refer to the situation of Iraqi civilians – whether as first, second or third topic – more than four times altogether. It should also be mentioned that the German prestige paper, which according to Table 5 seems to direct relatively much attention to the Iraqi civilian population, overall has very few articles about the situation of civilians.

It has been said that media coverage of the Gulf War was remarkable because of the media's fixation with the restrictions emplaced on journalists and media manipulation efforts from the military (Eide 1992). It is true that the media as such are infrequently found as a news topic in normal news reporting, so that practically any mention of this topic could be said to be noteworthy. In the media sample of this project, 93 news items or approximately 2% have media and journalist conditions as the first topic. Including items in which the media category is mentioned as second or third topic brings the total up to 143 items or 3% of the complete material. The media topic is clearly of more concern to the US media than it is to the media from the other countries. In *WP* it is coded as first topic in 5% of the cases, as against 1% to 2% for the other countries' prestige papers. Thus, the US media are more concerned about the conditions for the press corps which might have given their audience a better chance to be aware of the propaganda impact on the media coverage.

It is during the first days of the air attacks that the media features as a news topic. More than half (59%) of the items that address media conditions were published in time-spot 4, i.e. 17–19 January 1991.

### Politics, attitudes to aggression and the UN image – three complementary explorations

In the following we will look at the results from three special analyses intended to elucidate both the contextual relations of and the propaganda impact on news discourses. The first analysis deals with the focus of the political coverage and is thus related to the question of institutionalized relations between war journalism and the political context. The second focuses on how aggression by the opposing parties is depicted in the media in terms of attitudes and responsibility, and is thus a follow-up of the general attitude analysis presented earlier. The third special study deals with the image of the UN with respect to the topics brought into focus by the media in connection with the world organization. The second and third special analyses in different ways complement the previous results for propaganda indicators. If media coverage is influenced by war propaganda, we can expect it to show a polarized view in which Coalition violence does not have negative connotations, in contrast to Iraqi violence, and is furthermore mainly described as a response to the latter. Further, analysing the UN image in the media can indicate whether the news is subordinated to the US propaganda strategy, which depicted the function of the UN as essentially one of legitimizing the policy of a military resolution to the conflict

*(a) Politics: US politics or domestic?*

Transnational news can be conceived as a symbolic flow of, for example, political perspectives, views and standpoints between public agendas in various nation-states. In certain global matters these national political discourses may be so closely interlinked as to comprise a pseudo-global public sphere. When that happens politics is globalized and the national political discourses become relativized (see Chapter 1). Is this what happened in connection with the Gulf War? Let us take a more detailed look at the location of the political events reported in the Gulf War news. What debates and politicians are in focus? To what degree is the spotlight directed at the political scenes in Baghdad, Washington or – in countries outside the USA – at the domestic scene in the media countries?

The general picture to emerge from our material is that politics in Washington is what matters most in the media discourses. The USA is the primary location for 29% of the items about politics, whereas not more than 11% feature Iraq. Instead, we can note that the Iraqi political scene is more frequent in terms of second and third location – which indicates from which angle the media view this conflict. This is a conflict very much seen from the US perspective with respect to political moves, initiatives and commentary.

Regarding the importance of the domestic political scene in relation to US political scene, the latter dominates slightly over the former in all media groups. The percentage figures in Table 6 have been calculated for the sum of frequencies of primary, second and third location.

**Table 6.** Location of politics; percentage of sum total of primary, second and third location in each category

	Finland	Germany	Norway	Sweden	USA
<b>US politics</b>	21	37	32	29	72
<b>Domestic</b>	18	33	25	25	X
<b>n =</b>	164	60	28	95	74

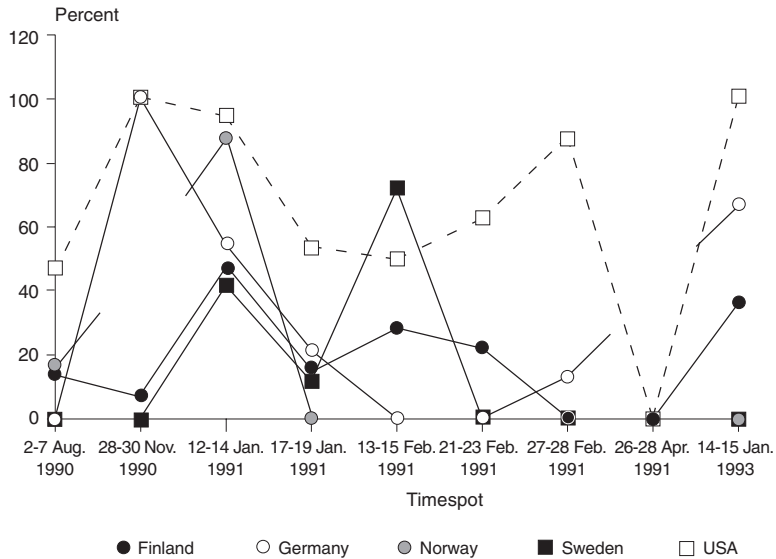
Attention to the US political arena in the European media groups is continuous although not stable over time, as shown in Figure 6. Only primary location is included here, but the frequencies for USA as second and third location are negligible and do not change the pattern.

That the US media pay attention to US political scene throughout the conflict period (with the exception of time-spot 9) is only to be expected. More noteworthy is the fact that the US politics recurrently captures between 50% and 100% of the political attention in the European media groups, even if it is in different time-spots for different groups.

If this picture is compared with the patterns of domestic politics in the coverage (statistics excluded here due to the lack of space) it becomes clear that the European media very rarely concentrate on the domestic political scene



**Figure 6.** US location of politics; percentages of sum total of primary, second and third location in each category



to the same degree as the US media do. At certain moments, however, they obviously turn most of their attention to the political 'home front'. Among the Nordic media that is the case mainly in connection with Security Council resolution 678 (Finnish and Swedish media) and the initial stage of 'Operation Desert Storm' (Finnish and Norwegian media). The German media differ from the Nordic media in having a more domestic profile in coverage during the actual war, i.e. time-spots 4-6, and especially in relation to the Soviet peace initiative (time-spot 6).

*(b) Aggression I: attitudes*

War propaganda is usually constructed on the basis of a radical distinction between the violence perpetrated by the antagonist and that of one's own forces. While military operations by one's own troops are described in terms of protection and defence, the other side's operations are condemned as hostility and aggression. Different values and attitudes are related to violence, depending on which side is held responsible. This is the reason why it is relevant in a propaganda analysis to study whether and to what degree the news media treat Coalition aggression differently than the Iraqi in terms of attitudes. The point is not that this is ethically wrong, but instead that the levels of polarization can reveal the propaganda impact on the news. The aim here is not to pursue a moral standard for war news coverage in this respect, but only to trace propaganda influences on it.

Two variables will be used to explore propaganda tendencies in the depiction of aggression in the news material: attitudes connected with aggression, and the degree to which aggression is depicted as provoked. Let us begin with a look at attitudes towards the USA and Iraq in news items describing Coalition and Iraqi aggression.

As to the polarization tendency in the news referring to aggression, we can get a clear indication from the balance of positive and negative attitudes towards the main antagonists, the Iraq and the USA as main country actors.<sup>9</sup> For items about Coalition aggression the attitude balance for the USA is 63 positive and 18 negative notations. Comparable figures for items about Iraqi aggression are 9 positive and 83 negative. This shows clearly polarized reporting of the aggression in the conflict, with Coalition violence being regarded as legitimate and Iraqi violence as naked aggression. As such this result is hardly surprising; more interesting is that in fact there are also some critical attitudes towards the USA in the material. Where do we find these attitudes?

**Table 7.** Attitudes to USA in connection with Allied aggression against Iraq

	Finland	Germany	Norway	Sweden	USA	All
Positive	11	9	9	8	26	63
Negative	5	1	5	3	4	18

From Table 7, it seems evident that the US media deviate from other media because of their clearly more positive attitude toward the US also in connection with the Coalition's violence. Comparisons between the European media groups do not reveal any significant variations.

This picture is confirmed by the analysis of news items that mention *either Iraqi or Coalition aggression* with respect to attitudes towards Bush and Hussein. In connection with Iraqi aggression all media generally express attitudes negative to Saddam Hussein, whereas in connection with Coalition aggression it is very rare to find negative attitudes towards George Bush.

If the attitudes towards the two leaders are specified for time-spots we see that the US media are more pro-Bush in the first three time-spots than media in the other countries. That is the case both for news items where Iraqi or Coalition aggression is mentioned. Later in the conflict, however, the US media are not more pro-Bush (or anti-Hussein) than the other media generally. Particularly during the days when the bombing of the Amirya bunker was covered by the media (time-spot 5), and when the Kurds and Shias were asking for protection against the Iraqi forces (time-spot 8), the attitudes in some of the other countries' media are equally or even more pro-Bush than in the US media. It is also interesting to notice that in time-spot 8 the US media are more negative than positive to Bush.

*(c) Aggression II: Provoked or not?*

Violence is normally not accepted in relations between human beings, either in the national civil society or internationally between nation-states, except in situations of self-defence. For war propaganda this widely accepted norm represents a problem since it cannot simply be denied. One approach is then to legitimize the violence from one's own military forces as defence of the nation against threat from an external enemy – to describe it as a response to the aggression of the other side. In the Gulf War the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait stood out as an exceptional violation of the right to national sovereignty, which as such legitimized intervention by other countries after the Security Council's decision to accept the use of force for the liberation of Kuwait.

It can be expected that the Western media not only had different attitudes to the violence used by the Iraqi troops compared to the Coalition violence, as analysed above, but also that they tended to view the latter as a defence reaction provoked by the former. The question here is whether this varies between media from different countries in the sample, so that it can be assumed that national news discourses polarized the conflict image in terms of legitimate and non-legitimate violence and aggression in different degrees. Once again it should be borne in mind that a quantitative content analysis can provide no more than a cursory assessment. What it can do is provide some information about possible selectivity in the way media portray emotionally loaded actions from the involved parties, and whether they tend to emphasize prior actions by the opponent more in relation to one or the other of the antagonists. This is what the 'provoked'-variable data can help us clarify. For calculation of the figures in Table 8 the items in which the Coalition's violence has been described as provoked has been divided by the items in which the Iraqi violence is depicted likewise for each media group, and the resulting quotients are used as estimations of the degree to which the media tends to put the responsibility on one or the other side of the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 8.** Aggression depicted as provoked; quotient of number of items with Coalition violence as provoked divided with number of items with Iraqi violence as provoked for national media groups

Finland	Germany	Norway	Sweden	USA
2.6	5.8	12.0	2.0	6.0

It should first be mentioned that depictions of aggression as being provoked by the other side are rather rare when measured on the level of items. In the total material of 4098 news items 1267 or 31% mention Iraqi aggression and 1052 or 26% aggression by the Coalition. Iraqi aggression is depicted as provoked in 128 items or in 10% of those items reporting aggression from that side, whereas the comparative figures for the Coalition's aggression are 404 items and 38%. In other words, the average relation between the amounts of the material that

describes the Coalition's and the Iraqi aggression respectively as provoked is slightly more than three to one (the exact figure is 3.2).

If this relation is compared with the corresponding figures for media groups in table 8 we can see that the Finnish and Swedish media deviate from the other three groups because of their less polarized view. But also in these media the Coalition is seen as provoked more often than the Iraqi side. However, in the other media the tendency to put responsibility for the violence on Iraq is clearly stronger – and particularly in the Norwegian media. The results in this instance point in the direction of a correlation between the media country's institutional association with NATO and the media tendency to polarize the way they depict the violence in the war. It is to some extent remarkable that the media in two neighbouring countries with traditionally very close relations as Norway and Sweden in this instance place themselves at opposite ends of the polarization scale. In the summary an interpretation of this finding will be suggested.

*(d) The UN and its media image*

We have already noted how, in the initial phases, the UN as main actor in the conflict gets less attention in the US media than in for example the Scandinavian media; and how the other media tend to converge with the US media on a low level of UN coverage towards the end of the conflict period. In addition, we have seen how US policy is gradually treated more affirmatively in the news. What image effects for the UN are involved in this? To many people, the United Nations represents a *peace-keeping* organization and not an organization involved in military campaigns. What then has been happening with its image during the Gulf War and afterwards – e.g. in the Balkan conflicts – after the UN lost the political initiative to the US president almost immediately after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait? To answer this question, we need to look at the thematic connections between the UN and the conflict events as presented in the news.

If we break down the material into items about a particular main actor, like the UN, and specify for different topics, the number of items in each cell becomes relatively small. This limited number of items makes it risky to draw definite conclusions, so I have merged and dichotomized the media groups (into US/non-US) and also fused the time-spots into three periods.

**Table 9.** UN-related primary topics; column percentage of total in each category

	Period 1 (time-spots 1–3)		Period 2 (time-spots 4–7)		Period 3 (time-spots 8–10)	
	US	Non-US	US	Non-US	US	Non-US
Military	33	12	50	17	(100)	23
UN pol. & deb.	29	31	–	19	–	7
Neg. & peace p.	8	18	44	21	–	7
n =	24	142	18	121	2	30

*Abbreviations:* UN pol. & deb. = UN policy, debates, decisions, declarations; Neg. & peace p. = Negotiations: meetings, demands, peace proposals

The general conclusion is that the UN as actor is more often related to military matters in the US media than in the other media. And the trend – with the caveat of the low figures for the last period – is that the world organization, whose main mission has always been to support and keep peace, in both groups gradually becomes increasingly associated with armament and warfare issues. In the US media these military aspects are more in focus than are UN policy and negotiations, while the other media focus relatively more on the latter topics.

The difference between the US and the other media in terms of the relative importance of military questions and negotiations is especially pronounced in the first period. But in the later periods the non-US media focus more on military matters, and in the third period the military topic is much more important than the negotiation topic also in this group. This may indicate that the US coverage of the UN is to some extent copied by the non-US media.

### Summary

War news is a media genre situated in a symbolic environment that is constituted mainly by propaganda. The concrete content of war propaganda will vary with the specific conflict. Polarization is typical: the enemy is described as cruel and mean whereas one's own side represents the good and the brave, and all sufferings in the conflict are blamed on the antagonist. In order to generate support for the military, the threat or the use of force is depicted as the only possible solution. Positions taken by third parties, and possible proposals for peaceful resolution of the conflict tend to be suppressed, so as not to jeopardize the concentration of armed forces.

It is extremely difficult for journalists and the media to avoid becoming seriously involved in the propaganda war and to provide an accurate, balanced and independent coverage in this surrounding. The various media genres are natural targets for the activities of propaganda strategists; they can hardly avoid being influenced, not least since so much of the raw material for journalists' reports is produced by the antagonists – in terms of motivations for their actions, demands, proposals, comments and responses. However, the density of this propaganda environment varies with the distance to the conflict. Media in countries not actively involved in the conflict will be more free to report the news as they see fit, both with regard to selection of events, comments, etc. and in the framing of their stories.

In this way, media coverage can be said to be determined by 'national' conditions. Although legal, organizational and other factors that are characteristic for the specific media system also can be important, in this chapter I have been more concerned about foreign-policy traditions, and thereby the modern history of countries in question. The political and cultural heritage, as well as previously established relations with the major parties in the conflict, are presumed to be essential for how the media in various countries will differ in their coverage.

But propaganda does not stop at the national borders in an international conflict like the Gulf War. It moves transnationally and may even have a global impact. This has to do with the international exchange of news through which propaganda flows between national news discourses. Of course, not everything in the news is propaganda, but with regard to major international conflicts, the propaganda content is certainly not negligible. Generally speaking, there are mainly two types of relations between propaganda activities and media that may influence the news: firstly, direct contacts between journalists and propaganda actors, e.g. politicians or press officers; secondly, indirect contacts via intermediate news channels, e.g. news agencies or other media. For maximal impact, propaganda strategists aim both at the position of primary news source and at access to major media on the international news market. This will probably happen when, as in the Gulf War, one side is superior in propaganda capacity on both accounts. In such cases we can expect national variations in the ways media depict the conflict to disappear over time, as the effects of propaganda gradually penetrate the transnational news system.

This is the general perspective from which I have approached the news coverage of the Gulf War in this chapter. I put the searchlight on propaganda influences over time – as processes – in an effort to contribute to better understanding of war journalism and propaganda in the New World Order. The study has employed traditional content analysis (TCA) and has focused on two types of indicators. The first type is related to the contextual aspects of the news discourse, and the second to its propaganda dimensions. Both are operationalized in terms of content variables. The contextual aspects have been observed with the help of variables which refer to ‘sources’, ‘location’ and ‘main actors’ in the coverage. Mention has also been made of a special analysis of the national political arenas emphasized by the media. In the second part of the chapter, the propaganda indicators are the *attitudes* towards leaders, the *thematic focus* with respect to such topics as ‘war and military’, ‘negotiations’ and ‘civilians’ situation’, and also how *aggression* is depicted. The time distribution of attention to the UN as actor has also been included among the propaganda indicators.

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, indicators have been selected partly on the basis of what can be considered general characteristics of propaganda influence (such as contextual relations and polarization of attitudes), and partly from indicators relevant in relation to the particular conflict (for example, emphasis on the topic of negotiations). All the results should be interpreted in light of the specific circumstances in each particular case and in particular with regard to the chronology of the conflict.

Another methodological principle is that the validity of the findings can best be assessed in a test of their mutual consistency within a comprehensive interpretation (cf. Nohrstedt, 1986). In this study the first set of variables is used to establish the degree of dependence between the news and the Coalition side in the conflict, and the other set to estimate the propaganda impact on the news. Taken together, these two sets of data offer some possibilities for evalu-

ating the coherence of the findings, which has been a guiding principle in the presentation of the findings.

What then can we conclude concerning the role of war journalism in the 'New World Order'? I will first sum up the results related to the contextual relations and then turn to the propaganda influences on the conflict constructions in the news.

*(a) Contextual relations*

The analyses reported here have revealed that most media in the sample were contextually linked to one side in the Gulf War, namely the Coalition or the US side. Notations of news sources in the material are predominantly references to sources in the Coalition countries, especially in the later part of the conflict, i.e. from the start of 'Operation Desert Storm'.

The Gulf War – according to the media construction – took place primarily in Iraq and the USA. Events elsewhere – for example in the Soviet Union, the other Arab countries (with the exception of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia), or in the United Nations – were in focus only in a few percent of the material. Israel was, however, often mentioned: due to the Scud attacks on Israel, this country got as much attention in the reports as the UN and the Soviet Union together.

In terms of main actors, the war is personalized to a substantial degree. US President George Bush and the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein were found to feature as leading actors in 12% or around five hundred of the news items each.

*(b) Propaganda influences*

In light of these results and the almost overwhelmingly one-sided orientation in the conflict, it would be remarkable if the news were not heavily influenced by Coalition propaganda. This conclusion is confirmed by the analysis of propaganda features in the news. We also found support for the hypothesis that media in the most involved country in the sample have the most propagandistic pro-Coalition coverage.

We can conclude that the US media generally have the most polarized image of the conflict among the media in this study. From the attitude pattern it is clear that the US media are far more unequivocally positive to US policy and to the Coalition, while being more unreservedly negative to Iraq than media from the other countries. This is confirmed for attitudes to the leading characters, Bush and Hussein, and for news items about Coalition or Iraqi aggression. Moreover, the US media put relatively little emphasis on negotiations or on the situation of the civilian population in Iraq. When they do take note of civilians, it concerns people of Kuwait, Israel and the USA to a remarkable degree. The US news discourse tends to reduce the role of the UN to a legitimizing function for the military strategy, rather than linking the world organization with negotiation initiatives and mediation proposals. All this would seem to indicate strong propaganda impact on coverage in the US media, but we should also notice that the US media at the same time show concern with the conditions for the media. This indicates a professional reaction to the media management strate-

gies pursued by the authorities and a possible 'immunizing' feature in the coverage. On the other hand, the media feature as a topic in only a tiny proportion of all the news items, so the counter-propaganda effects should not be exaggerated.

Compared to the US media, the other media groups appear as considerably alike in their coverage. This is particularly evident with the attention directed to events in Iraq and to the negotiation issues, but also because of the more moderate position in terms of attitude – neither so decidedly pro-USA nor so strongly anti-Iraq as the US media.

Our analysis has also identified some more distinctive features in the different national media discourses. Furthermore, as the conflict developed, it seems that some of these characteristic features tended to disappear and that the other media gradually approached the US media in their reporting. I will now turn to the convergence hypothesis and discuss the findings in relation to the assumption that the Coalition propaganda influenced the European media.

