

**ORIENTALISM, PAN-ARABISM, AND MILITARY-MEDIA WARFARE:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN CNN AND ALJAZEERA COVERAGE OF THE
IRAQ WAR**

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Abstract

Undoubtedly, the suicide attacks of 11 September 2001 had multiple repercussions on U.S. geo-strategic orientations. Under the influence of neo-conservative figures, the Bush administration capitalised on the offence to national self-esteem, and embarked upon wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). These were the basis of a renewed American quest to dominate international affairs, and to prevent any other superpower from emerging in the new century. Numerous influential neo-conservative ideologues close to the Bush administration endorsed the reshaping of American empire. In this context, the 2003 Iraq War can undeniably be considered as the defining conflict of the 21st century. The control of Iraq was an unfulfilled, but openly declared, neo-conservative objective since 1998. Their main think tank, the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), considered that the invasion of Iraq was necessary and inevitable.

The neoconservatives' obsession with Iraq, combined with their ideological drive to make the Middle East and "global Islam" the primary focus of U.S. foreign policy, converged ultimately with the interests of other powerful lobbies, such as those representing the oil industry and the military-industrial complex. This convergence of interests paved the way for a very powerful media orchestration aimed at selling the war to the American people, American allies, and the United Nations. The principal arguments put forward by the American administration centred on the Iraqi regime's alleged capacity to produce biological, chemical, and nuclear "weapons of mass destruction" (WMDs), as well as its supposed covert links with Al-Qaeda.

On the eve of the 2003 Iraq War, propaganda and psychological warfare had reached unparalleled levels. The sophisticated use of the information warfare paradigm by the U.S. forces effectively undermined the journalistic standards of American mainstream news outlets. Subsequently, two wars were waged: the actual war in Iraq, and the battle for favourable public opinion which employed the visual and rhetorical styles of commercial / entertainment television. The general method was to exploit popular reservoirs of patriotism and cultural prejudice. But while U.S. news organisations were successful in putting across their frames within their nation, they were not effective abroad. Globally, they confronted the existence of counter-hegemonic news frames. The new millennium witnessed a contra-flow of information, whereby developing region news outlets increasingly challenged the Western command of information. In the Middle East, there was a noticeable growth of satellite television, which enabled Arabs to see the world through Arab lenses. As the Iraq War marked an end to the near monopoly in global news that American and other Western media had long enjoyed, some attention has been paid to oppositional news coverage of this conflict from the non-Western world. In this regard, there have been studies of Arab transnational satellite television; however such research is limited in scope.

With these considerations in mind, my dissertation primarily examines news coverage of the main phase of the Iraq War (from 20 March 2003 until 1 May 2003) from both a U.S. and a Middle-Eastern news perspective, as illustrated by CNN and Aljazeera respectively. CNN was selected because it is the pioneering example of a global television news network. Aljazeera was selected because it is the leading transnational satellite channel in the Middle East and has worldwide influence. Given that there are few studies comparing the Western and the Arab media coverage of the Iraqi War, my research initiates an understanding of the rival news dynamics surrounding international conflicts in this region. To this end, I will employ discourse analysis, ideology critique, and visual-semiotic analysis to illustrate the differences in coverage. My general conclusion is that Aljazeera provided an effective propaganda critique of CNN framings as the Iraq War unfolded.

This comparative evaluation of CNN and Aljazeera is informed by prior discussion of the following themes. Firstly, the conceptualization of media bias through the perspectives of media sociology, propaganda analysis, and the framing paradigm; secondly, the growing sophistication of wartime propaganda in the context of news media coverage and the public sphere generally; thirdly, the development of Orientalism and the official discourse on terrorism, as well as their convergence in constructing otherness during the post 9/11 era; fourthly, the emergence of CNN and its framing of conflicts in the Middle East; fifthly, the evolution of pan-Arabism and its influence on Arab transnational media, especially in regard to Aljazeera.

This dissertation contributes to academic research by uncovering the workings of U.S. military propaganda in the context of the 2003 Iraq War, and showing how military propaganda practices worked in duo with framing processes adopted by American news media generally, and CNN in particular. It also reveals how Arab news media, and particularly Aljazeera, counteracted the American military propaganda by employing counter frames rooted in local ideologies such as pan-Arabism. Consequently, Aljazeera's critique helped, globally, to delegitimize U.S. military-media strategies associated with the preparations for, and prosecution of war.

The originality of this study derives from the cross-cultural examination of how rival satellite television networks covered the same world event. The findings provide a platform for future studies concerning the mobilisation of media bias, and its contestation with regard to U.S. interventions in the Middle East.

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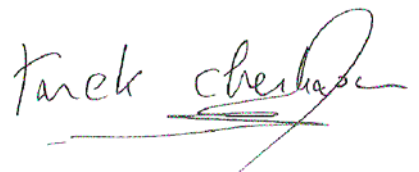
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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a University or other institution of higher learning

Signed:

Tarek Cherkaoui

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tarek Cherkaoui". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end. Below the signature, there are several horizontal lines, possibly indicating a signature line or a stamp.