*(c) Convergence – a question of US media and propaganda dominance?*

In summing up the result here I distinguish between convergence in the short- and in the longer-term perspective. The short-term perspective refers to a process of convergence found during the period from the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in early August 1990 till the ceasefire in the end of February 1991. The longer perspective includes also the later time-spots.

Looking first at the long-term trends in the material we can note (a) a pronounced increasing and lasting use of Coalition sources in the European media after the start of 'Operation Desert Storm', (b) an increasingly positive attitude to President Bush in the European media (with some reservation for the German media) and (c) a general lessening of attention to the United Nation from around the start of Coalition–Iraq hostilities in January 1991, together with a growing tendency to associate this organization with military matters. These long-term trends can be explained by influences from the US war propaganda, as will be elaborated below. But this is not a case of monocausal explanation: the influence of the propaganda must be understood in its context, i.e. in combination with other factors mainly involving the success of US policy in the conflict.

In contextual terms, news coverage becomes highly dependent on information from the Coalition when the conflict develops into armed confrontation in connection with the Coalition's attacks in January 1991. With practically all media attention directed to the events on battlefield, the space for diplomatic manoeuvres and negotiation appeals is diminished, both on the political scene and on the media agenda. Together with the one-dimensional concentration on the military sequences of events it then follows that the media are almost totally at the mercy of the press officers in their news reporting. Through the enforced policies of military secrecy, censorship and restrictions on journalists' freedom on both sides in the war, access to independent, alternative news sources is strangled. Media interest in conveying information from other parts and others



aspects of the conflict than the martial ones diminishes likewise. All in all, this means that the media become almost completely dependent on the war propaganda.

The findings show that this contextual dependency leads to long-term effects on the attitudes expressed in the European media, but not in the US media where the effects are short-term only. This difference has to do with national factors that determine the penetration of the war propaganda. The European countries in our media sample did not take active part in the combat. Neither politically nor in terms of human lives were the risks as great as in the belligerent countries. This in turn meant less pressure on journalists and the general public to support the national leaders in their war efforts, and is reflected in the long-term trends. In the beginning the European media are hesitant and reluctant to support the US policy. Only in connection with 'Operation Desert Storm' and the growing dependency on Coalition sources does support for President Bush increase. The liberation of Kuwait and the Coalition victory in the war against Iraq cemented these attitudes which henceforth dominated in the European media. The German media, generally more restrained in their attitudes, differ somewhat from the Nordic media, where the continuing pro-Bush trend is most marked.

We have seen how the image of the UN undergoes a gradual change, from that of an organization associated with politics and negotiations in the beginning of the conflict to an image dominated by military aspects. This is a clear consequence of the media focus on the military actions to protect the Shiias and the Kurds from Iraqi air attacks in the later part of the period under study. Significantly, as the conflict grows, also the European media seem to allot a more marginal role to the world organization, reducing it to a legitimizing instance for policies pursued primarily in Washington and London – an image already previously dominant in the US media.

The most important short-term trends consist partly of changes in attitudes in the US media directly connected first to Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and second to the liberation of Kuwait, and partly of occasional oscillations in attitudes among some of the other media groups.

With the US media we noted a clear 'rallying around the flag'-effect with no real counterpart in other media. Unique to the US media is, firstly, that the pro-Bush attitude appears directly in conjunction with the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the strong official US reactions that ensue. The powerful condemnations and demands for immediate retreat instantly arouse sympathy among the US media. A minor decrease in this support can be seen in connection with the even vote in the Congress to authorize the President to use the military forces against Iraq, but the pro-Bush sentiments then grows steadily until the liberation of Kuwait. Secondly, the changes in attitudes in the US media are extraordinary: after the ceasefire, there are simply no pro-Bush attitudes to be found. Taken together, these dramatic shifts clearly confirm the 'rallying' effect in US news coverage, an effect explained by a 'priming mechanism', as shown in studies of opinion formation (Iyenger & Simon, 1994; Miller & Krosnick, 1996).

When a war is in the centre of attention, it is the actions taken in relation to that which determine attitudes to the political leaders. But as soon as the conflict recedes from the foreground of public attention, how the leaders have handled this particular matter is perceived as less important. Other issues take over instead. Indeed, soon after the victory in the Gulf War, domestic economic problems in the USA came to the fore, determining public opinion about President Bush (Iyenger & Simon, 1994; Miller & Krosnick, 1996; Shaw & Martin, 1993).

Among the European media we noted some temporary attitudinal swings. In a few instances, the German media contained critical views on Bush, partly in connection with the Security Council's decision to support the militant US policy and partly when the revolts by the Shiias and the Kurds came to the fore. And the Norwegian media were more critical towards Bush than other media in connection with the bombings of the Amirya shelter. I will come back to these short-term trends below.

Two further questions remain. First, did the US war propaganda direct the news media coverage? In other words, to what extent did propaganda strategists manage to orchestrate the media? Second, can the variations in media coverage be explained by national differences in foreign-policy tradition? As to the first question, I have examined the degree to which propaganda images were spread to the US media and then later to the European media.

The orchestration hypothesis receives considerable support from the long-term trends in the material. Both contextually and in terms of impact on content, the trends are coherent with the US war propaganda. The US propaganda strategy aimed at penetrating the major national and international media through mutual cooperation, which on the one hand was meant to result in the US authorities – the military in particular – gaining control of the information conveyed by these media, and on the other was to assist the media by granting privileged access to attractive news material. The long-term trends reveal that this strategy was successful: media in other countries became increasingly dependent on Coalition, especially US, sources and more positive to the US policy, while the United Nations was marginalized, becoming a mere bestower of blessings to the policy of the USA. The correlation to the Voice of America propaganda, as described by Alexandre in Chapter 4, is obvious here. The UN is referred to quite often, but only to underline that the international community stands behind the US line. This VOA editorial is typical in its conclusion: 'The United States is greatly heartened by the UN's new effectiveness. If the UN remains faithful to the principles in the Charter, it can be a significant force for peace and stability.' (VOA, 29 October 1990).

The US war propaganda had, notwithstanding its international diffusion, varying impact in different national media discourses, a finding which confirms the importance of national contexts. Foreign-policy tradition was found to play a role: for example, the media in nonaligned countries show less receptivity to the propaganda than do media in NATO member-states. The initial pattern for attitudes towards Bush and Hussein thus confirms the assumption that the

news discourses are dependent on the foreign-policy position of the country. Comparing the media groups, we found that the strength of the pro-Bush/anti-Hussein tendency in the first time-spot correlated with whether a country was a NATO member or not.

The Swedish media in several respects stand out as the opposite to the US in the beginning of the conflict, in terms of both contextual and propaganda indicators. They were found to be slightly less dependent on US agency sources and spokespersons, and paying less attention to the USA than the other media; with considerably more space devoted to the UN, an organization that the Swedish media mainly associate with non-military methods for conflict resolution; with more focus on negotiations and the situation of the civilian populace; and initially showing a mutedly positive attitude to President Bush and to the USA, and less tendency to polarize between provoked Coalition aggression and un-provoked Iraqi aggression. This would seem to fit well with the assumption that Gulf War coverage was affected by the policy of neutrality and nonalignment, a guiding principle of Swedish foreign and security policy for almost two centuries. During the Cold War, Sweden tried to take a mediatory position between the two superpower blocs; as a small nation outside the military alliances, it has regarded the UN as an important stabilizing factor in international politics and a guarantor for the security of the small nations of the world.

Comparisons within the Nordic media would seem to back up these assumptions. Finland has, as Sweden, chosen a nonalignment policy after World War II. And like the Swedish media, the Finnish media also have relatively less concentration on the US scene in their Gulf War coverage; they pay considerable attention to the UN, and are less polarized in their view on the parties' responsibility for the violence in the conflict. And as with the Swedish media, the Finnish media image of the UN is, in the beginning of the conflict, primarily related to negotiations and peaceful means of conflict control.

Similarities as well as differences between the Norwegian and the Swedish media have been found. Taken together they reveal a pattern that points in the direction of a conflict in the Norwegian news discourse as the result of temporary but strong cross-pressure reactions. With respect to sources, location and actors, the Norwegian data reveal a mixed picture: as with the other Nordic media groups there is a relatively modest focus on Coalition sources and US location, but on the other hand slightly more on the US political arena than the Finnish and Swedish groups. Also in terms of the propaganda indicators, the Norwegian media seem torn between opposing tendencies. Like their Nordic colleagues they pay relatively high attention to negotiation and peace initiatives, such as the Gorbachev peace proposal in late February 1991, and to the fate of the civilian populations.

All these features make the Norwegian group distinctively different compared to the US media, and more similar to the other Nordic media. However, when it comes to attitudes towards President Bush, the Norwegian media show dramatic shifts very different from their Finnish and Swedish counterparts. It is

true that also the Swedish media fluctuate between relatively strong pro-Bush and 'neutral' attitude positions during the first four time-spots, but no other group reacts so strongly in negative direction – without, however, swinging over to a directly anti-Bush position – on the bombings of the Amirya bunker, and so strongly in positive direction to the liberation of Kuwait as does the Norwegian group. This may indicate that the success of the Coalition was perhaps even more greeted with relief in the Norwegian conflict discourse than in the other Nordic countries because of its more wholehearted support for the US policy – as shown by, for example, the modest attention paid to the UN, and the polarized, pro-Coalition view on the question of responsibility for the aggression.

The German media tend to rely more on Coalition sources in the first three time-spots, focusing more on the USA than the other media, with the exception of the US media. But like the Norwegian media, the German newspapers studied seem to have found themselves in a cross-pressure situation in connection with the Gulf War. Like the other European media, the German media are hesitant to take a firm stance during the first two time-spots. But, in contrast to the Norwegian media, this moderation does not yield to a marked polarized conflict image later on. The German discourse remains more restrained, with less use of black/white images of the conflict. This is most evident in the relatively low level of manifest negative attitudes towards Iraq. The trend towards a more definite positive attitude to President Bush is also delayed and less accentuated in the German media, compared with the other European groups, in the period from time-spot 3 to 8.<sup>11</sup> Germany belongs to the European big powers and has, through its membership in NATO, a natural place in the Coalition that the USA commanded in the Gulf War. Against this background – and viewed from an explanatory perspective in which the foreign-policy factor has an impact on the news discourse – it is no surprise that the UN has a less visible role in the German media discourse, whatever the interest shown for negotiations and the situation of civilian. In fact, the Gulf War unleashed a constitutional issue in Germany about whether the German military forces could be deployed to and participate in war operations outside Europe. The unwillingness to polarize the conflict revealed by the German media could be explained by this domestic conflict, and by reluctance, conditioned by this internal problem, to let US propaganda exert too strong an impact on Gulf War coverage. Thus whereas in the Norwegian discourse the cross-pressure was mainly the result of an ambivalence in national foreign policy, in the German discourse it was more evidently related to a severe and open internal conflict about foreign policy.

In this summary I have aimed to show a pattern in the material that is relevant, both in terms of theory as well as from an ethical–pragmatic point of view. Are there, however, also results that do *not* confirm the interpretation presented here? The answer to this will depend on whether the explanation is understood as single- or multi-factor. In my view, every successful attempt to explain the pattern of news coverage must aim at an integrative approach utilizing several factors – but there is admittedly a risk that the interpretation be-

comes increasingly ad hoc as more factors are considered. If we then restrict the discussion to the two factors underlying the foregoing analysis – propaganda influences and national foreign-policy tradition – it can be noticed that some findings do not fit into this simple explanation model. Even though the European media become increasingly dependent on Coalition sources, they do not show any growing adaptation to the pattern in the US media with respect to giving priority to reports about the USA and the UN. Differences between the US and the European media certainly diminish over time, but to claim that this is a case of the European media adopting the US image would be disputable. (With regard to the attention to UN as main actor, however, this seems plausible.) Furthermore, unambiguous trends are lacking when it comes to the focus of political reporting and attention to such topics as negotiations and the situation of the civilian populace. Alternative ad hoc explanations could be proposed in these cases – the decreasing focus on the USA after the liberation of Kuwait may be connected with the fact that the US lost the initiative concerning the situation of the Shiias and the Kurds to United Kingdom (Shaw, 1996), and that some topics that have been given high priority in some countries (such as the Norwegian and the Swedish media’s attention to the conditions for civilians, seem uninfluenced by the focus in the US media) can be the result of their essentially humanitarian engagement in the conflict.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, there is a limit for trying to compress all results into a comprehensive ‘Gestalt’. I consider it sufficient to have demonstrated that a theoretically reasonable explanation finds substantial confirmation in the material, which thereby qualified it for continued research interest.

### The relation between news and foreign policy: A final comment

The findings and tendencies reported in this chapter as well as the implications for the relations between news journalism, propaganda and foreign policy are discussed further in connection with globalization theory in Chapter 10. Let me offer a few preliminary reflections here in relation to the question of how these tendencies are linked to changes in international relations and of the UN’s role as peace improving intergovernmental organization.

Firstly, when confronted with results like those presented in this chapter, we may expect two alternative interpretations, depending on the theoretical perspective. From the common journalistic view that the news mirror reality, it becomes natural to perceive the media discourses as mere reflections of the political and military course of events in the Gulf War and its aftermath. That, for example, the Nordic media become increasingly positive to the US policy and increasingly relate the UN to military matters would in this perspective simply be explained by the actual events – on the one hand, that the US policy was successful in the Gulf War, and, on the other hand, that UN cannot function satisfactorily if its mandate is restricted solely to peaceful methods, a conclusion implemented in practice in the later part of the period under study.

But if we take the second view, and consider news as symbolic reality constructions, then this aura of innocence disappears. The matter is furthermore complicated because propaganda images and 'reality' cannot be distinguished, except analytically. An important aspect of the propaganda is also the actions taken by the involved parties and how these actions affect 'reality'. Propaganda is not only said – it is also done. A superpower like the USA can, through its own policy, largely control what reality there is for the journalists to report about. In this perspective, it becomes reasonable to see the media as involved in reciprocal interactions with official political discourses and as such influence developments in the foreign policy sector. That the impression of the USA as the international hegemon, an image established already after the end of the Cold War, was even more profound after the Gulf War may be explained by the firm US grip on both the actual events and the transnational news flow.

The successful propaganda strategy did more than control the formation of opinion within the USA: it also facilitated the reorientation of foreign and security policies in countries not actively involved in the Gulf conflict. In this view, then, the transnational flow of news may be seen as an agent of change in the field of security policy in European countries, and as a medium for US views in the national political discourses all over the world.

## Notes

1. All three studies mentioned here, notwithstanding their shortcomings with respect to trends analyses, are major contributions to the field. All are methodologically advanced: Cohen et al. (1996) combines field observations in news-rooms with content analysis and reception studies; Hjarvard (1995) actually conducts a kind of trend analysis based on secondary data, and he also makes comparative content analysis of Eurovision news exchange material and four national television news programmes in three countries; Swanson & Smith (1993) is the only one of the three studies to focus on Gulf War material; and the authors conduct a qualitative comparative narrative analysis of the first week's coverage in television news programmes in seven countries.
2. In international news research this is a fairly standard assumption usually connected with a well-known study by Bernhard Cohen (Cohen 1963; cf. overviews in Bennett 1994 and Robertson 1995, p. 235 ff.), but also with some neo-Marxist studies (e.g. Chomsky & Herman 1979; cf. overview in Nohrstedt 1986, p. 27 ff.). For example, a study of the first weeks of television coverage of the Gulf War in seven countries found that the main explanation of the variations was 'national sentiments and affinities' thus indicating the importance of the national political context for the conflict stories (Swanson & Smith, 1993, p. 190).
3. Here and in the following text, 'European media' refers only to the European media in our sample.
4. Sources have been classified in the following categories:
  - (a) *Allied* countries, i.e. with *combat troops* in the war zone are: Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, France, Honduras, Italy, Kuwait (exile), Morocco, Netherlands, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, U.K. and USA;

- (b) The *supporting* countries are: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Phillipines, Polen, Portugal, Rumania, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sweden;  
 As *Allied* shall also resistance movement sources within the occupied Kuwait be counted.  
*On the side of Iraq* for instance pro-Oraqi sources within the occupied Kuwait should be included. But Iran is for example regarded as neutral. *Israeli* sources are coded separately, i.e. neither as belonging to the alliance nor neutral.  
*Neutral* countries that are not members of the military alliance and also not Iraq or Israel.  
*Alternative* sources are those belonging to the peace movement, non-governmental human rights, pacifist or ecological ("green") organisations.
5. Calculation of percentage is based on the total sum of different sources for the following categories: Coalition, supporting countries, Iraqi, Israeli, neutral and alternative. If the concentration is estimated on the relative frequency of items with Coalition sources (irrespective of number of different such sources) the corresponding figures are as follows: period 1: 31%, period 2: 39% and period 3: 51%.
  6. Calculated as average quotient of number of items with US and Iraqi sources respectively in each national media group.
  7. The results are here restricted to data concerning the 'main' individual, country and collective actor respectively, although in the coding as many as five actors in each category were noted.
  8. Note that in this calculation no distinction is made between a pro-Bush attitude and an anti-Hussein attitude, and vice versa.
  9. The analysis is here based on attitudes towards nation-states as 'main country actors', in distinction to attitudes towards individual leaders that have been utilized in the previous results, and is also exploited below in relation to the aggression variable.
  10. Our data for the aggression variable indicate that the coders have applied the coding schedule differently in this case. It has, no doubt, been difficult to decide where to draw the line between what is mentioning of aggression and what is not in the news from a conflict that, after all, is constituted by antagonism and more or less manifest aggression in words and deeds. In order to control for this deviation between coders the mentioned quotient has been used instead of relative frequencies, which would be difficult to give a meaningful interpretation.
  11. However, in time-spot 10, when almost two years have passed since the outbreak of the hostilities between the Coalition and Iraq, and Bill Clinton has been installed as President of the USA, the German media together with the Norwegian reach the maximum US-positive index score.
  12. One way in which such humanitarian engagement was manifested was by these countries' sending medical personnel to the conflict region.





## A Hard Reign's a Gonna Fall

### *The Media and Gorbachev's Peace Proposal During the Gulf War*

Oddgeir Tveiten

Ten days before the UN forces began their ground offensive in the Gulf War, President Mikhail Gorbachev of the Soviet Union presented the world with an alternative to military action. His alternative was negotiation and more time to test out the effects of the economic sanctions declared by the UN against Iraq. However, his alternative strained the Coalition, whose interest it was to remove Saddam Hussein as fast and as decisively as possible, within the bounds set by the UN peace-keeping mandate. The news media responded to the situation with massive coverage in the course of that ten-day period.

Gorbachev's peace alternative would have to meet several conditions, it was said. It would have to be a viable alternative, since, after the airstrikes, so much was at stake, materially and ideologically. It would have to represent a common goal among the Coalition countries, reflecting the breadth of interest within the Coalition. It would have to be acceptable to the UN, reflecting its role as global mediator. It would at the same time have to serve the interests of all the allies in a *short-term* perspective, as well as offering a workable solution to the conflict in the *long term*.

All of these considerations would have to be met within the limits of the UN Charter. And the UN would have to oversee its implementation, since this was a UN operation. For all that to happen, the Coalition would have to shift over to a different frame of mind in terms of conflict resolution, a frame that would represent less clear-cut choices for CNN-ified war news reporting.

The story of ten intense days of peace-mongering as related through the news pages in 1990 is not about tabloidization, however. I would say that it is about two rather different things: The *first* of these is the question of how news mediation and news media at times come to function as an *arena for conflict management*, and how that conceptualization tends to emphasize how the media are also *agents* in conflict resolution rather than mere 'lap dogs' or passive 'filters' – not to speak of revolving doors that sources walk in and out of.

This active deliberation by the news media was amply demonstrated during the Gulf conflict.

The *second* aspect might be formulated as the logical sequel to the first: If the news does serve a function as mediator and arena for global political struggle, then the idea of 'media manipulation' cannot only be an aspect of manipulation *prior* to the manifestation of news texts. It must also contain an aspect of reaction *after* the news. I see this as important for the assessment and evaluation of the merit of propaganda analysis and propaganda theory, perhaps the main paradigm underlying contemporary studies of the media and war. Propaganda studies of war reporting tend, for obvious reasons, to emphasize both surveillance and control, but they do so with the underlying assumption that the implications of surveillance and control – understood as media roles, that is – are to influence the *public*, the *masses*, the *individuals* and the *social groups*. This happens *through* the media. And that belies the independent aspect of the co-dependent character that news operations are supposed to have.

Much propaganda theory in mass communications theory makes this emphasis, implicitly or explicitly. Classic propaganda theory is in fact based on it – it grew out of a branch of the theory of communications that emphasized mass control, powerful media (the injection model), and persuasion (by sender, of receiver). The rhetorical tradition in media research also emphasizes the persuasive role of communication, but here the focus is on the rhetor's ability to control the arena and to structure and perform his argument well. It is between these two positions on media persuasion and effect that a third one might be advocated: Most theories of media effect are aimed at either *mass* or *individual* effect. What then of *institutional* media effect? Clearly, the crucial element to control during the Gulf War was not the general public of the 'global village', as much as the 'chieftains' and 'kings' of the various neighbourhoods. It was a global operation. Its participants did not conform to two single interest blocs. Values, priorities, and world views were, one would suspect, dramatically different within both alliances.

To return to Gorbachev's peace proposal, the political will among the UN allies to discuss such a peace proposition, was not, it seems, widely shared. On the other hand, there *was* choice. The idea that the war was really about getting Hussein out of Iraq rather than getting Iraq out of Kuwait, seemed to peak during the air raids. Despite its short duration, the Soviet peace initiative was a major event during the war and a central news event in the course of war reporting as a whole.

## Propaganda as News Analysis

As a news event, the peace proposal had front-page exposure for almost a fortnight – from 12 February 1991, when Saddam Hussein probed the will to negotiate in the Western countries, to 24 February, when the ground offensive started. My analysis begins with the double meaning of the term news 'frame'

(Tuchman, 1978). On the one hand, 'framing' refers colloquially to the deliberate positioning of an innocent in a situation of guilt, a person being given the blame for something he has not done. In the US media, Gorbachev was in a sense framed within the context of a leader whose rhetoric was dishonest, for behind it loomed the shadows of the Cold War generals willing to do whatever they could to regain a position within the conflict process. However, in the context of news sociology, the term 'frame' will be used to refer to a perspective or a position from which reality takes on a certain hue and meaning. Tuchman borrowed the term from Goffman's analyses of how individuals frame their interaction vis-a-vis others through role ascriptions (as for instance in Goffman, 1974). Tuchman applied Goffman's micro-sociology in a study of how journalists and sources meet to 'construct a reality by doing work'. In essence, this meant that the specific ways in which journalism operated and news texts appeared could in part be explained by analysing the source-reporter relation. There is a certain way that journalism establishes fact, that it establishes authority, thereby excluding other facts and other authoritative accounts of happenings in the world.

What Tuchman describes so well, in relation also to Berger & Luckman (1966) is the nature of the interaction balance more than the outcome of it. From Berger & Luckman she drew inspiration to develop a perspective on how the daily life of journalists at work in fact constitutes the media's *modus operandi*. There is a time and place for everything: to study journalism is in part to study its times and places, its range of practices, its routines and informal modes of control. A major aspect of that research challenge is that journalism commits its practitioners. Once you enter into the source-news-worker contract, it becomes a three way affair – involving the source, the media-worker and the logics of the medium. Those who define this relationship as a two-way affair between a reporter and a source – like Gans (1979) in his reference to 'tango dancing', where he points to the necessity of someone 'leading' in the dance (usually the source, it is said) – overlook the importance of context, or, to continue Gans's metaphor, the importance of the ballroom, the parquet, the prevailing etiquette and how the bystanders influence what the practitioners do.

One element of this which Tuchman does not address, however, but which has become central in news discourse analysis of recent years (see van Dijk, 1996), is *language*. A few comments, from three different angles, might be in order. First of all, when political events are referred to in the news, they are linked to *prior events*, through generalizations of various kinds. Gorbachev's peace initiative is linked not only to the airstrikes, to the coming ground offensive, or to the UN arena, but also to the Cold War, to internal Soviet Union matters, and the like.

Secondly, news is *stories*, with beginnings and endings. These stories start with headlines, leads and summaries, and they provide scenarios, conflict descriptions and verbal reactions. And since the material that makes up the news consists of people in different circumstances, it does matter how those people

are portrayed, who the people in the news are, who portrays them and within what context this happens. To put it differently, news has *plots*, *characters*, *events* and *settings*, much like fictional tales. What sets news apart is the fact that its actors and actions are also actors and actions in the *real* world. There are moments of transition between textual roles in a narrative and contextual roles in the political context of which the news narrative is a part, that place the news text in a situation altogether different from that of other texts. And that has to be convincingly pursued in the analysis of actual political conflict. When events that take place in the world of politics are transformed into media events, this involves implicit statements as to why this specific event is important, why a news audience should bother spending time on it, and what the implications might be. One event gets linked to a previous one – for instance Gorbachev’s peace diplomacy was linked to Hussein’s peace probe of 12 February. In part this linkage was made when news stories stated that Gorbachev ‘responded’ to Hussein (which was the US chorus line); in part it happened through visual keys, like the use of a banner headline over a double page-spread, with words like ‘The Gulf War’ or ‘War in the Gulf’, signalling that day’s development in an ongoing story – or more correctly, a news play.

Third, there is the level we might describe as news discourse – although the term ‘discourse’ has acquired a range of meanings in contemporary news sociology. The news text is a text of facts and evaluations expressed as act and reaction. Something happens in the world, someone reacts in the world, both action and reaction get reported in the news, someone else reacts to that, while the reporter in a sense constructs or reconstructs the story’s elements in relation to one another – and on and on we go. In that sense, news narrative plays directly into politics, in that the news offers an *immediate and encompassing space of deliberation* between political actors on the one hand, and between political actors and their constituencies on the other. What marked the Gulf War in this respect was the fact that it was a truly global event in which the media represented the only viable sphere of worldwide, immediate action–response drama.

Content analyses of news have largely neglected this story or *play* quality, because the traditional quantitative orientation has tended to be focused elsewhere – on the match between content data and extra-media data, such as surveys or opinion polls. Quantitative content analysis has always been correlational, precluding more in-depth analysis of its structure and narrative form. In recent years, attempts have been made to apply conceptual schemes from the narrative study of fictional texts to the study of news (Katz & Dayan, 1993), from linguistics (Fowler, 1993; Fairclough, 1994; van Dijk, 1988) and from semiotics (Bird & Dardenne, 1992). It is within that broad context that this chapter has been conceived.

## War and Peace in the News – Chronology of an Event

The sample for this analysis comes from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (the US paradigm), *Aftenposten*, *Verdens Gang* and *Bergens Tidende* (the Norwegian paradigm), as well as *Dagens Nyheter* and *Expressen* (the Swedish paradigm). The sampled period (12–24 February 1991) is accounted for in terms of news, news analyses, editorials and opinion pieces, written either by regular staff or by independent pundits. The actual texts analysed are those dealing with the Soviet peace diplomacy in the period. The focus is on how the story was told over the course of those few days.

Iraqi forces had been in Kuwait for nearly half a year when the Coalition bombings began on 17 January 1991. And now, as of 15 February, international opinion was as adamant as ever that independence should be restored to Kuwait, as per UN resolution 660. Commentary and editorial writing did reflect on the historical conditions that in many respects could be said to lie behind the invasion, in light of the out-and-out breach of international human rights that an invasion represents. And yet, how was Gorbachev's initiative was met in Washington? – with the reaction, 'you just can't trust them Soviets yet'. As Republican Senator Bob Dole mused, maybe the Cold War had been called off a little too soon: *'I'm not certain what the Soviets have in mind,'* he said, and added that *'but I'm not certain it's to help the United States'*.<sup>1</sup>

Gorbachev was paying lip service to peace, it was said. His 'peace initiative' was really an effort to regain his standing at home and take the lead in the international diplomacy as well, in one act. And Bob Dole lit the path of the Congressional response. There is more to the story than a vilification of Gorbachev, however. There is also the scepticism towards Saddam Hussein, rooted in the many failed attempts at getting him to negotiate. As the *Washington Post* (WP) sums up the situation on 14 February, the framework is this: *'Is there something to the latest Soviet peace bid in Iraq? Successive foreign envoys have journeyed to Baghdad trying to stop the fighting. Until now, at least, Saddam Hussein has rebuffed them all, even those who asked of him not that he leave Kuwait – this is the necessary minimal requirement, and Moscow insists it upholds it – but only that he announce an intention to leave'* (WP, 14 February 1991, A22).

On Wednesday, 13 February, the *New York Times* started one of its front-page stories by reporting that *'President Saddam Hussein of Iraq said tonight that he was willing to cooperate with the Soviet Union to end the Persian Gulf War, but also said that Iraq was determined to keep fighting "until aggression and the aggressors are beaten back"'*. The six sober paragraphs that appeared on the front page concealed as much as they revealed – unless they were read in light of another story, which reported of a heavy shelling on Iraqi soldiers in Southern Kuwait the night before. Seen together, these two stories reflect the duality underlying the whole peace process, the timing and the stalling – deliberations of peace, while the war goes on.<sup>2</sup>

The WP editorial cited above is based on the same recognition: peace negotiations go on while the war is in progress. It is this situation that makes

for interesting news analysis – even during the first days of the peace probe it is clear that the media work as a prime arena for making demands, stating reactions, and otherwise setting conditions for warfare and for peace.

Meanwhile, a different – yet strangely similar – story is to be found in Oslo's *Verdens Gang*, and possibly in other tabloids as well. Hussein says the same on the issue of peace as he does in the *Times*, but now he does it on a page all to himself. He is photographed kneeling on a prayer-rug in a mosque. In the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Aftenposten*, *Dagens Nyheter*, and *Bergens Tidende*, there is political process, a number of stories recounting the situation, including extensive excerpts from Hussein's Baghdad Radio speech the night before. There are graphic maps of the bombed regions, and there are pictures of pick-up trucks onto which machine guns have been mounted. In contrast, in the tabloid *Verdens Gang* there is the drama of a praying soul (visual presentation) set against a diplomatic process. Only when you turn the page is there war. The coverage in *Verdens Gang* is in part based on the transcript of Hussein's speech, as well. The sources are the same. Half way through that day's coverage, *Verdens Gang* cites Marlin Fitzwater, the White House spokesman. His stance: Ceasefire can happen only if there is complete withdrawal from Kuwait.

In other words, also in the tabloids there is political process, but it is presented differently, with more personalized attention – and possibly greater leeway for propagandist stunts, like that of Hussein kneeling in prayer. I think that that difference is worth noting in a comparative perspective.

Not only is there difference between tabloids and full format papers: there are also considerable differences among the full format papers. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* narrative is a much fuller account of the situation than that of other large-format and so-called elite papers, with a great deal more props in the way of characters and actions. This is in part an outcome of the sheer amount of space devoted to the Gulf War. This 'fuller account' would also appear to be a more comprehensive account, but that may not necessarily be the case. Let me comment briefly on two aspects of this. First, what is covered in all these papers is in essence the same story, over the course of a fortnight's news coverage. It is the same characters and conflict situations that make up the general framework around Gorbachev's peace bid. But compared to *Verdens Gang*, for instance, the conflict scene and its themes in the *Washington Post* refer to the peace initiative as a rhetorical element in the business of the war. A closer look reveals that not only does the *Washington Post* have a different opening than the *Verdens Gang* frame of Hussein kneeling on a prayer-rug. On the thematic plane, we find that the *Washington Post* frames its sources and its editorial evaluations much more in the light of Cold War rhetoric.

*Verdens Gang* treats Gorbachev's peace bid as a discrete event in the development of the war. Not only is the narrative different, when analysed on a detailed plane. The peace bid as reported in the *Washington Post* is a diplomatic endeavour where 'not much is new' – the comments and verbal reactions deal with (1) the US response to the actual peace initiative and (2) the US

response to what is felt like a hardening of the internal conditions facing Gorbachev on the home front. ['The Generals think he is going soft.'] In the Nordic media, the peace probe is rendered as a real event, not a mere re-run of an old song.

All this we return to in due time, the point being here to establish that there are in fact differences in the news narratives. Where *Verdens Gang* emphasized the talks, *Bergens Tidende* emphasized the US reaction, through a main story that day surrounded by a page full of related global reactions. *Bergens Tidende*, a so-called 'quality paper', employed a wider range of identified international sources than did the tabloid *Verdens Gang*. On this day, it cites Yassir Arafat, who gives Iraq three years; a Soviet general who thinks Iraq will hold out against the Coalition forces; and reports of surprisingly large amounts of Russian on Iraqi military radio frequencies (all 400 Soviet advisers had by then reportedly been sent home).<sup>3</sup> However, *Bergens Tidende* carries the top story on the US reaction in the Reuters version, not an independent one. It presents it without Reuters's excerpts from Hussein's speech, which appeared in the US media. And there is little in the way of national reaction from the readers in Norway.

In more general terms, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* look very much like *Dagens Nyheter*, *Aftenposten*, and *Bergens Tidende* in terms of design and lay-out. As full-size papers, they have the means to provide a more complex set-up than the tabloids, and on this day they all carry pages dominated by Gulf news. Page 14 of the *New York Times* that day, and its content, fans out into the US national idiom. Here we find war and peace, a few political remarks and a great deal of day-to-day saga telling. The story on Hussein's peace probe continues here, in a wider context. The *New York Times*, like the *Washington Post*, reiterates a deep scepticism rooted in a view of Gorbachev's uncertain domestic position, possibly a relevant concern and possibly a good rhetorical point to emphasize (*NYT*, 13 February, p.14):

NEWS-FRAME: 'Moscow, Feb. 12 – Hard-line politicians and newspapers here have grown increasingly critical of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's support of the multinational alliance in the Persian Gulf and have accused the United States of "neo-colonial aggression" in the region.'

BACKGROUND REFERENCE [second paragraph]: 'An article published today by the daily newspaper *Sovyetskaya Rossiya* exemplifies the emerging hardline view, saying Moscow's agreement to join the U.N. alliance against Iraq "ended the USSR's existence as a superpower".'

In the Nordic idiom we find the same war and peace, which is not surprising. However, it is the same sources that provide the political commentary – generally US specialists and politicians. In other words, whereas the US media provide the US scenario for US readers, the Nordic media provide the US scenario – for Nordic readers.

There are exceptions, however. As one field reporter and analyst for *Bergens Tidende* stated sarcastically on 13 February, *I don't know who it is but someone's*



*lying here.* That angle marked many of his contributions from the field. Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* is similarly concerned with truth, but that is for the most part in its editorial line, where the paper is highly critical to the military solution in general. On Wednesday the 13th, *Dagens Nyheter* reported, much echoing the sober voice of the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*: 'Amman: Mikbail Gorbachev's special envoy travelled to Baghdad on Monday to investigate the possibilities of a diplomatic process. At the same time, the Iraqi media continued to denounce all calls for a ceasefire'.<sup>4</sup>

### News media, the UN, and cold war rhetoric

We have established that the Nordic media tended to frame Gorbachev's peace proposal as an event outside the Cold War reference but with a preference for sources in the USA. In the way it is told, the greatest difference is between tabloid and full-size, not between US and Nordic media. The difference is one of narrative construction, where the tabloid narrative has fewer props and in general a more simple tale to tell.

On the other hand, there is a normative stance to be observed. If the news really does play a surveillance and information role, then political reaction and assessment from the nation-state arena is not only to be expected: it is in fact crucial. We return to this point later; here let us note that, already this early in the unfolding news story, there is precious little in the way of establishing a typically Norwegian or a typically Swedish news discourse, with verbal reactions from the local polities. It's all American, lock, stock and barrel.

The next day, 14 February, the *New York Times* reports on the devastation of a bomb shelter which had reportedly housed military operations. This is the so-called al-Amiryra event, in which 500 civilians are victim of airstrikes, according to Iraqi estimates.<sup>5</sup> The story goes around the world. Most papers, also *Verdens Gang*, give the story front-page play. In *Verdens Gang* it sports the usual tabloid headline-size. Inside, US military experts affirm that there was indeed a military installation there. *Verdens Gang* cites the military line that 'it was a perfect hit'. Also *Bergens Tidende* reports it on the front page. But here it has become a story with the potential to raise serious doubt about the direction of the war, much more in line with the *New York Times* reporting.<sup>6</sup> The event was a typical war event in all the papers, treated in more or less the same idiom – but, as we see, with different undertones. The usual war reportage was there: Dead people, despair in photographic detail, comments by military personnel and by high-level political figures. *Bergens Tidende* and *Dagens Nyheter* were the least uncritical papers, if by degree of critical awareness one means (a) criticism of the Western Coalition and (b) ability to look beyond facts, positions and figures, to the potential for rhetorical gain. And for his part, Saddam Hussein was no doubt well aware of how the incident could be used.

There is little question that the peace proposal that Hussein issued the day afterwards had something to do with the Iraqi leader's capacity for playing on already sensitive Arab sentiment. He was now in a position to 'reach out a hand', having now become the victim of a senseless shelling.



The tabloid narrative seems to be too crude to allow for that perspective. Of greater interest is perhaps the lack of such an emphasis on Hussein's rhetorical potential in the accounts presented by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* – perhaps such an emphasis would be taking too much of a chance with Bush's leadership role, in that he, like Hussein, had an obvious stake in the media definition of this event. We will return to this in the summary. Unlike the other papers, Sweden's *Dagens Nyheter* now clearly questioned the direction of the war. As it turned out, the UN Secretary-General had had meetings with high-level political officers in Iraq three days prior to the start of the war, i.e. on 14 January, in an effort to convince Saddam Hussein to withdraw his forces in order to 'help our Palestinian brethren'. Reportedly, Saddam Hussein had agreed to a package solution which included withdrawal from Kuwait. This is documented in a transcript from the talks, published by the Jordanian newspaper *Ad Dustur*, and also referred to in the *Washington Post*. It had been leaked to the paper by Iraqi diplomats, according to *Dagens Nyheter*.<sup>7</sup>

It is not a small story: in fact it occupies a central place and it carries two photographs (Hussein and Pérez de Cuéllar), along with one map.<sup>8</sup> Since this might be either a planted propaganda item or a truly critical action on the part of the UN, we ought to take a closer look. The beginning of the story is simple news narrative:

OPENING: *Dagens Nyheter*, Feb. 14th – 'New York. Saddam Hussein mentioned a withdrawal from Kuwait in a meeting with UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar three days before the start of the war in the Persian Gulf.'

The opening frame is implicitly critical, and different from that of the *Washington Post* the day before, where the emphasis was on the issue of closed vs. open meetings. As the paper states on the 15th: '*U.N. Security Council debate on the Gulf War started today amid indications that the U.S. move to keep the discussion behind closed doors had averted the threat of a divisive confrontation with anti-American overtones.*' The *Dagens Nyheter* story continues in a quite different vein, to the point where it notes that the UN cannot verify the version of the story that was published in *Ad Dustur*. *Dagens Nyheter* says that too much is being kept in the dark here. The action, according to *Dagens Nyheter* and contrary to the *Washington Post*, is this:

EVENTS/ACTION: 'Last week Iraq's UN Ambassador, Abdul Amir al-Anbart, demanded that the UN publish a transcript of the talks. Pérez de Cuéllar refrains, through his spokesman, saying that to do so would be a breach of the confidentiality of the Secretary-General's talks with political leaders.'

[TRANSITION:] 'The UN has not verified the version of the talks that were published in the Jordanian newspaper.'

EVENTS/ACTIONS AND REACTIONS: 'Pérez de Cuéllar too touched upon message of a "package agreement" in the not yet publicized account of the talks which the Secretary-General gave the Security Council on 14 January. Late Tuesday, the

British paper *The Guardian* published Peréz de Cuéllar's statements to the Council, which met behind closed doors.'

The paper goes on to reiterate the contents of the talk between de Cuéllar and Hussein, from the point of view of the Iraq version, in which the UN Secretary-General also commends Hussein for putting the Palestinian issue back on the political agenda. However, what is more interesting than a reference to confidentiality is the timing of the *Dagens Nyheter* report. There was another meeting behind closed doors – a meeting in the Security Council which *Dagens Nyheter* reported in a separate story, and much the same as what was reported in the *Washington Post*.<sup>9</sup> A critique of secrecy became an aspect of the day in *Dagens Nyheter*. And meanwhile, to the right on the same page, is a story reporting that Israel has received the go-ahead from the Pentagon for an operation of its own against missile ramps in Iraq.<sup>10</sup> This has been cleared with the Pentagon in Washington: there is no reference to other members of the Coalition. If there ever was a case of political servitude during the war, this is as good an illustration as any – not even here on the question of degree of secrecy in a global, democratic organization do we find any reporting on the local-Parliamentarian reaction.

## A Range of Views

If it is the case that the Nordic media, with some exceptions, provide the US idiom rather than their own, then we ought to have a closer look at that idiom. If we were to take the al-Amirya story in the *New York Times* on its own, out of context, there might seem to be little in the way of reporting on the protests and outcries against the bombing. It is a straight news story. On the other hand, where does one story begin and another one end? How was it read, used, timed? That same day, the paper also reported, in a separate story, that the combined effect of the costs in civilian lives and the prospects for a Soviet-initiated peace proposal left Bush with pressure to either start the ground offensive or make a peace initiative himself. These stories in the *New York Times* ought to be seen in light of each other: there is both a narrative linkage between stories over the course of days, as well as between stories over the course of pages on a single day. The front-page display on this specific day provides a classic *NYT* mode of summarizing relations between stories:<sup>11</sup>

JOURNALISTIC SUMMARY: 'After weeks of trying to minimize American military casualties to preserve domestic backing for the Persian Gulf War, President Bush is confronting the prospect that civilian casualties in Iraq could threaten international support for the continuing bombing campaign.'