Chapter 1

1- Theory, methodological discussion and research objectives

1.1- *Conceptualizing media bias*

Media bias is a term used to describe selectivity in the reporting of information and the coverage of events in a way that contravenes the standards of high quality journalism. Many scholars such as Sandra Dickson and Daniel Hallin have made the argument that media biases exist in news coverage. Even the general public increasingly considers news media as widely biased.¹ Sources of bias may come from the fact that journalists or media owners favour their own ethnic, racial, religious, political, class belonging over others. But often media bias is shaped by the heavy influence of government and business interests in determining the way stories are featured and framed. This influence commonly reflects the “official perspective”. The latter has been defined as ‘the set of views, arguments, explanations and policy suggestions advanced by those who speak for the state’ (Schlesinger et al 1983: 2-7). Therefore, media bias, as Van Dijk observed, often aims to serve the official perspective, and can be detected in the small and subtle details of news reporting (Van Dijk 1985: 73)

Propaganda, as a concept, has an obvious link with media bias. Indeed, one can say that propaganda is the mobilisation of media bias. Propaganda has been defined as “biased communication” (Dovring, 1959), but this biased form of communication is only effective when it emanates from the work of large organisations or groups that can organise massive orchestrations of information feeds to media outlets. This means that propaganda is necessarily associated with power. Power is at the centre of knowledge production and is also conversely defined by it. As Hans Morgenthau observed, power is “man's control over the minds and actions of other men” and represents 'a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised' (Morgenthau 1978: 30). Therefore, it has often been asserted that the mainstream media play the role of public interpreters of events on behalf of power centres, and thus constitute a symbolic arena for ideological struggle between the dominant discourse and its contenders (Wolsfeld 1997: 54). This everlasting struggle over

¹ For instance, a survey conducted in 1999 by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) revealed that 78 percent of the public believed there was bias in news reporting. See: American Association of Newspaper Editors, 1999. *Examining our Credibility: Examining Credibility, Explaining Ourselves*. Reston, Va. For more, check out the link: (<http://www.asne.org>).

the meaning of events by journalists is instrumental; they adopt certain frames of reference that include certain facts and representations while excluding others.

Scholars interested in how discourses emanate from power have investigated the concept of ideology. Numerous researchers have studied this concept in terms of its content, the functions it serves, its causes, or its effects. The word ideology itself was coined by Count Antoine Destutt de Tracy in the late 18th century. He simply defined it as a ‘science of ideas.’ However, such “non-critical” conceptions of ideology - as John Thompson labels them – gradually lost acceptance in academia in favour of analyses associated with critique. Some critical discussions of ideology reached the conclusion that this concept entailed a set of ideas proposed by the dominant class of a given society to all members of that society. For example, in *Making Sense of Marx* (1985), Jon Elster defines ideology as false or distorted conscious beliefs held by individuals about the social world (p. 462-64). But I prefer the definition of ideology proposed by John Thompson. For him:

[Ideology is] primarily concerned with the ways in which symbolic forms intersect with relations of power. It is concerned with the ways in which meaning is mobilised in the social world and serves thereby to bolster up individuals and groups who occupy positions of power...*to study ideology is to study the ways in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination* (Thompson 1990: 56) (original emphasis).

Detecting traces of ideology in communication is thus the key to understanding how the mobilisation of media bias operates, which constitutes propaganda. In fact, scholars such as Jacques Ellul argued that propaganda has an unequivocal relationship to ideology. For him, propaganda always and necessarily begins with ideology (Ellul 1965: 193-202). Similarly, propaganda experts such as Jowett and O'Donnell determined that the objective of propaganda is to serve power by ‘sending out an ideology to an audience with a related objective’ (Jowett & O'Donnell 1992: 3). Accordingly, they recommend that the first step when analysing propaganda is ‘to look for ideology in both verbal and visual representations’ (Jowett and O'Donnell 1992: 213-214).

Analysing traces of propaganda in public discourse is hardly a novelty. In fact, it dates from the First World War, when the press - even in countries with strong democratic traditions - worked with governments to glorify national victories, while discrediting the achievements of

the enemy. At that time, many U.S.-based critics became alarmed by the profound threat to democracy posed by the growing use of propaganda by the media, governments, and other corporate entities. For example, Harold D. Lasswell wrote *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927), which placed him ‘in the mainstream progressive critical tradition of propaganda analysis’ (Sproule 1989: 232). Other examples include Will Irwin, Walter Lippmann, and others, who despite having worked for diverse departments of propaganda during the First World War, regarded propaganda as a danger to democracy. Lippmann, for instance, went to the extent of writing that the ‘protection of the sources of opinion is the basic problem of democracy’ (Lippman 1919: 626; cited in Sproule 1989: 229).

The flourishing of propaganda analysis in America during the 1920s and 1930s derived from growing concern about the power of the communication industry and the widespread disillusionment with American institutions following the great depression. Michael Sproule argues:

In 1919, “propaganda” meant Germany’s “spies and lies”, whereas, by 1930, propaganda was understood to include efforts by just about anyone to influence public opinion—especially the U.S. government and big business. The change in notions about propaganda came with post-war disillusionment with the Great War, and the realization that wartime techniques of opinion manipulation were being ever more widely practiced by domestic special interest groups (Sproule 1984: 7).