The story is linked to the bomb-shelter story, and it is not oblivious to the differences of interest within the Coalition, as far as a ground offensive is concerned. Just as Scandinavia's *Bergens Tidende* and *Dagens Nyheter* are concerned with the implications of media activity in the war, so is the *New York*

*Times* in the USA. On this particular day, the *New York Times* carries five front-page Gulf War-related stories. The story quoted above is a good example of how the *New York Times* ties such front-page play together. The paper's strategy has always been to summarize critical conditions from a birds-eye perspective, and not give first-person voice to criticisms offered outside a very tight, inner circle of the Establishment. Here the typical critical remark is a paraphrase by the reporter – one could of course magnify everything by signalling the kind of moral concern that *Dagens Nyheter* does on several occasions in its editorial section, but the *New York Times* never does.

Its view of Bush's challenge, to mount continued support sounds instrumentalist and detached – simply something observed in passing. The *New York Times* does not problematize the political interests in finding nonviolent and human conflict solutions while at the same time maintaining favourable poll points. Where *Dagens Nyheter* in some respects might be said to question implicitly the will to negotiate a peace through its reference to the talks between Hussein and de Cuéllar, the *New York Times* provides a much simpler assessment. This is a bird's-eye narrative of a situation in Washington, not a reference to the 'other side'. In essence, the story concerns not so much the civilian suffering as it does the effect of this suffering on Western popular support for the war.

One device by which this is made plausible in the news is through quotation, or what I have earlier called a type of verbal reaction. A news story can contain such reaction in two primary forms – either as direct quote in a quote-response fashion with quotation marks, or as a paraphrased quotation, where it is easier to hide the origin of the quote but where it is still evident that text does refer to a source [*Administration officials and Western diplomats said...*] In the second paragraph of the story cited above, the *New York Times* goes on to reflect on the war situation: unnamed sources are concerned with the *toll on civilian life* and *anti-American demonstrations* in the Middle East, as well as with diplomatic *overtures by the Soviet Union*. Following these reflections, the story refers to *White House aides*. But the term 'overtures', in this context a negative term, does not have any identifiable origin.

This is spread around the world as 'the US point of view' – but is it propaganda? Is it 'artful construction', creative freedom? Does a good quote travel on its own? To the extent that the story around the world corresponds in time and phraseology to that of the *New York Times*, the answer is given. The *New York Times* is a leading paper. As such, the NYT story is not open to the criticism of bringing anything tangibly wrong. Neither does it tell us that the *New York Times* has been manipulated. But that is not the whole story.

The big difference is one step removed from the surface. Contrary to Nordic coverage, the US paradigm employs 'US reaction' as a main theme, and not a sub-theme. The White House mood is reported as *defensive* that day, in *the early rounds of the battle for public opinion, as Iraq asserted that American bombers had killed hundreds of civilians in non-military air-raid shelter in Baghdad*. The battle for public opinion is acknowledged, and the *New York*

*Times* goes on to apply a specific event, the bombing, as an element in a wider narrative. The White House is both acting and reacting. The story is told with more props and characters than in the Nordic media. Interestingly, the front-page play of this story ends with a report on how White House officials are working to contain negative image effects. The Nordic media are not as concerned with image effects – and why should they be, when all they report is the US idiom, for a non-US audience?

## Enter Gorbachev

By 14 February, the image of an antiseptic war with ‘surgical’ strikes had begun to wane, in the USA as elsewhere. The prospects for severe losses of Coalition soldiers in a ground offensive started to take hold, and one might deduce from a propaganda perspective that in the phase to come it would be as important as ever to contain public opinion. The various reports show that several Coalition countries are in trouble in this respect. There are protests in Germany, especially, involving much more than rank and file grassroots. And now, at the bottom of a *New York Times* page on the 14th, Gorbachev’s envoy to Iraq reports that he sees a *glimmer of hope*.

*So what?* – seems to be the ironic attitude at the *New York Times*. *We’ve heard it before*. There is a difference, however, for now comes a range of opinions in both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. And that is an aspect of news reporting which the sociology of news has not conceptualized well, especially in cross-national comparisons. The range of ideas and opinions voiced in commentary sections in papers like the *New York Times* has always been greater than the range of ideas and opinions offered in the news pages as such. It is instructive to look at Gorbachev’s entry from here, because many non-native readers fail to grasp the opinion page as an institution in the English-speaking media world.

In the US media, the fate of Gorbachev’s peace proposal is a rather different story in the views columns. Minnesota’s Democratic Congressman, Paul D. Wellstone, had called for a breather in the war already on the 12th: It is now paramount to stop and assess the alternatives, he stated (*NYT* 12 February, A19). *Before America hurries into an incalculably costly ground war, the Bush Administration should order a temporary halt in allied bombing that would give third parties such as Jordan and Iran a chance to mediate in an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait*. Wellstone’s background is the fact that it is now becoming clear that the civilian costs will be greater than estimated. White House Chief of Staff, John Sununu, is cited as estimating approximately USD 50 billion in 1991 alone.

As a Congressman, Wellstone had authority. He was not the only one to advocate a non-military solution: Henry Kissinger did, too. And both of them, like former Prime Minister Kåre Willoch of Norway,<sup>12</sup> emphasized that long-term peace requires long-term strategy. To make amends for the Palestinian

situation, to avoid an unbridgeable gap between the oriental and occidental worldviews, and to avoid civilian suffering, must mean more than a quick victory. Wellstone used his authority in ways that no Scandinavian elected official did during this period of the conflict, however. There was no comparable political dialogue in either the Norwegian or Swedish media at this time. That may of course mean that the dialogues took place elsewhere – but where would a Scandinavian MP look for an audience for his critique of the US-led coalition?

The more plausible answer is that there was little opposition to speak of – which leaves us with a different sort of conclusion than the typical media propaganda theory would come to: To the extent that there is more opposition to the war in the views and opinions-sections of US newspapers than there is in the Nordic media's commentary sections, the likely explanation follows one of two lines: One possibility is that the media in the Nordic countries did not allow for critical debate. But they did, especially in Sweden if these ten days of coverage can be used as a basis for inference. The other explanation is that there actually was no Parliamentary reaction or critique to speak of – which seems a more likely explanation, since the media actually did carry other kinds of critique, albeit in moderate forms. In fact, the striking element is that Parliamentary discourse is generally absent, in relation to Gorbachev's peace probe.

A typical commentary response of the Scandinavian media is to be found in a *Dagens Nyheter* editorial, dated 15 February.<sup>13</sup>

*DAGENS NYHETER* – SITUATION ASSESSMENT: 'The United Nations works but is hardly noticed. A paradoxical and undesirable situation has emerged in the Gulf War. Much of the criticism of the world organization is unjust. Is what grew forth in the course of the past autumn at risk of falling apart, or might it serve as a basis also for continued efforts at creating peace?..The sanctions ought to be allowed to work longer. No one knows where the ongoing warfare will lead. Everyone was bound by the ultimatum that the USA pushed forth.'

Where was Sweden's Ingvar Carlsson, or Norway's Gro Harlem Brundtland? This is much the same argument that we can find on the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*. But this is the *Dagens Nyheter's* own reaction, not that of a columnist, nor a Parliamentarian. It is not a political reaction from any of the three branches of government, but it is of course *political* – it is the fourth branch speaking. And it is here, on that level, that the Nordic media and especially *Dagens Nyheter* offer a more varied political discourse than that found in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. *Dagens Nyheter* is the more critical, in terms of the paper's own critical voice.

Where *Dagens Nyheter* poses these concerns on its editorial page, as it did frequently, the *New York Times* expands on its opinion page. Wellstone's article is juxtaposed to the writings of an in-house commentator, in this case A.M. Rosenthal: *The war in the Persian Gulf is still to be won, but the struggle for the shape and meaning of the peace already has been joined*. Rosenthal's concern here is Gorbachev, whom he identifies as *the Soviet President, the Nobel Peace Laureate, the Man of the Decade*, in an increasingly sarcastic tone. Rosenthal's

point seems to be that Gorbachev is waking us up to the realities of interest pursuit, the aim is to *influence UN members who want to save Saddam Hussein*, and it *may increase the pressure on President Bush to go to ground combat earlier than he might have otherwise*.

This is in a sense not just the view-frame but also the news-frame of Gorbachev's initiative in the US media. On 16 February, the *New York Times* runs a whole series of articles, headed by a banner stating *War in the Gulf: reactions around the world*. And its presentation deserves reflection: *Soviet Union – Moscow welcomes Baghdad's offer; Soviets Call Iraqi Statement 'Encouraging' but Repeat Support of U.N. Terms*. As signalled in the headline, the story of Gorbachev's peace initiative is framed as a reaction, since so much space has already been devoted to Hussein's offer and to subsequent US reactions. Contrary to Norway's *Verdens Gang*, where Gorbachev's initiative is *an immense diplomatic activity*, the *New York Times* presents it as a response to Hussein in a questionable alliance that has too much Cold War and too little pro-West in it. Thereby the crucial information that the Soviets still support the UN line. In the Scandinavian media in general, Gorbachev's activity is presented less as a reaction: he is an initiative generator, working hard in the background, somewhat to the displeasure of the US side. And when he is drawn into question it is with reference to *US* sources.

The photo accompanying the *New York Times* article shows Gorbachev talking with Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, with Soviet colleague Aleksandr Bessmertnykh in the background – thereby cementing the image that Gorbachev's interests are as much with the Middle Eastern partners as with the Western Coalition. To the extent that this is confirmed by the text, the contrast to George Bush is striking. Few images of Bush present him in anything but a position on a podium, speaking in dignified ways to audiences not in view. Gorbachev, on the other hand, is always shown talking to two or three important figures at a time – in rooms with walls. There are never any podiums, no elevation. The single phrase from the Gorbachev story that is pulled out and enlarged, as an appeal to the reader, is that *the Kremlin seems to distance itself further from the West*.

In essence, a news-frame of suspicion, which has already been developed over several days, presenting Gorbachev in a less than credible light, is here confirmed when he actually enters the scene himself. And that is the main difference between the US news and that of the Nordic countries. The frontline news in *Bergens Tidende* was that *the Americans were sceptical to Gorbachev* – not that Gorbachev had something to offer. In *Verdens Gang*, his *hand was an outstretched hand of peace*. The *New York Times* now quotes several opinions on the question of peace: *Moscow, 15 February – The Soviet Government, pursuing its own diplomatic peace initiative in Iraq, greeted Baghdad's conditional offer today to withdraw from Kuwait initially with 'satisfaction and hope'* (p. L7). We remember the phrase from other news stories: it was reported verbatim around the world.



Beside the story, there is a photo of Bishop John Hurst Adam of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, as one of several people interviewed on the question of reaction. A US stockbroker is first to be interviewed – on the street, as if to set the tone:

BACKGROUND – LAY REACTION: 'It's a non-event,' Charles Temel, a stockbroker, said as he stood at a sidewalk vendor's table on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, sifting through a pile of T-shirts, emblazoned with patriotic images or logos of the war.

According to Temel, the man whose interest in the war is emphasized through his *sifting through a pile of T-shirts, emblazoned with patriotic images or logos of the war*, Hussein has a lot of chutzpah. He is like the guy who kills his parents and then pleads for mercy because he is an orphan. And that is a very good quote. It is also 'chutzpah squared', the by-stander goes on to say, after which the reporter quotes the photographed Bishop, a statement by 60 church leaders, and then Coretta Scott King's appeal to President Bush for a speedy peace.

The lay reaction (Temel) is *chutzpah*, special interest reaction (Hurst Adam) is *concern*. Both are presented in the same story. The latter is there on account of a political act (signing a letter of protest), while the other one is out to lunch. Whether the slight is deliberate or merely the effect of bad judgement we cannot say, but it is an interesting news-frame, at that. If there were a hundred similar cases we might say that it was a deliberate delegitimization attempt. Since there were not, we might say that a Democrat who writes an opinion piece usually gets a different sort of presentation than a Methodist Bishop who signs a petition. These are two different political acts, and they do not correspond in the Nordic and the US political discourse.<sup>14</sup>

The peace initiative received considerable news deliberation. A range of reactions were reported in separate stories, and verbal commentary linked the discrete stories together. Jordan's Minister of Information, Ibrahim Izzedine, welcomed Hussein's offer, calling it a *courageous move*, while Egypt condemned Hussein in the following way: *The ministers view this proposal as an insincere offer which contains conditions that were previously considered unacceptable as well as new conditions,' Mr. Abdel-Meguid (Egyptian Foreign Minister) said, reading from a statement at a news conference.* The *New York Times* questioned Gorbachev and reported more or less directly the US response, in reports that confirmed an international backing behind the US strategy. The Nordic media played a thinner version of the same, with greater attention given to the Soviet spokespersons on the peace issue. As the drama intensifies, shuttle diplomacy increases speed. On 21 February, *Verdens Gang* reports that the world is waiting for an answer, but that it may already be too late. The paper has two angles, one from its New York correspondent and one from its Moscow correspondent. In both cases Hussein has put the world through much too long a wait for conclusion, but now the end is coming: *SADDAM GIVES UP! Yes to peace plan last night — Leaves US in a tight spot.* Iraq has agreed to pull out

of Kuwait, on terms that the editors of *Verdens Gang* regard as well within the limits of what the USA ought to accept. The White House is sceptical. The Nordic political establishment is simply not present. To make a long story short, Bush never accepted the terms, as we now know, maintaining that the details of withdrawal were not strict enough. The day after he issued an ultimatum. Hussein failed to comply. And thus the ground offensive started.

## Exit Gorbachev

As we have seen, news may apply similar forms of telling singular events, but it is in fact quite different in its ways of contextualizing them and drawing explicit or implicit conclusions. The best we can do is to try to reconstruct the outlines of the news. As Hussein's peace probe and the story of the bombed shelter shows, it can be told in many different ways that *look* similar, but where contextualization shows they are not. Hussein was, for instance, not presented as a friendly image in *Dagens Nyheter*, but the paper offered its coverage in light of the morality of peace. *Verdens Gang* and *Expressen* churned out the 'Saddam wants peace – read all about it' version. And Norway's conservative *Aftenposten* remained as close to the US bulls-eye as it could possibly get without slipping through it.

The US framework for Gorbachev's initiative was clear all along. The initiative could split the Coalition. It challenged President Bush. And it was neither right, nor wrong. Say that the US stance favoured the military solution aimed at a complete rollback from Kuwait and abolition of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq. Say that this was the political line, and that there was crucial dissent to it in the USA: Then a truly critical paper would balance the pros and cons – as some say the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* did and others that they did not. How then might we account for a prism on balance?

Kempf and Luostarinen (1996) have suggested analytically juxtaposing a military logic to a peace logic, where the peace logic would emphasize a communal or collective cognition of common rights and interests, in place of a questioning and demonization of 'the other'. Clearly, both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* generally subscribed to neither of these frames in a clear-cut way. But if the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* had wanted to back a peace initiative, they could have found more forceful argumentation to support Gorbachev than they did. Should a quality paper like the *New York Times* have challenged the presidency at this point, should it have pursued the UN focus more than it did? I do not have an answer: but we should question why the *New York Times* passed over the peace negotiations as superficially as it did.

How then ought the Nordic media to have responded? This too is a difficult question, not least since 'ought' can mean so many things. The Nordic media reported the peace initiative in different ways. The general line was advocacy of an extension of non-military sanctions and a postponed ground offensive.



This was differently put by the various media, but it was there – the weak point being the lack of a local critical reaction from the political sphere. Everyone knew what the USA was committed to. And here was a prime case for the Nordic allies to spell out a critical position of some kind.

Returning to the war and peace discussion, we might then surmise that the *New York Times* is in keeping with the war-frame, mainly because the prerogatives and preconceptions of the journalistic ideal lead to a frame defined largely by its sources. The same might be said for the *Washington Post*. This is in line with practically all current news sociology. But is it in line with propaganda theory? From this we might answer quite briefly some questions that were asked earlier.

The first is whether there is anything in the range of opinions in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* that provides for the necessary balancing act: Yes, but also no. Critical opinion is relegated to the views sections, and makes few splashes in the news sections. Prevailing political wisdom is never challenged. There is one exception, and that is former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, who advocated collaboration with Gorbachev to end the war before the ground offensive started.

The second is whether there is strong similarity between the US idiom and the Norwegian and Swedish idiom: Yes, because it is the US idiom that is presented in Norway and Sweden. There is no local political idiom in this case. It is not that the Scandinavian media are never critical, but this does not happen in the news sections, only in the editorial line as the papers' positions. There is no local reaction.

Gorbachev was evidently in a tight spot himself: The 14 February story on Primakov travelled the world and is clearly built on a press conference, since so many of his statements, quoted verbatim, appear worldwide almost identically. There is a *glimmer of hope*, but there is no *categorical* optimism. The prospects are *tangible*, but *more remains to be solved* before a peace is probable. The *New York Times* story, written by Moscow-based reporter Serge Schemann, moves into a reflection by French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas. Dumas has evidently had talks with Gorbachev and he has participated in the press conference at which Primakov spoke, where he stated that he would pay more attention to the facts and opinions presented publicly than to Gorbachev's more *flexible* comments in private. Dumas speaks for the Coalition in this press conference. The article then moves to commentary by Soviet military officials who show visible anger towards the Coalition and towards Gorbachev: '*The officers, officials of the military-political administration that is a basis of hard-line military thinking, held the press conference to argue the need for continued Communist control of the military* (14 February, A19).

As the story goes, the concern is with the double bind that Gorbachev is seeking a way out of. On the one hand, his former Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze has resigned in protest at the increasingly right-wing turn of Gorbachev's foreign policy. (Shevardnadze was behind the Soviet acceptance of the UN mandates that contributed crucially to the legitimization of the Coa-

lition.) On the other hand, the Soviet president is under fire from the right for not being adequately supportive of the interests of Iraq.

No such story was reported in detail in the Nordic media. The allegedly double nature of Gorbachev's aims was referred to as a concern that the USA had, and through that concern, the populations in Norway and Sweden were made aware of the fact.

How then is the background on Soviet politics depicted in the USA? Not only was it under Shevardnadze that Moscow formed its policies, Primakov and others who had contributed to the shaping of Soviet Middle East politics *had insisted that the Soviet Union could not sever those links and allow the United States to gain influence in those regions*, the *New York Times* stated. It was presented through the voice of the reporter, as background fill-in. It is in this light that one reads the next story which follows directly below (US doubts on Soviet Talks), where US officials are reported as seeing nothing particularly new in the Soviet initiative. *'When it was pointed out to American officials that Mr. Primakov said on returning to Moscow that he saw 'glimmers' in the position of the Iraqi leadership that inspired optimism that the gulf war could be halted, they remarked that Mr. Primakov has consistently accentuated anything positive that the Iraqis might say, while playing down their inflexibility'* (14 February, A19).

As we approach 16 February, the event moves into a qualitatively different phase, which is doubly interesting from a news analysis perspective since the 16th is also a Saturday, with news magazines and time to provide background. That day the *NYT* virtually wrote a complete book about the war, as far as length is concerned. Gorbachev now takes the front stage, relegating Primakov and others in the Soviet gallery of actors to the sidelines.

That is, Gorbachev takes front stage in the Nordic media – not in the US media. Gorbachev and the Soviets were the story in Scandinavia, the 'US sources' being props in the background, whereas it is George Bush that is the story in the USA. The *New York Times* is less concerned with the peace plan in general than it is with what it does to the US initiative. While Gorbachev may be the peg, or the opening of the news narrative, it is Bush that is the story proper. Furthermore, in the *NYT*, the initiative is Iraq's, not the Soviet Union's. Gorbachev is depicted as a responder, not a generator.

ACTION–RESPONSE: 'Washington, 15 February – Iraq said for the first time today that it was prepared to discuss compliance with a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for its withdrawal from Kuwait if numerous conditions of its own were met. But President Bush rejected the offer as a 'cruel hoax' and urged Iraq's military leaders and civilian population to 'take matters into their own hands' and force Saddam Hussein from power.'

SITUATION EVALUATION: 'Washington, 15 February – Iraq's proposal on Kuwait today appears to open a new phase in the Persian Gulf crisis, in which cohesion of the anti-Baghdad coalition is likely to be severely tested, particularly the core United States–Soviet Union alliance.'

SITUATION EVALUATION: 'Washington, 15 February – Iraq's proposal to discuss withdrawal coincides with a marked deterioration in Baghdad's military position this week and continuing American preparations for a ground war, according to American military officials in Saudi Arabia and at the Pentagon.'

Even the dateline, repeated three times – *Washington, 15 February* – signals authority of account. There are three different reporters all dwelling on the image of the President. Mid-way through the first story, the gist of the matter appears. '*When I first heard the statement, I must say I was happy that Saddam Hussein had seemed to realize that he must now withdraw unconditionally, from Kuwait,*' Mr. Bush said this morning. '*Regrettably, the Iraq statement now appears to be a cruel hoax, dashing the hopes of the people in Iraq, and indeed around the world.*' ... Mr. Bush, Prime Minister John Major of Britain and President François Mitterand of France all rejected the Iraqi statement, and this quickly dampened the initial excitement.' The repetition of the term 'cruel hoax' makes for a central context of the three stories. Ironically, a fourth story at the bottom of the page runs the report on what happened when excitement broke out in Baghdad: *Jubilation in Baghdad, and then Bombing.*

From a news sociology perspective, one might say that the got Gorbachev. There was too much that stood in the way, when added together: (1) No doubt Iraq took a long time in reacting to Western signals, no doubt the country stalled for time. (2) But Soviet credibility was severely questioned in the USA, while (3) no-one questioned the USA. Congressional opposition to the ground offensive did not seize on the chance, perhaps because its spokespersons did not want to interfere with the prerogatives of the President whose Congressional consent for war had already been given. (House Speaker Tim Foley was among the opponents to the ground offensive who gave this justification. Wellstone of Minnesota was not.) On the other hand, such US constitutional affairs did not stand in the way of either the UN itself or the Coalition political leaderships, whose allegiance to the USA here was mandated through a joint organization – the UN.

Gorbachev would have had to gamble on the UN climbing aboard *his* wagon, taking the lead from the USA – in what was, after all, a UN operation. The UN might have provided that credibility, perhaps. But when it did not, it is in part because the word of the media is a double-edged (s)word: (1) When emphasis is placed on US leadership and that vacuum is filled, then half the definition work is done. (2) If the media succeed in labelling the peace initiative an Iraqi affair, then how can the UN climb aboard? This was the issue when the UN Security Council decided to meet in closed sessions, at the request of the USA. The Soviets could not afford to challenge the USA any more than they had, hence they did not oppose closing the UN meetings, as many long-time allies in the Third World did.

In order to create a fixed point in the analysis, we might say that the 'web of facticity' in this case involves three distinct spaces – or *topoi*. The first is the Iraq–Soviet connection. This is the dominant theme in the US coverage, as illustrated earlier. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* linked

Gorbachev's peace proposal directly to the logics of the Cold War during which the Soviets were the enemy. And that frame stuck throughout this phase of the war. The effect might be expounded on in different ways. For one thing, Gorbachev's initiative was in general questioned, whereas little attention was paid to its potential.

The second space is the US setting itself. And here Nordic reporting is copious and not necessarily uncritical, at face value. As Sweden's *Expressen* reported (16 February) *Bush and his staff in the White House view the proposal with a great deal of concern. They know that Mikhail Gorbachev, with a large Moslem population and a great deal of trouble at home, has everything to gain by becoming a peace hero and the one to end the war.* The statement is no different from the perspective in the *Washington Post* or the *New York Times*, save one critical condition: The only reactions *Expressen* serves its own public are US reactions. When the paper quotes Bush as saying that *no one but we decide the terms of peace* (16 February, p. 2) this is a statement that reverberates throughout the world. The crucial word is 'we'. None of the Nordic media seemed to regard their own national politically elected representatives accountable for that 'we', Coalition or not. It was Bush's call.

The third, and by far the least represented, space in the Nordic media concerns the Coalition forces in relation to the local political constituencies in the Nordic countries. The following serves to strike the tune: *At the same time, a range of countries are working for a peaceful alternative. Even Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson has, in an article in Aftonbladet last Saturday, expressed a wish for a pause in the war (Expressen, 11 February).* Since the paper never says what else Carlsson might have done besides writing an article, it is hard to know quite what to make of it. The phrase 'even Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson' suggests that he is not expected to do much or that he is incapable of it. What is striking here is how the Nordic idiom passes over domestic-national reaction as a nigh-unmentionable aspect of a war in which one is, formally and in real terms, a partner. This is what we get – our political leaders escaping scot-free of any journalistic inquiry: *Yesterday's proposal was speckled with solutions that are unacceptable to the USA and its allies. Even so, voices were heard that wanted the world to listen to Saddam Hussein, to grasp an outstretched hand (Expressen, 16 February).*

## A Hard Reign's a Gonna Fall

Although news content data provides a meagre basis for any generalization in political communication theory, I do feel that the case of Gorbachev's peace initiative – as news story – illustrates the capacity of the media to engage directly in political moments of definition. Gorbachev's initiative was put before world opinion on 15 February 1991, one month after the air raids had started. This was a choice that opened up for the US leadership, for the UN Security Council, for the Arab states in the vicinity of the conflict location, and for the

European allies as well. The plan involved Iraqi commitments to withdrawal from Kuwait, the principal content of UN declaration 660, which Iraq would have to observe closely. Add to this that the Coalition ground offensive was about to start, and that ground war would increase economic costs dramatically: Surely, one should think, peaceful settlement was desirable.

On the other hand, Gorbachev's initiative was vague. The Iraqi commitment to withdraw from Kuwait was not immediate enough for President Bush – or so he said on many occasions. Saddam Hussein had himself contributed to the tension only days before, in a speech condemning Iraq's adversaries and calling for Arab unity behind Iraq. In retrospect, events in the days that followed seem to indicate that peace was actually further off than continued war. Gorbachev's initiative was not well accepted in the United States, which was more interested in a complete, and completely *visible*, defeat for Saddam Hussein. Little more than constant shuttle diplomacy seemed to come out of the talks between Soviet and Iraqi envoys either, while time was running out fast for a Coalition bent on keeping up the military momentum. As if this were not enough, the political leadership of the European Coalition nation-states was not very vocal in its response to either Gorbachev, Bush or Hussein – the three figures who now represented the corners of this triangular drama.

What then is the best theory framework for viewing and interpreting the news coverage and the political event itself? Beyond doubt, the Gulf War was premised on extensive information control, lending credence to the general propaganda framework of the *Journalism in the New World Order* project. On the other hand, the fact that propaganda is paramount need not in itself imply that a propaganda *theory* is – that will depend on the type of theory. To my mind, a fair amount of the propaganda theory which has been applied in the analysis of the Gulf War is far too rigid and static to offer any new insights. All wars in the mass media age are premised on information control. No one can seriously doubt that. But what implications can we draw from this – in terms of media *effect*, media *power*, and media *mismanagement*? These are important questions that media propaganda theory is still grappling with.

In the Gulf War, the Western Coalition sought to achieve concerted information management through the pool system (Taylor, 1992). The various governments sought control in each their fashion (Sifry & Cerf, 1991) – but above all, the outreach of the US propaganda machine was undeniably powerful, in two different ways: The first of these is the power yielded over processes of public opinion formation within the USA. No doubt, especially TV coverage generated massive government support. The second and by far more interesting element is the ways in which the media were consciously used to control *and* guide the member nation-states of the Coalition. The means by which information can be controlled have undergone constant refinement ever since World War I, as new information media have been invented for both military and civil use. Likewise, knowledge has been added concerning the efficiency of information control.

If we opt for a propaganda framework, a minimum requirement must be to address the development of the concept, in light of such changes as these. Early propaganda theory referred to ways by which leaders supposedly lead the public – an elitist view held by Walter Lippmann, among others. In *Public Opinion* (1922) Lippmann stated his classic thesis that political leadership, abetted by the emergent administrative political science (of which he himself was an eminent practitioner), entailed the provision of elite leadership where laymen would founder in the complexities of the modern world. The media were central to this endeavour towards a supposedly benevolent leadership. It is in this sense that Herman and Chomsky refer to the media–elite linkage: Elites control but do so through the production of consensus. Where Lippmann sounded a positive (albeit not uncritical) note, Herman and Chomsky voice more negative connotations. However, the general thesis of elite control still remains the core argument.

On a parallel track, there have been more sophisticated efforts at theory building. Here the term ‘propaganda’ may or may not have been used, but the gist of the matter is that information to the public is being restricted in ways that endanger democracy.<sup>15</sup> This orientation owes a great deal to C. Wright Mills, who among a great many other things introduced the Frankfurt School’s critical theory to US sociology in the 1950s, and constructed from it his own perspectives on mass culture and elite power in the United States. To Mills (1963) and his like-minded, propaganda was action, it was elite action, but it was *constricted* elite action: To study people and what they do is meaningless unless this is placed in the proper context. Here Mills may be said to have been a precursor of critical–hermeneutically oriented institution sociology, in that he observed what Chomsky seems to overlook: Politics and networking among the elites is contradictory and fluctuating. Mills does apply a mass–elite distinction which today may be too simple, but he also insisted that to speak of the elites as a monolithic force capable of swaying the opinions of the masses, is to miss the crucial point: Elites often have more than enough to do to keep themselves and their peers in line, he argued in a fashion precursing the 1970’s debates on ideology and political domination

Mills’s critique of the media power relations in the USA is also a forerunner of Turner and Abercrombie’s well-known critique of the dominant ideology thesis (1982, pp 396–415). Like Abercrombie and Turner, Mills maintained that the business of a dominant ideology is not to contain the public but rather to maintain coherence among the elites. If for no other reason than clarification, one should reflect on these widely differing perspectives contained within the bag called ‘propaganda theory’. To Chomsky, for instance, propaganda is more an outcome of an institutional set-up than it is to Mills. Chomsky and Herman’s (1988) five-filter model (state pressure, advertising, sources, commercial platform and dominant world-view) is a kaleidoscope and not a theory, however. Chomsky and Herman may be right on the mark in their analyses, but the reason they – and others of the new propaganda tradition – often are accused of conspiracy theorizing, is that they tend to blur rather than clarify the thin line

between an *action-oriented* and a *system-oriented* view of propaganda in the news media.

It is here that my title comes into play. Many of us who saw the mobilization in the USA of public support for the Gulf invasion were struck by vast tide of popularity that George Bush was riding on – his support was indubitable. And there was beyond any doubt a concerted media campaign to bring about the retaliation against Iraq. But it proved impossible to transpose that to the international scene, where public sentiment was much less certain, and where the so-called Coalition ‘partners’ were also split by considerable differences in terms of interest and commitment. As noted earlier, propaganda analysis has tended to emphasize the relation between ‘sender’ of information and ‘receiver’ of information, with the underlying assumption of an asymmetrical relationship of power. The sender is the dominant partner. The communication line is linear, the possibility of feedback small.

Against this theoretical leaning is another theory that emphasizes the necessity to keep the political leadership of nation-states together – in a global conflict, they are the ones who need orchestration and cohesion, not the public. In the USA, the protest against Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait seemed to take on a prophetic stance shared by leaders and laymen alike – a proclamation of universal struggle against evil, reminiscent of the mud-dance at Woodstock (*no rain, no rain, no rain*) only now with a slightly different spelling, a different focal point, as well as an expanded cast of characters: *No reign, no reign, no reign..*

The message was heard and reiterated around the world, little attention being paid to the critical voices from within the US establishment. Coalition nation-states dutifully toed the line, thus illustrating this underconceptualized aspect of institutional media effect.

*[Exit Gorbachev.]*

## Notes

1. *Washington Post*, 21 February 1991: *Gorbachev's New Grist For the Cold War Mill*.
2. *New York Times*, front page 13 February 1991: *Hussein Meets With Soviet Envoy and Talks of Effort to End War*, and *Heaviest Shelling by the Allies Yet Rips South Kuwait*.
3. *Bergens Tidende*, 13 February: The main story is *Bombing Continues – Sceptical to Peace Proposal*.
4. *Dagens Nyheter*, 13 February, p. 6 ‘Iraq turns down all offers – bitter sentiments meet Gorbachev envoy in Baghdad.’
5. *New York Times*, front page, 14 February 14th: ‘Iraq says U.S. killed hundreds of civilians at shelter, but allies call it military post.’ Minor story, also front page: ‘*Commanders deny error in target.*’
6. *Bergens Tidende*, front page, 13 February: ‘Shock bombing of Iraq’.
7. *Dagens Nyheter*, 14 February, A8: ‘Withdrawal had been mentioned – UN Secretary-General found Iraqi will to compromise before the war’.
8. *Washington Post* ran similar stories on 13 February, A22: ‘*Security Council Set to Meet on Gulf. Issue of Whether Sessions Should Be Closed Divides Members*’, and on 15 February.



9. *Dagens Nybeter*, 14 February – ‘UN Security Council – Secret Meeting’.
10. *Dagens Nybeter*, 14 February – ‘Israel is Allowed Attack on Iraq’.
11. *New York Times*, 14 February, p. 1: ‘Bush’s Quandary. Civilian Toll in Iraq Could Strain Alliance and Bring Pressure to Speed a Ground War’.
12. *Verdens Gang*, 14 February, p. 4.
13. *Dagens Nybeter*, 15 February – ‘UN as peacekeeper’.
14. The next *NYT* story, 16 February, reports reactions from other countries, including a number of Arab nations. In line with our theory of news discourse, we might say that *Times* coverage on the 16th has both a total narrative where the actions of warfare are contextualized together with several stories on peace, proposals, reactions and assessments, and a day-to-day narrative which is still a war narrative, but where assessments of conditions, of technology of the day-to-day developments occur in a less issue-oriented and more event-oriented fashion.
15. See for instance the Bibliography, for references to works by David Paletz, Daniel Hallin, John Downing, Edward Herman, to name some of the more frequently cited within a vast research area.



## Summary and Conclusion

### *Globalization and the Gulf Conflict 1990–2000: Challenges for War Journalism in the New World Order*

Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen

#### Introduction

The Gulf War never happened – according to Jean Baudrillard, who succeeded with his intention of provoking most people concerned about the realities of that conflict (Baudrillard, 1991). We, on the contrary, claim that the Gulf War never ended. Discussions about how to understand the conflict and its aftermath have not yet ceased and will probably continue for decades to come. In fact, the war resounds in another conflict – a kind of a *Historikerstreit* – that is enacted in political rhetoric, popular culture, and among researchers debating how this war should be remembered. The two apparently contradictory theses – ours and Baudrillard's – are not so wide apart as one could imagine. Both take the view that the symbolic construction of the war is indeed very problematic, and that we might have good reason to be sceptical about how the war was covered by the media. No less is this the case when this is written one year after the end of the Kosovo war in 1999. Media coverage of the Kosovo conflict exhibits both similarities to and differences from the media coverage of the Gulf War, though these cannot be dealt with here. And it is also an open question to what extent – if at all – media organizations and journalists have learned professionally from experiences of previous conflicts and improved the ethical standards of war journalism.

How then was the Gulf War constructed by the media in 1990/1991? The previous chapters in this volume provide some important findings that can serve as a basis for systematic interpretations. Together with other studies, they enable us to see the broader lines in the picture. In this final chapter, we will sum up the general conclusions of this project, with special emphasis on the importance of war journalism for international politics in the new world order. We will integrate the findings in the theoretical framework outlined in the intro-

duction to this volume, and also elaborate this framework somewhat further towards a conception of transnational news journalism as part of a globalized symbolic power process. This theoretical framework has emerged as one of the main results of this project, even though it was not launched as part of the grand plan when the project started.

In the following, we begin by indicating a view on the symbolic meaning of production as a dual process of reality construction and specify how globalization is related to the meaning creating processes. We then go on to elaborate a set of theory assumptions about the impact of the media on politics and opinion-formation in connection with international conflicts. Thirdly, we summarize the findings of this book. We then conclude with some comments on the ethical conundrums for war journalists in the new world order, as indicated by our theory perspective and our findings.

## Symbolic Power Processes and Relativization of National Policies

In relation to the globalization perspective and the notion of a New World Order, it is impossible to conceive of the Gulf War as separate from the reorientation of nation-states brought about by the changes in the international situation. We utilize a dual constructivist perspective for interpreting and explaining the course of events and, not least, the role of the media in this conflict. In this dual perspective, there is on the one hand the conflict process itself, conceived of as a sequence of purposeful activities carried out by the involved parties. This is a process in which the opposite parties in various ways try to use the media to achieve their aims – both to disorient the opponent, and to win domestic and the international opinion over to their cause. On the other hand, there is the impact and meanings of the Gulf War in a wider global and historical context, conceived of as the discursive cultural and political re-orientation processes initiated by the conflict and the new international situation.

The symbolic production of meanings associated with the Gulf War took place *not only* in the immediate centre of the events – where the actors involved in propaganda, decisions and practical actions like military mobilization competed about how this conflict should be understood – *but also* in more distant quarters – in political circles of nation-states that were not active participants in the war, and even in local public interactions and exchange of views on the war, whether in pubs or community media. We will argue that media as a key factor for the globalization of politics and opinion formation have crucial importance for the production of meaning in both these respects, and that the media provide the connections between these dual symbolic processes.

To return briefly to the theory approach presented in the introduction to this book: the main concern here is the way transnational war journalism interacts with foreign- and security policies, not only in the actual conflict but also in a more general sense. To comprehend relations between media coverage

and policy in these sectors today, we must view them within the framework of current globalization processes – at the levels of economy, international politics, media technology and journalist practices and professional ideologies. This is clearly evident in connection with the Gulf War.

The Gulf War appears as a focal point in the history of globalization, an event which in condensed form brought to the fore as well as precipitated some basic changes, so that the world is now conceived of as ‘a single place’, and national policies and identities are being reconstructed. Let us take a closer look at these two aspects of globalization in connection with the Gulf War.

(a) Few – if any – other events so clearly point up the tendencies of a world compressing in time and space as the Gulf War. Because of the voluminous media coverage of the war in almost all corners of the world, the war became a global event, something which people everywhere were affected by and talked about. This feeling of closeness was strengthened by the intensity and immediacy in the coverage at every new turn. The experience of the events being reported almost instantly – in ‘real time’ – serve to stimulate a feeling of ‘condensation’, an experience of being almost on the spot or at least closely connected to the place where the crucial happenings occurred. Experiences of this kind were facilitated by a journalism that looked for national angles on the events. In countries with combat troops engaged in the war, the media naturally paid great attention to the daily life of what was referred to as ‘our boys’, and to the support from relatives and friends back home. But even in other countries not directly involved in the conflict, the media dramaturgy exploited involvement techniques to keep audience interest alive and even create a momentary feeling of exultation at being part of this ‘righteous struggle’ (Morley & Robins, 1995, p. 140). For example, a few days before the 15 January 1991 deadline, a message regarding a possible Iraqi terrorist campaign on a global scale was relayed by the media. In Sweden, for instance, a country which did not send combat troops to the conflict, the media speculated about Saddam Hussein launching his ‘long-distance weapons’ – terrorists – for attacks on airports and power-supply systems (Hadenius, 1992). In this way, ‘home fronts’ were established also in countries not directly involved in the conflict, thereby confirming the notion of the Gulf War as perhaps the first ‘participant war’ in history (Galtung & Vincent, 1992, p. 197; cf. Ang, 1991).

In terms of propaganda, the enormous media attention and the involvement of the general public were crucial for strategies to influence public opinion. Together with the compression of space and time in conjunction with instant satellite media coverage, the media and public attention were ‘...another rationale for governments to control and censor war news’ (Hachten, 1996, p. 156). The USA, as the leading force behind the alliance against Iraq, developed a global strategy of ‘public diplomacy’ to strengthen its leadership with assistance of the media. Real-time broadcasts of President Bush’s speeches and cooperation with the major media, primarily the CNN, were central components in this propaganda strategy. This campaign was designed to raise support for

US policy also in foreign countries and cultures, although US opinion was the main target.

(b) Another globalization effect of the Gulf War was that it brought about a re-evaluation of prior conceptions both about the international system and the national position of one's own country in that system. This can be described as relativization of the nation-states' positions and identities in relation partly to the 'world system of societies' and partly to 'humankind' (cf. Robertson, 1992, p. 27). We will concentrate here on the relativizing processes that took place between the international and the national levels in connection with the Gulf War. On both levels, actors appeared in public with proposals for how the conflict should be conceived, what the opposite positions were, and why their own policy was right. The conflict discourse in this respect – internationally as well as nationally – concerns the definition of this new reality and at the same time the actors' own identities. For the USA, part of what was at stake in the conflict discourse was the construction of the meaning of the New World Order (NWO) and its own leadership in this process. For other countries, such as the Nordic countries, the conflict discourse was – at least partly – about reconsidering traditional security and foreign policies and taking up a position in relation to the US claims as leader of the war campaign against Iraq. The security policies in Finland, Norway and Sweden after 1945 have been rather different. Finland has considered it necessary to avoid close collaboration with NATO and the Western countries in order not to disturb the sensitive relations to its Eastern neighbour. Finland has also been restricted to less sensitive sectors of Nordic cooperation than defence and security. Norway, as a member of NATO, has developed close cooperation with the USA and the UK in both its security policy and its defence strategy. Sweden has throughout the 20th century officially relied on its non-alignment policy, aimed at remaining neutral in case of military conflicts in the surrounding region, and therefore claimed to be independent towards the two superpowers during the Cold War. Recent historical findings have, however, documented that the linkage between the Swedish and US governments was far closer than the official neutrality position should indicate. Especially in Finland and Sweden, the end of the Cold War, and the Gulf War, gave rise to substantial uncertainty about the position and role of both nations in the NWO.

We return later to the role of the media with regard to influences on the reconsiderations of national policies in the Gulf War. Suffice it here to note that the media are simultaneously arena and motor in these relativization processes. As Martin Shaw has argued, in at least some international crises, the media are more important than traditional civil society institutions in connecting distant problems and human needs with national government policy (Shaw 1996). Furthermore, the media might have had a more independent role in the countries not directly involved in the conflict than in those that were members of the coalition against Iraq. In the latter countries, national leaders had the initiative and defined the policy, but in the former the political situation was more open

and gave other actors, including journalists and media commentators, more chance to influence the re-orientation of the nation's policy. Thus the globalization of Gulf War policies should be seen as an uneven process also with respect to the media in different countries. In the following we will suggest a framework for analysing such a process – or, more accurately, processes.

### 'Domestication' of Transnational News

Before we go into further detail about the ways in which media coverage of the Gulf War interacted with reconsiderations of national policies, some general remarks are in place as to whether global news flow acts to promote the formation of a global opinion. From the globalization theory developed by Robertson, briefly presented in the introduction, and the central position of the notion of 'relativization' in his approach, it should be clear that we do not subscribe to any thesis of immediate casual relation between media content and opinions throughout the world. We feel more in tune with an approach that emphasizes 'recontextualization' (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 41) and 'domestication' (Cohen et al., 1996, p. 152–153) of news when decoded and transferred from a transnational to a national or local context.

The ways in which the globalized diffusion of media content influences the audience's views and opinions has at least tentatively been elaborated by John B. Thompson, who argues that the appropriation of such symbolic material will always depend on local cultural, political, etc. conditions. Such appropriation is further characterized by 'symbolic distancing from the spatial-temporal contexts of everyday life' and also a 'source of tension and potential conflict' (Thompson, 1995, pp. 175, 177). This means that even media content that is distributed worldwide will not generate identical interpretations and mental effects everywhere. The impacts of the transnational media activities in the local contexts of reception are rather to be understood as increased reflexivity concerning the taken-for-granted beliefs, norms and mores. Moreover, since the distancing process rarely is smooth and painless, they will frequently lead to political and ethical ruptures.

This analysis seems also to offer a relevant framework for conceptualizing the way global media interacts with national policies. For our analytical focus, this suggests studying not only the similarities and variations in the content between media in different countries, but also that the coverage should be understood as a process of propaganda and conflict images flowing between national media systems, with propaganda and images becoming discursively transformed during these processes. Our approach has made it particularly interesting to study in detail the symbolic transformations of some key events as they 'move' from one national communication context to another.

We have not found much empirical research that has applied this kind of approach in cross-national media studies. Of course, there is some research which in a general sense has bearings on the present project, without dealing

directly with the Gulf War. For example 'The Global Newsroom' project has focused on the consequences of television technology for transnational relations within news journalism. Its main conclusion is that the 'global village' is far from realized, despite a shared international professional culture: 'Thus, while the images may have global currency, the meanings given to them may not necessarily be shared globally.' (Gurevitch et al., 1991, p. 214) Domestication of foreign news takes place in the journalists' decoding of the events, in their encoding of them for the purpose of making them understandable for the receivers, and by the audience when interpreting the media content (Cohen et al., 1996, pp. 152–153).

Some previous studies of the Gulf War, although limited to single countries, have studied the way national media 'domesticated' the US and allied propaganda, albeit without using this exact concept. Studies available so far seem to indicate a similar pattern in several countries, a pattern of hesitation and reluctance to support the policies advocated by US President Bush and his associates. In early autumn 1990, the Canadian and Spanish media, for example, did not cover the US policy affirmatively. Then, partly as a result of the successful propaganda campaign, with its links between Hussein and Hitler, and its extensive references to the UN for legitimation, media opinion gradually converted to support of the war policy – not, however, without some remaining signs of refusal to acknowledge the US leadership. A particularly interesting finding in these studies is how national myths served as effective symbolic devices that made allegiance to the US policy more acceptable to the domestic general public (Kirton, 1993; Rojo, 1995).

A comparative analysis of the first weeks television's coverage of the Gulf War in seven countries found that there was not one Gulf War story but seven different stories, each of them conditioned by the specific 'national sentiments and affinities' (Swanson & Smith, 1993, p. 190). Another television study, in this case of the coverage of the al-Amarya incident, looked at twelve different services in five countries. It draws slightly different conclusions: that the bombing of this alleged shelter for civilians in Baghdad was narrated as basically the same story in all channels, although with different angles depending on the national media culture (MacGregor, 1997, p. 170 ff.)

What these studies at least make plausible is the conclusion that the media constructions of the conflict were important in the shift of public opinion in these countries. Furthermore, that the media had an active and partly independent role, which went far beyond that of non-selective and passive transmission of the propaganda from the USA. In fact, these findings indicate that the de- and re-coding of the propaganda, which the media pursued within the respective national political and cultural contexts, was adopted to the cultural codes and myths of the specific nation. In this way, the propaganda contributed to the mobilization of the general public in several different countries. This makes it misleading to assume, as some media researchers apparently do, that such decodings of messages from the superpower are irreconcilable with this superpower having a hegemonic, dominating influence over international

opinion. On the contrary, we would argue that it is precisely this recontextualization and accommodation to the variety of local cultural conditions that makes the propaganda efficient over the entire world.

Media research concerning the thesis of superpower dominance still suffers from the lack of empirical testing. One major line of research has concentrated on studying heterogeneity and variety in the news flow, but only in synchronic analyses. In the present project, the dominance hypothesis is tested in greater depth through convergence analysis based on diachronic data. The notion of ‘dominance’ does not refer to a situation with more or less total unity at any particular point of time between conflict images in various national media systems. It rather relates to a *process* in which the image promoted by the hegemonic power is spread to and conveyed beyond by media in other countries. Another theoretical point of departure for this project is that dominance in the field of international communication should be studied in situations where the interests of the hegemonic power can be assumed to be at stake. From our point of view, testing the dominance thesis on normal news reporting without considering whether the hegemon’s vital interests are affected or not is basically irrelevant.

### Transnational Opinion-Building: Adaptation Theory Applied on the International Level?

In the introduction to this volume, we presented our theory perspective on the influences that media have on public opinion and politics in terms of what we called the ‘adaptation theory’ of media effects. According to this theory, the media influence opinion and politics primarily through their capacity to provide the symbolic environment in relation to which the audience can develop cognition and opinions. In no way should this be understood as a matter of uniform, passive, unreflected reactions on the side of the receivers. The individuals comprising the audience will make their own interpretations of the media content – interpretations that may vary depending on, for example, different ideological dispositions, cultural identity, or prior knowledge. All the same, there are some general patterns in the way media affect opinions and politics. Opinion research seems, by and large, to have confirmed the social adaptation mechanism that is the essential ingredient in this approach (cf. references in Chapter 1). The conclusion is that people tend to orient their own opinion in the direction of the view depicted in the media as the dominant one and/or the view taken by a legitimate elite. Because of so-called elite cues, i.e. information about the policy promoted by the national political leaders, the media exert an affect on public opinion, since the public tends actively to orient itself to this information (see e.g. Bennett 1994; Noelle-Neumann, 1973 and 1991; McLeod et al. 1991).

To what extent is it, then, possible to draw inferences from the national to the international level as to the opinion formation role of the media in conflicts?



Is the adaptation theory also relevant for transnational opinion-building processes? As noted in the introductory chapter, arguments have been raised against the conception of a 'global culture'. In a similar way, the notion of a 'global opinion' should be understood as purely a media construction, without most of the factual references that give the notion of a national opinion some empirical substance (Gurevitch, 1991, pp. 186–187). On the other hand, other scholars have argued for further exploration of the questions about the potentials for a global public sphere (Garnham, 1992; Tomlinson, 1994), global public responsibility (Thompson, 1995) and a global civil society (Shaw, 1996). Studies have also been conducted on issues where it is obvious that opinion formation beyond national borders is a reality and where concepts like 'world opinion' or international media opinion have been applied in empirical analyses, for example Alexa Robertson's study of the Euromissile controversy in the early 1980s (Robertson, 1995, p. 326).

In any case, it is disputable whether it is relevant to draw immediate conclusions about the transnational opinion-formation role of the media from studies on the national level. We cannot elaborate extensively on this topic here, but a general reflection would be that opinion building is more sensitive to political content in the media when it refers to matters on the national level than on the international or global level for at least two reasons: (a) subjective feelings of 'belongingness' and of being concerned are probably higher on the national level; and (b) public authority is more clearly defined nationally than internationally.

It does seem, however, that media construct the symbolic environment, which is the precondition for the leaders' and the general public's views and opinions in connection to domestic as well as foreign policy issues, and probably to a higher degree in the latter case. The general public is, in relation to the foreign policy sector, exclusively dependent on the media, while the state authorities and the politicians rely on the media to varying degrees. For the latter other channels, like embassies and other diplomatic contacts, comprise the important infrastructure in the daily work. But when a conflict or some other important event suddenly occurs, then even politicians will find themselves depending on the media for their information.

This dependency on the symbolic environment created mainly by the media for opinion formation in international affairs seems to indicate that similar mechanisms might operate transnationally as on the national level. Hence, views that are depicted by the media as dominant on the international level can be expected to guide opinion-formation processes within different national contexts. But the formulation 'within different national contexts' is central here: in contradistinction to national opinion building at the nation-state level, when it comes to transnational influences from the media on opinions there is an intermediate factor which, for lack of better words, can be called national filters, i.e. decoding schemes, that have no proper equivalent inside the national frame. Whereas opinion building nationally is directly related to national political leaders, on the transnational level it is only indirectly related to international leaders,



such as the President of the USA or the UN Secretary-General, and national leaders and their policies are also taken into consideration in the decoding process.

Accordingly, when it comes to international conflicts, the media operate in a tension field between influences through the transnational news cooperation networks, which convey national policy perspectives from a variety of countries, and their own government's policy in the conflict. How much power the media and journalists will be able to exert on opinion will, therefore, depend on how deeply the national government is involved in the conflict and how strongly its policy is articulated. If the political leaders act with great purposefulness and authority, i.e. without being questioned on the national political scene, the media will hardly have any independent opinion-building function whatsoever. But if a national policy is absent, influences from the policies of other countries will not meet much resistance from national news frames when mediated by the transnational news channels. In this situation the media become important conveyors of views from other countries and political fora to their own national audiences. It is mainly in such situations that transnational opinion formation processes will be important, and that the media will have an influential role to play also in relation to the policy-makers and public opinion on the domestic arena.

Although only applied on the national level, in this case the US media and their impact on peace operations, Warren P. Strobel (1997) has suggested that the media effects are 'conditional'. This means that the existing level of public support, along with the stability of an administration's policy and its public communication, determines the nature of the media's impact. Policy makers can manoeuvre relatively undisturbed by media as long as the Administration maintains a stable policy that is understood and supported by the Congress and the public in general. When the policy is unclear and/or lacks public support, the media can have a pull effect in speeding up the change of policy (as in the case of Somalia 1992–93), but it will not by itself change the policy in a totally new direction (cf. Neumann, 1996, for similar conclusions).

To illustrate the implications of the adaptation theory when applied to the transnational level, three hypothetical cases are outlined below in connection with general prognoses concerning the opinion-formation role of the media in international conflicts.

### Three Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are suggested both as interpretative framework for summarizing the findings of the present project and as a basis for further empirical research about opinion formation in international conflicts. They have been elaborated with the media in democratic, developed countries in mind, and are not equally relevant for media in other socio-political systems:

*H1.* If the homeland of the media is involved in the conflict, news reporting is expected to function as a propaganda channel of the nation-state. Major attention will be devoted to mobilization appeals in support of the armed forces, and military and defence objectives will be regarded as superior to journalistic ideals, even among journalists. Undisguised censorship or self-censorship will make the media blind and mute to sufferings of the other side of the conflict. Losses, defeats and setbacks for the 'enemy' will be described as successes and victories for the media's own country, the 'good guys'. The media will not have an independent opinion effect, but they will affect the penetration power of the propaganda in public opinion.

*H2.* If the dominant and recognized leading superpower is involved in the conflict its media will, according to the first hypothesis, convey war propaganda to the benefit of the government's policy. In this case, however, the propaganda will not only penetrate the domestic public opinion, but will also under certain conditions be relayed further on by the media in other countries in such a way that it seems reasonable to speak of the formation of a pseudo-global opinion. In the receiving countries, the media have an important role, because they act as a 'cushion' between the national policy in the conflict and the propaganda from the superpower. The greater the distance between these two, the less will the media function as a propaganda channel for the superpower. And vice versa: the narrower the gap between the policies of the superpower and the national government respectively, the more open will national media coverage be to the superpower's view.

It is particularly relevant for media research to reflect upon the way the media will function where the nation-state does not express any strong commitments in the conflict. In such cases the media might have a decisive impact on the national political scene as conveyer of the superpower policy, and as such contribute to changes both of the political elite's and the general public's views (see below).

*H3.* If neither the media's home-country nor any superpower is involved in the conflict, the most plausible scenario is that the media will not take much notice. To the extent that they nevertheless publish some reports of the conflict, the role of media in the opinion building processes will probably be random and determined by coincidences. This is not to say that the effects on opinion and politics may not be prominent, for example when the media coverage encourages humanitarian demands for intervention from the international community in order to stop indiscriminate killings or other appalling atrocities. Other circumstances can, of course, also be of importance and result in media coverage that favours one of the parties to the conflict, for example when the culture of the media country is more affiliated with the culture of one of the parties.

The reservation that also factors other than national policy and superpower involvement influence the outcome is, of course, valid for all the generaliza-

tions above concerning the relation between media, policies and international opinion. Even if adaptation theory provides a rather solid base for explaining the relative importance of the media, there may always be other circumstances which can intervene in the complexes of relations between the international and national political elites and the media in a conflict.

The three hypotheses offer a basis for predictions concerning the role of the media in various conflict settings – among them the Gulf War. We will briefly indicate these possibilities, with a few references to concrete historical cases. The Gulf War offers several empirical cases for testing the predictive capacity of the hypotheses. Because of the large number of countries involved and since both superpowers and smaller nations in the Arab world took part in the Coalition, it is not difficult to find typical cases to which the two first hypotheses can be connected. Let us begin with a look at the methodological aspects, i.e. the ways in which the Gulf War case can be utilized for empirical tests of the hypotheses.

As to the *first hypothesis*, any of the Allied countries – or Iraq (although the mechanisms are different in that case because of its undemocratic system) – could be taken as empirical example. In any case the media in these countries will certainly have an extensive and probably at the same time one-sided coverage compared with media in non-involved countries. In pluralistic political systems like for example the USA and the UK, coverage will probably not be completely one-sided to the disadvantage of oppositional views within the domestic political scene, but when it comes to the opposite side in the international conflict – in this case Iraq – it is likely that the US and British media will not generally make extensive efforts to convey a comprehensive picture of the opposite party's views. This tendency will be particularly strong after hostilities have started.

Since the USA was heavily involved in the Gulf War – as were two other permanent members of the Security Council, France and the UK – that conflict also gives ample material for evaluation of the empirical accuracy of the second hypothesis. The Gulf War can be said to constitute a very extreme case exactly because all permanent members of the Council acted in concert. But from a methodological point of view this makes it an ideal case all the more relevant to use for empirical evaluation of the predictive power of the assumptions.

Because the *second hypothesis* is about influences between media and policies in several countries, with a number of separate positions in the international system, it also needs further specification before it is suitable for operationalization in empirical research. We will now elaborate these specifications.

Important conditions for the impact of transnational news flow are: First, the fact that the remaining superpower, the USA, took a definite stand in the emerging conflict with Iraq and managed almost immediately to achieve a hegemonic position internationally. In the introductory chapter we presented three arguments for the assumption that, in such a case, US propaganda will penetrate the media coverage in other countries, arguments that relate to (a)

the political position of the USA in the international system, (b) the close cooperation between the US military and the US press corps in the conflict and (c) the US media's initiative in the transnational news flow. Second this does not in any way exclude variations in the image of the war, because critical and deviant views, compared to the US propaganda, were expressed both within the USA and elsewhere and thus available to the media. Hence the relevant question is their relative presence in media from different countries. Third, political proximity in terms of foreign policy tradition, defence alliances, shared interests in the actual conflict, etc., between the media's home country and the USA presumably will explain the relative impact of the US propaganda on the media content. Fourth, we expect that among the European media the German and Norwegian groups will be closer to the US media in their coverage of the Gulf War than the Finnish and Swedish media owing to the latter media's non-aligned national political context. But also other specific conditions are probably influential, for example the exact point in time we are referring to within the timeframe of the conflict or whether the US policy actualizes internal complications for the national political leaders in the media country.

The *third hypothesis* above, concerning media coverage in a situation where neither the home-country of the media nor the big powers are involved in the international conflict, can best be illustrated with reference to some post-Gulf War crises, especially Somalia 1992 and Rwanda 1994. These were both conflicts in the so-called periphery of the international system, with no obvious links to the crucial interests of any superpower.

In conflicts of this type, the media undoubtedly have major importance for opinion formation, and also for political responses in some instances. It is in these cases that it is most reasonable to talk about CNN effect, CNN curve or 'CNNization', since the attention of the international media can be decisive for the creation of an opinion with global dimensions strong enough to make politicians intervene. This kind of crisis is probably also what Cohen had in mind when he suggested that television's technique and capability to dramatize means more for foreign news coverage than whether or not the elite is united (Cohen 1994, p.10; see also Chapter 1 in the present work). Others have preferred, however, not to speak of 'CNN effects' even in relation to such instances. Instead, as this argument goes, although independent media impacts are more plausible in situations of the type 'operation other than war' than in war, they are nevertheless restricted to merely 'tactical' effects in such cases – for example, 'Operation Restore Hope' in Somalia. It was not the CNN coverage itself that caused the operation, or the decision to withdraw. Television coverage largely followed, not preceded, policy decisions. But once the decision had been taken the media put pressure to bear, to speed up and expand the operation (Strobel, 1997).

Media attention in such cases is also characterized by its unpredictability and accidental occurrence. Famine, internal struggles and mass murders may in one instance make big headlines, whereas in other cases they can pass without notice. Ideological bias may be one explanation for the selectivity, as for exam-

ple when the Indonesian government's genocide campaigns against the people in East Timor occasioned only sparse reports in the news (Chomsky & Herman, 1979). Another explanation might be that media logic allows only one major crisis in the periphery to be noticed in the Western foreign news at the time.

But despite or perhaps because of this unpredictability, media reports will usually have some political impact and some effects on opinion formation. At a certain point, media attention will reach a level where the politicians must react in order to avoid political backlash. That does not imply that the media can decide *what* actions will be taken – only that public attention may make it necessary politically to show some concern. Moreover experiences like Somalia reveal what political and other risks are involved in improvised actions as response to the pressures from the media and the public opinion. Media coverage might quickly switch angles and undercut the policy they recently gave rise to, for example by alleging what a failure the aid operations have been and what a waste of manpower and material resources they are.

Finally let us turn to a mixed case of recent importance, namely the wars in former Yugoslavia. This case is characterized by its various stages, in which some of the conflicts are of a more civil war nature and others more like international conflict and war. This makes it a case or cases that in some periods would be relevant to analysis from the point of view of the third hypothesis and in other periods from the perspective related to the first and second hypotheses. Here is not the place to elaborate on these more recent wars, but – to complete the picture – some general comments can be made as possible deductions from the adaptation theory as interpreted here.

Before the entrance of the USA on the scene as a peace enforcer it is expected that media coverage of the events will differ widely according to historical and cultural relations with the people of former Yugoslavia and the Balkans. For example, before Dayton the German media presumably had a more pro-Croatian coverage than the Finish and the Swedish media. Later, and particularly after the NATO engagement in the Kosovo conflict in the spring of 1999, it might be expected that the variations between media from different Western countries, including media in non-aligned states like Finland and Sweden, will decrease in a process of convergence between national media discourses. The litmus test would be to study the framing and explanations of the further 'ethnic cleansing' of Kosovo after the start of the allied bombings and the degrees of demonification with respect to President Milosevic over time<sup>1</sup>.

In the discussion above, we have deliberately simplified the complexity of the problematique so as to bring to the fore the underlying theoretical assumptions. Partly this has been done by presupposing that the transnational news flow contains substantially more comprehensive and multifaceted information than what is exposed in the national media. And partly by employing simple categories for characterization of the relations between state policies, media and opinion.

The question of *pluralism* in the transnational news flow has come to prominence in connection with demands for a new international communication and

information order, voiced in UNESCO from the end of the 1960s to the first half of the 1980s. Critics of the existing order maintained that the leading news agencies primarily conveyed information about the industrialized countries, that coverage of Third World countries mainly consisted of negative news, and that the depiction of the latter was marked by a neo-colonial perspective (for overviews of the debate and the opposite positions, see e.g. Carlsson, 1996; Golding & Harris, 1997; Hachten, 1996; Mowlana, Gerbner & Schiller, 1992; Reeves, 1993; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991). Although this critique was, and still is, justified to a certain extent, it is important that media researchers proceed to concrete studies of transfers *and* transformations of meanings in the information flow between different national media systems. The rather broad generalizations that formed the basis for maps of the media's global attention priorities in the 1970s are after all not much help when it comes to understanding the variations in the news and opinion processes in conjunction with international conflicts today. This is one major conclusion of recent studies of various forms of heterogeneity in communication processes, whether reception studies or popular cultural studies of the news flows.

Adaptation theory, in contrast to injection theories of various sorts, does not deny the active part played by journalists at either end of the transnational flow of war news. If the importance of elite cues with regard to opinion-building processes is also valid on the global level, then it can be concluded that adaptation of the news coverage to the US propaganda is a conscious act of favouring what is regarded as dominant views in the current global situation. There is in this perspective no assumption about journalists, either in the USA or elsewhere, converging to the US position because they really believe that the US propaganda construction of the conflict is the 'Truth'. But it is anticipated that the journalistic norms, as most journalists see them, make it natural to relay the US propaganda, provided that US international leadership both politically and in the news system is considered to be a matter of fact. This explanation avoids the crude simplifications of the theories about mechanistic linear persuasion and propaganda effects. At the same time it does not exclude the possibility of US global dominance in the transnational exchange of news about the Gulf War.

As to the simplified categories in the discussion above, let us stress that in calling the media 'propaganda channels' etc. we do not assume that news journalism as a rule is openly championing a position in their reports. Examination of the concrete textual, narrative accounts shows that the ideological tendencies are manifested in the news in far more subtle ways. First, when propaganda appears in news it is usually within the confines of the generic rules for news journalism. These rules do not generally accept that journalists should confess vested interest in the matter covered by the media. On the contrary, the rules for the news genre exclude any manifest signs of position-taking by the news journalists although this is currently challenged by tabloid journalism. Secondly, when journalists 'domesticate' the news in the transnational flow, i.e. adjust the news to the requirements of the national audience, it is more a

question of the news being framed by the political leaders who are regarded as authoritative interpreters of the national interest or the 'global opinion', etc. than a matter of the journalists themselves articulating the frameworks. Thus the news media discourse will construct reports in such a way that it appears self-evident that the superpower's view will have a prominent place; the distinction between the media's perspective and the superpower's perspective becomes blurred, and eventually disappears. Only rarely is the tendency caused by direct self-censorship, i.e. that journalists consciously or unconsciously exclude information coming from one of the parties to the conflict. Far more often this is the result of routinized allocation of commentary and authority values in the news discourse.

## Summary of Results

Two major conclusions deserve emphasis when we sum up the results, since they relate to the heart of the matter of the media's role in the globalization processes and their institutional context within international politics. To the degree that news media reports are important for the long-term consequences of international conflicts, this impact in connection with the Gulf War is revealed in the extension of the following observations:

1. Media reporting from the Gulf War was largely about conveying information about the US policy to a global audience. Since the USA was seen as the driving power in the conflict process, coverage focused on considerations, decisions and comments on the US political agenda. The leading superpower therefore exercised international or global leadership partly due to the contribution of the media. This leading and driving role was the more obvious because the political elites in several countries took a wait-and-see attitude without expressing any marked positions of their own as to how the conflict should be solved.
2. This does not, however, mean that US policy in the conflict is described exactly in the same way or equally favourably in all news media worldwide. Although the US views are widely covered and moreover depicted as decisive for the development of the conflict, the perspective and the angles differ in various media, due to local historical circumstances in each country. The news has become 'domesticated' in the sense that the image of the US policy is presented in different light through the narrative devices in the process of priorities and making comments, selected in every single medium. In some instances, these differences can be ascribed to a particular type of medium or media genre. More important in this context is that the reporting in general seems marked by national patterns of apprehension and domestication. We will soon exemplify this in connection with our summary of the propaganda effects on the news coverage. Suffice it here to note that these national variations do not entail any given conclusion as to the question of US power over the media



coverage. The variety of interpretations in different national news discourses as to the US role in the game could mean that the superpower has not succeeded in controlling media coverage through its propaganda. But whether this is valid or not will depend on the character of these variations – whether they support or oppose the US propaganda interests, and whether the variations remain stable over time. The question of dominance has been discussed widely among media researchers, especially in relation to the theory of media and cultural imperialism. It has then usually referred to US export of media products to other parts of the world. In this project, the issue of dominance has another and more precise meaning in relation to propaganda theory: here it is treated as an empirical question whether US propaganda managed to influence the news media, not only in the USA, but also in other countries. In the analysis that Nohrstedt presents in Chapter 8, the concept of dominance is operationalized in terms of convergence. That is, a criterion for US dominance having been established is that the US propaganda views penetrate the media coverage in other countries in such a way that the content gradually becomes more like the US media's coverage. Conceived in this way, the presence, at a given time, of national transformations and domestication of US media material when used by media elsewhere is not a decisive argument for rejecting the dominance hypothesis. The important thing is rather whether these de- and re-codings in the long run facilitate or obstruct the objectives that the US propaganda is meant to promote.

Let us now turn to the specific results reported in this book, and more particularly, those of special interest in relation to the theory framework presented above. Luostarinen and Ottosen in Chapter 2 summarize the media–military relation in and after the Gulf War. The collective memory of the military is far more advanced than that of the media in building upon earlier experiences in dealing with such difficult issues as censorship, access and media management in a professional manner. This is one of many reasons why critical studies of war journalism are necessary.

In Chapter 3, Garbo shows how the role played by the UN in the Gulf War was rather ambiguous. This might create great difficulties in the future for the organization's capacity to handle conflicts, especially in the Gulf region and elsewhere in the so-called Third World. The UN became a tool for US foreign policy, and the USA succeeded in getting the organization to legitimize a policy that in some respects twisted the UN charter to suit US purposes. The most obvious examples are the use of military force without proper prior evaluation of the efficacy of the economic sanctions, and the Security Council's self-imposed authority to regulate the borders between Kuwait and Iraq. It is serious in itself that the UN thus sanctioned a policy of violence, which also indirectly implies that the arms industry will be supported by the UN. It is also worth recalling that the USA accounts for around 40 % of the arms export in the world today (SIPRI Yearbook 1996). But even more serious is that in the long-term perspective the UN risks its credibility and legitimacy if the organization comes



to be regarded as merely an instrument for the remaining superpower. Together with the UN's subordinate role in post-Yugoslavia and the debate about reforming the organization in compliance with US demands, this indicates that the consequences of the Gulf War on international politics have a much wider scope than what is revealed in the Gulf region only.

In these events, the media were hardly of more than secondary importance. But against the background of the changes in international politics discussed by Garbo and others, it is nevertheless crucial to inquire whether transnational journalism has contributed to US dominance by conveying US propaganda during the Gulf War.

Thanks to Alexandre's analysis of the 'Voice of America' editorials in Chapter 4 of this volume, confirmed by previous studies as well, a clear picture emerges of how the US propaganda was constructed in this conflict. The actions taken by the Coalition were, according to the US propaganda, taken exclusively on behalf of the UN, and dictated by the sole objectives of liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi occupation and of establishing a New World Order in which freedom and justice should prevail. This propaganda image either neglected the economic sanctions, or dismissed them as irrelevant. The haphazard interest in peace initiatives from third parties or even refutations of them on the pretext that these third parties were running Saddam Hussein's errands is another part of this picture. A final crucial element in this US propaganda were the accusations that the Iraqi dictator was as dangerous for world peace as Hitler had been.

To what extent was this one-dimensional propaganda image conveyed by news media in different countries? As underlined above, the approach that we pursue does not assume that the US views are automatically transmitted without any modifications in the transnational news flow. On the contrary, we assume that recontextualization and domestication will entail transforming the propaganda to adjust it to the local views on the Gulf War, which may imply that its influence is either strengthened or counteracted.

Our results confirm the assumption that historical ties between the homeland and the USA with respect to foreign, defence and security policy are important for national media coverage. The more the country's security has been based on close cooperation with the USA, primarily within NATO, the more the media will promote active support for the US Gulf War policy in both national and local media. Additionally, some specific national conditions make their marks on reporting from the Gulf War. This was the case in the constitutional controversy in Germany, as well as in Finland's 'liberation' from previous sensitivity to the views of Moscow in the media discourse.

In Chapter 6, Kempf, Reimann and Luostarinen analyse New World Order rhetoric. They find that the central element in US propaganda – the historical parallel drawn between Hitler and Saddam Hussein, or the so-called 'German factor' – on the one hand had the strongest impact on the coverage in the US media compared to the media in the European countries. On the other hand they also find substantial variations among the European media. The Hitler–

Saddam parallel is more frequent in Norwegian and German media than in the Finnish and Swedish. Concurrently, both Norwegian and German media are found to contain relatively much critique of the NWO rhetoric, which in conjunction with the strong impact of the US propaganda indicates a cross-pressure situation in the media discourses of these countries. By contrast, the US media hardly convey any such critique of the proclamations about an NWO.

Kempf's second contribution is Chapter 7, on conflict escalation as symbolic constructions in the media. This chapter, as well as Chapter 8 by Nohrstedt, documents that the Finnish and Swedish media devote more attention to the UN than the other media groups. This is particularly evident in comparison with the US media, which in general show the least interest for the international peace organization of all groups. It is also the Finnish and Swedish media that tend to idealize the UN as an instrument for peace and for upholding international law. Kempf in addition shows that media from these two countries are more prone to pay attention to initiatives from third parties than are the other media groups. The Norwegian media once more show indications of some kind of cross-pressures by offering less space to alternative resolutions of the conflict than any other group.

Nohrstedt's chapter reveals that the US media have the most propagandistically polarized coverage of all the analysed groups. The conflict is depicted in black and white: In terms of attitudes the US media are far more positive to the USA, President Bush and the coalition, and more negative to Iraq and President Hussein than media elsewhere. They focus somewhat more on military aspects in the early stage of the conflict, and more often neglect or play down negotiation initiatives and the UN. As to the European media groups, despite their internal variations, when they are compared with the US media they deviate so consistently from the latter that we can see a clear divide between the US and the non-US media in the sample. But among the European media Nohrstedt also finds variations that indicate a correlation between the homeland's foreign policy tradition and the penetration of media discourses by the US propaganda. This is perhaps most apparent in the results of the convergence analysis which indicate that media in traditionally non-aligned countries – here Finland and Sweden – initially took a reluctant attitude towards Bush, but later gradually became more and more pro-American. The convergence analysis moreover supports the conclusion that Norwegian and German media experienced cross-pressures during the initial stage of the war. These pressures were eventually replaced by strong relief – in the later stages (time-spots) of the conflict, i.e. after the liberation of Kuwait. This was even more evident when the USA together with the UK and France forced Iraq not to attack the Kurds and the Shias from the air. German and Norwegian media reacted with the strongest pro-US attitudes of all media, including even media within the USA itself.

Naturally, it was not only one side in the conflict that sought to disseminate propaganda. The Iraqi government, with its totalitarian control of the national media and of visiting correspondents as well, did all it could to persuade international opinion to accept the occupation of Kuwait. Chapter 5 presents

Mathiesen's analysis of *Baghdad Observer's* conflict coverage during the autumn 1990, i.e. before the war between the coalition and Iraq had broken out. Here we can identify some characteristic features of the Iraqi image of the conflict. Only initially did the *Baghdad Observer* relate the conflict to Kuwait and the oil and border problems between the two countries. Gradually, as the coalition forces concentrated in the region, the rhetoric acquired a more abstract and religious vocabulary. Iraq was presented as standing up against Western imperialism, hedonism and heathens. Pan-Arabism and the liberation of Jerusalem were brought to the fore as the ideals and goals of the Iraqi resistance. Noticeable is also that in the *Baghdad Observer's* coverage the personification of the conflict assumes quite other rhetorical forms than in the Western media. George Bush and Saddam Hussein are never put on the same 'level' in the Iraqi paper: they are not two equally matched antagonists facing each other, but the Iraqi president is always a superior subject who stands above mundane conflict matters and only intervenes in the conflict in order to protect the Iraqi people and the true believers. To make this image coherent, no mention is made of the UN resolutions and their worldwide support.

In essence, then, the Iraqi paper tried to portray the Iraqis as victims of imperialist aggression. We do not know of any study that clarifies the efficacy of the Iraqi propaganda within the country. But with respect to its impact on international opinion, available research results support the conclusion that any impact was at best marginal. Even in the Palestinian community and Third World countries, opinion seems more the product of the post-colonial heritage than of Iraqi propaganda efforts; and although these attitudes were mainly against Western dominance in the Gulf region, they were not pro-Iraq or positive to the occupation of Kuwait (Khalidi, 1994; Seabrook, 1994).

The results for the Ethiopian media (see Chapter 8) do not indicate that the Iraqi propaganda in general had any great success in the developing countries – unless the absence of anti-Iraq attitudes can be counted as such. If we look at the Western media the situation is clear: the Iraqi propaganda had no impact, with the exception of the reports from the Amirya shelter (or bunker) in Baghdad bombed by the Coalition forces. Reports about that incident seemed to contradict the image of the 'surgical war', but their impact on Western opinion occurred primarily because journalists from the USA and Europe were allowed to present their own first-hand experiences on the spot. In all other respects, Iraqi propaganda failed in its attempts to influence opinion in the Coalition countries. The reason was quite simple: all Iraqi information, whether it came directly from the authorities or via the media, was labelled and treated as propaganda by media in the West.

It appears that it is only in the Arab world that the Iraqi version of the conflict had any impact at all. But, of course, it is not possible to speak of one unified, homogenous 'Arab perspective' on the conflict. For large parts of the Palestinian population, whether they are refugees in Jordan or have achieved some kind of national residential rights on the West Bank, Saddam Hussein represents an Arab leader who speaks for their cause. On the other hand, the

PLO condemned the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and did not oppose the Egyptian and Saudi Arabian policy in the conflict (Khalidi, 1994).

Some of the studies presented in this volume have documented that the European media have focused heavily on the US scene in their coverage of political events concerning the Gulf War. Given the leading role of the USA in the Coalition, this attention might seem natural and inevitable. But irrespective of how this is understood from the journalist point of view, this surely stands out as a crucial factor for understanding the importance of the news reporting for international politics during and after the Gulf War. Through this US-centrism in media coverage, the US approach was established as the reference point for opinion formation also in a global sense. We have seen that this meant that the US policy gradually received greater acceptance in the European media during the later stages of the Gulf War. Concurrently, this seems also to have meant that the image of the UN increasingly became framed by the perspective already apparent in the US media discourse from the very beginning of the conflict. The hegemony of the world's sole remaining superpower was thus reinforced by transnational cooperation and mutual dependency among the media actors.

Let us now think of media coverage not just as a mirror of 'reality', but rather as a part of the opinion-creating processes where the media discourse is connected to and interacts with political and cultural discourses in society. Then these findings may carry crucial implications for the future. We could hypothesize that the journalistic tendency to adjust the focus of coverage in international conflicts to the hierarchical power structure of nation-states is an advantage for the foreign-policy ambitions of the USA (and of other big powers). At the same time, this will be a disadvantage for the UN – because political processes that do not fit well into this pseudo-realistic framework, such as UN policy and the role of NGOs in international politics, will be disfavoured by journalistic routines. This became evident during the Gulf War when the media made scant mention of the critique against the US policy that was heard within the UN organization. One example is that the UN was left on the sidelines, and denied influence on the development of the conflict after the Security Council's decision to legitimize the use of military force. It was also the case when the Security Council considered itself authorized to dictate how to draw up the borders between the Kuwaiti and Iraqi territories. In this way, we could say, the transnational news system in connection with the Gulf War prepared the ground for the foreign and security policy reorientation that was to take place in Europe during the 1990s. These changes had a relatively dramatic character in Northern Europe and particularly in the former non-aligned countries, Finland and Sweden. Collective security both in Europe and elsewhere in the world has tended towards a Pax Americana upheld through US military strength. To a lesser degree it is also an issue for the UN and non-military peace work. The media, with their capacity to construct symbolically the available possibilities, simultaneously create history – both instant and more persistent history. Which direction history takes is of course not the result of an isolated media effect, but

something that evolves – at least partly – out of the reciprocal interactions between journalism and politics. It can be disputed to what extent politicians' thoughts and actions in the field of international relations depend on the media's reports, and – vice versa – how dependent journalists are on authoritative information sources in their reporting. In any case we may conclude that the result of this mutual influence is what creates the opinion conditions for the political players and their legitimacy. This in turn means that the media inevitably have great importance for the national and local political reorientation taking place in conjunction with global events.

The last three time-spots selected for this project include events that occurred after that the war between Iraq and the coalition had ended, i.e. events related to the Allied protection of Iraqi Kurds in April 1991 and the Shias in August 1992, and finally the bombing of Baghdad in order to force Iraq to fulfil the conditions of ceasefire in January 1993. They represent the legacy of the Gulf War in UN–US relations and can be regarded as laboratories for studying the long-term effects on relations between the Arab countries and the West. Through these and later examples it can also be discussed whether the media in their coverage had learned any lessons from their so heavily debated and well documented performance during Operation Desert Storm. Some incidents that ensued after our final time-spot seem particularly relevant in linking the Gulf War to contemporary Middle Eastern politics. Here we can mention the 27 June 1993 missile attack on Baghdad, instigated as punishment for an alleged attempt by the Iraqi intelligence; the bombing of military targets in southern Iraq to punish Iraq for attacking the town of Erbil in the 'safe' Kurdish zone in northern Iraq on 4 September 1996; and the threat to attack Iraq once again in the winter 1997–98 as punishment for lack of cooperation with UN inspectors searching for weapons of mass destruction in violation of the ceasefire agreement. Space does not allow us to make a comprehensive review of these events or the media coverage of them here, so let us simply summarize some long-term effects from the trends reflected in the research presented in this book. We find some worrying lasting tendencies in US–UN relations that Garbo warned about in Chapter 3.

This was evident already by the time of our last time-spots mentioned above, when the USA, as a follow up of UN resolution 688, unilaterally introduced a no-fly-zone in northern Iraq and the USA, France and Great Britain introduced a similar zone in the south. The intention behind establishing these zones was presented as being to protect the Kurdish and the Shia populations in those areas, and there can be no doubt that the Kurds and Shias did indeed need some sort of protection. The problem with these decisions was that they were not taken by the UN Security Council. At this point the USA had become so used to acting on behalf of UN that no strong opposition was voiced when the USA sought to implement this no-fly-zone by taking military action without even consulting the UN. As a matter of fact, several US/Pentagon spokesmen have stressed that it is up to the US government and not the UN whether to take military action or not. In defending the bombing in June 1993 US Secretary of

State defined it as a matter of convenience, and not of principle, whether the USA wanted to consult UN before attacking Iraq (Ottosen 1994, p. 259). The legal status of these actions in terms of international law is highly doubtful (Quigley, 1993, p. 18), but the media seem to a large extent to have ignored these legal and principle issues.

The media have, however, focused on the breakup of the unique alliance that was formed during Operation Desert Storm, when several Arab countries took part in the military action alongside the Western powers. Even by the time of the January 1993 bombing of Baghdad, the alliance from the Gulf War split when close allies like NATO-member Turkey and the long-term Arab ally, Saudi Arabia, expressed concern about the US bombing (Ottosen, 1994, p. 256). The old frontlines from the Gulf War continued to tear and fray throughout the US attacks mentioned above. This breakup was also evident in November/December 1997, during the shadow-boxing between the US government and the UN weapon inspectors on the one hand and Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government on the other over the mandate and function of the UN weapon inspector team. President Clinton on several occasions stated that Washington would not rule out a new military attack on Iraq. However, at this stage the USA met stronger resistance than ever among the old coalition partners. Even Kuwait along with several other Arab countries like Saudi Arabia opposed a new attack on Iraq (Reuters, 16 November 1997). Later, the USA and the UK after the withdrawal of the UNSCOM personnel from Iraq launched another round of attacks on military installations said to harbour equipment for the production of biological, chemical and nuclear weapons. Besides the damage done to these plants, the result so far is that the UN control on the ground is finished. And Saddam Hussein is still in power in Baghdad.

With reference to Oddgeir Tveiten's discussion on the failed peace initiative during the Gulf War in Chapter 9 of this book, there was another interesting episode during the tensions in November/December 1997 that differed from the Desert Storm events. According to *New York Times*, the brains behind Gorbachev's peace plan, the Russia's current foreign minister Jevgenij Primakov, this time succeeded in gaining the diplomatic initiative; military confrontation was avoided by his persuading the Iraqi government to allow expelled UN observers back into Iraq in exchange for a pledge of Russian support to Iraqi efforts to have UN sanctions eased. The motive for this may well have been the Russian government's desire to stage a comeback and re-establish its old super-power position in the region – but that cannot disguise the fact that it was Russia's diplomatic activities in 1997 that blocked a possible unilateral US military operation.

The US hegemony in the Arab world was never complete during the Gulf War as evidenced by the pro-Iraqi views among the Palestinians. Later on not even those among the Arab media that supported the war against Iraq are likely in the long run to accept the double standard in dealing with UN resolutions (cf. Johansen, 1994). They rightly ask how long the USA and its allies can keep on citing the UN resolution implemented to control Saddam Hussein, when all

attempts to put pressure on the Israeli government to fulfil its obligation to the UN resolutions on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict are effectively blocked (cf. Springborg, 1994) .

## The War that Never Ended

During the 1990s the enemy images have become closely linked to Iraq's capability to produce chemical and biological weapons as well as possible attempts to create a nuclear capability. Indeed, the existence of weapons of mass destruction in the hands of Saddam Hussein is a scary scenario. But who are these enemy images meant to convince? We in the West have long since been persuaded that Saddam Hussein is a ruthless and brutal leader. Are then these media images read in the same way by the Arab peoples? Probably not. The new generation of Iraqis growing up in difficult conditions are more likely to blame the majority of the UN, as it is they who maintain the sanctions. According to official Iraqi sources more than a million people have died as a direct or indirect effect of the UN sanctions. More than half of these victims were children. The moral and legal aspects of the sanctions as a kind of everlasting 'silent' warfare has attracted little media attention, even though some journalists have raised critical objections about how it is the ordinary people of Iraq and not Saddam Hussein who suffers from the sanctions (Nilsen 1999).

In the late autumn of 1997 and during the first two months of 1998, the USA once again threatened Iraq with military attack, owing to a confrontation between the Iraqi government and UN inspectors (UNSCOM) on monitoring Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions. The crisis was temporarily solved but during the autumn of 1998 the controversy over the UN inspectors once again bloomed. On November 14 a common US–British attack started but was aborted in the last minute when Saddam Hussein suddenly accepted the UNSCOM conditions for more inspections. When the head of the inspection team, Richard Butler, reported on December 15 to the UN Security Council that Iraq had implemented new restrictions on UNSCOM, Operation Desert Fox was a reality. Planes from USA and Great Britain bombed Iraq during a 70-hour-long attack, starting on December 16. In the beginning of 1999 several US media, including prestige papers like *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, revealed that part of the UNSCOM team had been misused by the USA for intelligence purposes. Even if there is strong evidence that Saddam Hussein's regime misled the UN inspectors, the credibility for the UN as an independent force was seriously threatened by these revelations.

During Operation Desert Fox the military attack on Iraq reached the headlines on front pages all over the Western world. A Norwegian study of the media coverage of the bombing indicated patterns similar to those of the coverage during the Gulf War (Eriksen & Hansteensen 2000). The same rhetoric was used to portray Saddam Hussein as the 'butcher from Baghdad' and, as during the Gulf War, Saddam Hussein represented the whole of Iraq in head-



lines where 'Saddam' (but apparently not the Iraqi people) was bombed. The consequences of the attack for the civilian population attracted little attention and there were few attempts to discuss the legal aspects of the bombing. When the four-day attack was over Iraq once again disappeared from the front pages. However, the bombing continued in the form of low-intensity warfare without much media attention at all. According to Pentagon more than 280,000 sorties have been flown in the decade since the no-flight zones were imposed in 1991. The Iraqi air defence commands says it has detected more than 21,600 penetrations into Iraqi airspace by U.S. and British warplanes between December 1998, when Iraqis started opposing the patrols with anti-aircraft fire, and the time of writing in the summer of 2000. According to Iraqi sources, about 300 Iraqis have been killed and more than 800 wounded since Operation Desert Fox in December 1998. (*International Herald Tribune*, 17-18 June 2000).

In connection with weapons of mass destruction and inhumane weapons, once again the double standard becomes apparent in the rhetoric against Saddam Hussein. Who is it that is talking about Israel's nuclear capability, not to speak of the weapons that were used by the coalition during Operation Desert Storm? The media portrayed a 'sanitized' and 'clean' warfare – reality was quite different. Of the total amount of 88,500 tons of bombs in 109,876 aircraft sorties during the Gulf War, only 7.4% were so-called 'smart bombs', according to Pentagon figures. 'Dumb bombs' missed their targets 50% of the time, and even 'smart bombs' were inaccurate 20% of the time (Walker & Stambler, 1991).

Coalition warfare included heavy use of a new generation of napalm bombs against Iraqi troops. Large numbers of Iraqi soldiers were attacked and killed while retreating from Kuwait on the road to Basra. Many of the journalists witnessing the slaughter on the Basra Road were shocked by the massive killings of soldiers on the run, as these individuals obviously no longer represented a threat to the Coalition. We have spoken with experienced reporters who admit that they never sent reports on these incidents, or that their reports were ignored because the news desks showed no interest in critical stories at this 'moment of triumph'. A new method for eliminating hundreds of Iraqi soldiers in their trenches, was to bury them alive, using huge armoured bulldozers. When confronted with this inhumane warfare by Maggie O'Kane in a Channel 4 television documentary<sup>2</sup>, Thomas Rame, the commanding officer in charge of the operation admitted that 'we buried those Iraqi devils'. When Thomas Rame in the same interview went on to defend this method, claiming that 'a thousand dead soldiers of Saddam Hussein are not worth one US soldier's life' we also got confirmation that the military way of thinking differs between 'worthy and unworthy' victims (Herman & Chomsky, 1979) – a double-standard approach likely to be reflected in media coverage as well.

Ten years after, investigative reporters have examined the moral aspects of the warfare during these last days of the Gulf War. Seymour Hersh claimed in a report in *The New Yorker* magazine that the all-out assault on a retreating Iraqi tank division two days after the war had been halted had little to do with warfare. Just one US tank was lost – burned when an Iraqi tank exploded



beside it. Just one US soldier was injured while hundreds of Iraqi soldier remained dead in the 600 burned-out tanks, many destroyed on their retreat. Hersh claims that the media during the moment of triumph avoided looking critically at this new type of warfare because it ruined the propaganda version of the war. In an interview with *Newsweek* he claimed after interviews with a huge number of eyewitnesses: 'We didn't go up there looking for a fair fight with these people... The new American way of war ... is to pulverize the enemy with overwhelming force at the cost of the fewest possible casualties' (quoted from *Newsweek*, 29 May 2000). These aspects of the 'New World Order' can be discussed ten years after, but the stories were available when it happened as well.

The military cover-up of the 'true face of war' also concerned the fact that the coalition forces were exposed to chemical weapons. On 21 June 1996, the Pentagon held a press conference where it was admitted that chemical weapons had been used in the Iraqi battlefield. After five years of denying charges from organizations representing 70,000 veterans suffering from the so-called Gulf War syndrome, the Pentagon finally admitted that such health problems as muscle fatigue, lung diseases, rashes and neurological problems could be related to exposure to chemical weapons. In one incident, the Coalition bombing of an Iraqi ammunition depot in Khamisiyah in 1991 caused spreading of nerve and mustard agents. A new round of embarrassment and apologies from journalists who had accepted the Pentagon cover-up and misinformation in these matters for years followed these new pieces of evidence. It was pressure from journalists like Dave Parks of the *Birmingham [Alabama] News* and the veterans themselves that eventually forced the Pentagon to tell the truth, leaving most of the national media and the major networks in embarrassment (McKenna, 1997).

Maggie O'Kane's Channel 4 TV documentary demonstrates how journalists should deal with their earlier mistakes. Maggie O'Kane was among those hundreds of journalists who felt unhappy at their own performance during the Gulf War. Unlike most of the others, however, she returned to the battlefield five years later to tell the story once more, this time including the documentation of all the lies and cover-ups provided by the military. In her television documentary she claimed that low doses of chemical and possible biological weapons were transported in Iraqi Scud missiles and dropped on the allied troops with the aim of spreading panic. More than 50 tests carried out by a Czech unit detected nerve gas on at least nine occasions. She interviewed the Czech team as well as a large number of US and British soldiers who reported similar incidents, where the alarm system had warned of chemical attacks and they themselves had felt symptoms similar to what the literature describes as reactions to exposure to chemical weapons. Thousands have been chronically ill since these incidents, while their health records and logbooks from the battlefield have mysteriously disappeared.

But the most serious health problems in the aftermath of the Gulf War are linked to the massive use of ammunition containing depleted uranium by the US forces, causing radioactive pollution over huge areas. A confidential report by the British Atomic Energy Authority from April 1991 was leaked to the Brit-

ish press. This report reveals that at least 40 tons of highly radioactive depleted uranium was dispersed in Iraq by the Coalition forces during the Gulf War. At least 10,000 of the 6-inch, 6- to 9-pounds shells were dropped over southern Iraq. Also British and US forces cleaning up in the war zone were unknowingly exposed to radiation. Vast areas in southern Iraq will remain contaminated for generations to come. A Harvard medical team has registered a huge increase in cancer among Iraqi children living in the war zone in the southern part of Iraq. Treatment of these children has been made difficult because of lack of medicine and food due to the sanctions against Iraq. According to UNICEF figures, some 4,500 children under the age of 5 are dying every month due to hunger or diseases because of the UN sanctions (*New York Times*, 29 October 1996). Clearly, then, there is no such thing as ‘ “clean” surgical warfare’ The cynical ruthlessness of Saddam Hussein as well as the willingness of the coalition forces to use the war zone as an experimental arena for new and inhuman warfare should put images of ‘smart’ bombs and ‘surgical’ warfare in the initial phase of Operation Desert Storm in its right perspective.

The bombing of Iraq continued while the world had its attention on the Kosovo conflict. The legacy of the Gulf War had also another impact on the Kosovo war besides the discussion about the performance of the media. Operation Desert Storm had a UN mandate, but in the post-Gulf War period this UN mandate had been replaced by a diffuse follow-up of the UN mandate. The USA and Great Britain, as the leading military powers in the old alliance, chose to define the UN mandate in their own terms. It can be argued that the clear mandate from resolution 678 which gave the Coalition the right to pressure Iraq out of Kuwait with ‘all necessary means’ was misused to continue to bomb Iraq on several occasions as a part of the new post-Gulf War ‘New World Order’. Later UN resolutions (such as 687) describe the terms for a ceasefire but do not define the consequences if Iraq denies to fulfil its obligations. Thus when the USA and Great Britain have continued a certain ‘low-intensity warfare’ by bombing Iraq on several occasions as already mentioned, these actions have been without a UN mandate. Neither were the no-fly zones implemented in northern and southern Iraq authorized by the UN. The NATO attack on Kosovo seems to be a logical follow-up of the leading NATO powers’ self-proclaimed role as an international police force. Since NATO consciously avoided a UN handling of the issue of using military force against Serbia, this indicates that the Western powers wanted to avoid an open debate on the legality of the bombing campaign in Kosovo (Ottosen 1999).

## The Logic and Ethics of War Journalism

War journalism is a challenge: for those who want to understand the mechanisms behind conflict escalation, and for those who consider it important that the debate on journalism ethics is constantly pursued. These two issues are closely related: if the media can be a contributing factor in the aggravation of

conflicts, so much so that the result is military confrontation, there is certainly a reason to be concerned about ethical questions in war journalism. Our results indicate that media are easily drawn into conflicts, where they can end up as an instrument for propaganda. Thus, the media may be a factor which promotes military solutions by making them seem acceptable to public opinion. But our findings have also shown that the media's receptivity to propaganda influences varies, and should be related to different phases of the conflict processes (cf. also Shaw & Martin, 1993). The ways in which journalism dramatizes all news reporting may be likened to the narration devices that draw on comparisons with games or sports. Whether the news is actually about tax reforms, negotiations on the labour market, political debates or war does not matter much – it is always possible to construct it as a story about a fight with winners and losers, etc. If one studies Gulf War reporting from that perspective, combined with the adaptation approach, it can be reconstructed as a story of a continuous struggle between different actors, a story that can be divided into various stages depending on the arena where the battle is staged.

In the first phase of the Gulf War, during autumn 1990, according to the media story, the events take place in Washington, DC: in the White House, on Capitol Hill, and in the Pentagon. President Bush, as the major figure, in an evenly-matched battle eventually outfights resistance against the military conflict strategy. At the same time as this battle is going on in the USA, similar discussions about the best strategy are underway in the European media. Advocates of opposing views skirmish on the opinion and news pages, in editorials and chronicles. This often takes place with the active participation of second-rank politicians, but rarely – at least if judged by the media in this study – with the national leaders expressing any firm political line of their own besides some dutiful expressions of support for the venerable UN Security Council.

In the second phase, the battle has been transferred to the Gulf region. President Bush now has, like a new Agent 007, managed to overcome the initial obstacles and has received democratic authorization to carry out his mission. He can now confront the main enemy, the demonic Saddam Hussein. Journalistic attention has increasingly been focused on the military preparations prior to the decisive showdown. Now, in the second phase, the question is whether the Allies, with Bush and his deputy commander Norman Schwarzkopf, have succeed in mobilizing enough strength to defeat the enemy. The drama is further intensified by the media's telling of how Saddam Hussein has the fourth strongest army in the world under his command. An army with recent combat experience, and with a capacity to launch attacks with middle-range missiles and advanced Russian air-fighters. As if by magic, all interest in alternative ways of resolving the conflict has disappeared from the media. All attention is now directed towards the outcome of the impending confrontation. The final battle must come, determined by the inevitable logic of the story itself. Metaphors conveying this expectation stream with the news flow: the hourglass where the sand is running out, the ticking bomb, etc.

Now the media are caught in the propaganda strategists' pattern by their own logic. Now journalism must be subordinated to the military sequence of events. Now the news columns and studios are full of pronouncements by military experts speculating about the relative strengths of the opposite forces in the conflict and different possible scenarios. Now it is totally out of the question to interview peace researchers about alternative solutions to the conflict, or to provide extensive coverage of anti-war demonstrations. That story has already been concluded from a journalistic point of view. Now it is the war game that goes into action with Cruise missiles, Stealths, nasty Scuds and stalwart Patriots. Because of the special working conditions during war, including secrecy, censorship, pool-journalism, misinformation, etc., correspondents are in many respects at the mercy of the military. This is evident when it comes to access to information about what is actually going on, the opportunities for independent reporting etc. But the most important aspect of this dependency is not linked to the operational restrictions. The journalistic self-comprehension and the consequences of the media logic are by now 'living a life of their own'. Due to the strong orientation towards what at each moment – the fleeting instant now – is perceived as the main events, war journalism almost by necessity is the victim of propaganda and military scenarios.

In the third phase, after the liberation of Kuwait, media attention can revert to other events. Domestic political issues again take the lion's share of the news space; only occasionally are there reports that remind us about the war and its consequences. The story of the second phase had its climax when that decisive showdown took place. The popular media in particular now turn to new stories with more audience-drawing appeal. But in the trickle of sporadic news that does manage to appear as follow-ups on the war in the third period, the coverage becomes somewhat less one-sided. It has become apparent in retrospect also in the media that the news of the second period was not always accurate; that the costs, both in economic and human terms on the Iraqi as well as on the coalition side, were considerably higher than what had been said previously.

Therefore the US Gulf War reporting during the time-spots after the liberation of Kuwait is assimilated into a domestic policy discourse, which deals with the game leading up to the coming presidential elections. In this new battle, Bush finds it more difficult to ride on the victory from the Gulf into the White House for a second term than might have been expected. Following the glorious celebration after the return of the troops, the media began focusing on the unfulfilled goals of the war: Saddam Hussein was still in power, and there was no sign of the promised NWO. In addition, problems in the US economy now had more weight on the political media agenda.

But for the European media studied in this project – as noted, British and French media have not been included – no comparative domestic story existed into which the post-Gulf War events of April 1991, August 1992 and January 1993 could naturally be inscribed. This had a paradoxical effect in comparison with the US media: the European media retained their positive attitudes towards the US president which had been developed during the second period.

In the third period this became accentuated, when these media provided nothing but an epilogue of the narrative from the second period, occasionally combined with further emphasis on how indispensable the US policy was – even if the intensity of the coverage now had decreased substantially in comparison with the second period, as it also had in the US media.

The different periods of war journalism are thus clearly visible in the context of the Gulf War. During the autumn of 1990, when the political manoeuvres about what strategy that might force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait took place, it was primarily the US media that emphasized the military matters and express manifestly positive attitudes towards Bush's policy. Later, when the hostilities broke out, also the European media took an increasingly more positive stand on the US president. In terms of news topics the start of the warfare meant that coverage became increasingly one-dimensional.

If the one-dimensionality and the sensitivity to propaganda in war journalism in the last resort is caused by the journalists themselves, what does that imply for the ethical responsibility of the journalist profession? We need to see this question in relation to the different phases of war journalism. During the first period it is relevant to ask whether the media should not resist building up excitement for the possible war, as they did in the intermediate period between the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the start of hostilities between the Coalition and Iraq. Today, war is possibly the only situation when the people are mobilized for a common cause, even in democratic societies (Hallin & Gitlin, 1994). If that is true, it is really a double problem. Not only does it cast gloomy shadows on the democratic system – it also rings a warning bell that media can, by their internal logic and drive to engage the general public in processes which generate further first-rank news and suit the media dramaturgy, contribute to conflict escalation. From that point of view, nothing can beat a prime-time war.

In the second phase the problems are probably even more serious for journalism ethics, due to the understandable general fascination of the drama taking place on the battlefields. Normal journalistic reasoning holds that media shall deliver whatever they can, to satisfy audience interest in information, pictures and views of the ongoing events. The media have to give the public what it wants. The problem with this argument is that it leaves the media wide open to all sorts of packaged propaganda – especially if the available programme windows are expanded and new media technology provides reports in real time. This reduces the time for consideration and editing of incoming material to almost nothing. It is fair to say that the relative amount of journalistic work invested in the war news is drastically reduced. In consequence, the relative degree of propaganda is increased in the news, partially as a result of the development of new media.

Is it possible for the journalist profession to ensure conditions for independent news reporting? We do not have the answer. It must come from the media and the journalists themselves. But here we would warn against an attitude that puts the blame for the lack of alternatives to preserve status quo in war reporting solely on them. It is a fact that some journalists did choose ways

other than those allotted by the military in order to provide more independent reporting during the Gulf War. Many journalists interviewed after the Gulf War admit that the media were not able to fulfil their duty as a critical watchdog. More disturbingly, perhaps, these reporters share a fatalistic outlook often expressed after the Gulf War: they did not expect things to work out better the next time around. We, however, suggest that more needs to be known about the conditions for active learning and the creation of professional strategies for making war journalism more resistant to exploitation attempts. In recent years, courses have been held in Europe to raise the consciousness of journalists in questions related to peace- and conflict-journalism. In a second volume from this project we will pursue these issues further.

And what can we conclude at this point? We have seen how, in some war/conflict situations, the media can easily become a tool for propaganda. The same ethical principles and rules of balanced and independent journalism are not usually applied in international as in national conflicts. It is our firm belief, however, that the journalist profession has a responsibility – and also the possibility – to choose the ethics and the role it wishes to create.

## Notes

1. A study of the media coverage of this conflict has been initiated by the authors and is expected to be finished during Spring 2001.
2. The documentary was called 'Riding The Storm: How To Tell Lies and Win Wars' and was first sent on Channel 4 on 3 January 1996.

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