Subsequently, propaganda analysis grew to the extent that by 1935, Lasswell, Casey, and Smith compiled a bibliography, which included several thousand works on the subject (Cmiel 1996: 89). This literature grew as the rise of fascism and Nazism became apparent. These political developments compelled dozens of liberal American scholars, journalists, anti-defamation activists, churchmen, and congressmen, to build organisations against Nazi and fascist propaganda activities within the United States. One of the best examples of such organisations was the short-lived *Institute for Propaganda Analysis* (IPA) (1937-1942). This educational association was founded by journalist Clyde R. Miller, and involved renowned academicians, such as Charles A. Beard, Edgar Dale, Leonard Doob, and others. The Institute published a monthly bulletin, and educational materials for schools. The IPA’s efforts maintained a critical stance against groups and individuals attempting to mobilise mass media bias for authoritarian ends. However, the entrance of the United States in World War Two significantly curtailed the field of propaganda analysis. The latter was ‘the first victim of the anti-critical trends that preceded the Second World War’ (Sproule 1984: 15). Subsequently,

the *Institute for Propaganda Analysis* closed its doors in 1942 because of the dilemma it confronted. Should it analyse America's official propaganda at a time when the country was at war. At the same time, propaganda analysts were hired to support the war effort. Harold Lasswell, for example, was sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation to interpret Nazi propaganda (Sproule 1984: 17).

The formation of the Communist Bloc after World War Two further hampered propaganda analysis in the United States. In the early 1950s, at the height of the McCarthy era, propaganda analysis was tagged unpatriotic. Accordingly, the "red" label became attached to researchers interested in propaganda analysis, including former IPA staff (Sproule 1984: 18). Furthermore, the field suffered from the cooptation of propaganda analysts by U.S. governmental agencies. They hired experts in order to push social research into domains of persuasion, opinion measurement, and mass mobilisation. In *Science of Coercion* (1996), Christopher Simpson details how U.S. government and military priorities used experts in propaganda analysis, such as Wilbur Schramm, Hadley Cantril and Harold Lasswell, to research psychological warfare on behalf of the military throughout the 1940s. According to Simpson, 'six of the most important U.S. centres of post-war communication studies grew up as de facto adjuncts of government psychological warfare programs' (Simpson 1996: 4-6).² These developments hindered propaganda analysis for the next few decades until the Vietnam War era.

Propaganda and framing

Writings on propaganda tend to view the mobilisation of bias as a concerted attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and mobilise the emotions of the targeted public for specific political ends. This is done while the real intentions and sources behind the communication are concealed and discursive means with little or no appeal to reason are employed. Michael Sproule summarizes how propaganda works:

Propaganda represents the work of large organisations or groups to win over the public for special interests through a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal both their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supporting reasons (Sproule 1994: 8).

² Christopher Simpson (1996) made important claims in his book. Indeed, he asserted that the money flowing from military and intelligence agencies made up more than 75 percent of the annual budgets of prestigious communication institutes, such as the Bureau of Applied Social Research (BASR) at Columbia University, the Institute for International Social Research (IISR) at Princeton, and the Centre for International Studies (CENIS) at MIT etc.

The concealed origins of the communication and the lack of reliable reasoning are just the most widely known characteristics of propaganda. But unlike other studies which concentrate on analysing propagandistic features, my research aims to uncover propaganda's modus operandi, which centres upon the mobilisation of media bias. I shall also discuss the extent to which counter mobilisations against media bias are possible and sustainable.

There is no doubt that propaganda reflects the dominant discourse on important issues. The transmission of the dominant discourse happens through "master frames" (Snow and Benford 1988). The latter are based on deep understandings of individual interests, values and beliefs. "Master frames" are sufficiently resonant to trigger waves of mobilisation messages. Such a mechanism reveals the essence of the framing process; its main function is 'to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilise antagonists' (Snow and Benford 1988: 198). This means that framing highlights certain aspects of social reality while concealing others. The strategic purpose of framing is to orient the mass public towards a particular set of political objectives.

Numerous scholars observed the strong link between framing and propaganda (McLeod and Detenber 1999; Parenti 1993). American media critic- Michael Parenti (1997) argued that if communicators (media, public relations executives etc.) are involved in a campaign of public opinion manipulation, they often resort to framing. It is therefore not surprising to find that framing analysis and propaganda analysis share a number of resemblances. Framing analysis examines how "public discourse about policy issues is constructed and negotiated" (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 70). Likewise, the ten steps³ involved in propaganda analysis, as outlined by O'Donnell and Jowett (1992), answers the following question: "To what ends, in the context of the times, does a propaganda agent, working through an organisation, reach an audience through the media while using special symbols to get a desired reaction?" (p240). From these definitions, one can say that both framing analysis and propaganda analysis share an ultimate purpose, namely to examine the contours of the media's role in the service of structural and institutional power. Also, both framing research and propaganda analysis allow close scrutiny of the sources of communication. They both provide a solid platform for analysing the orchestration of discourse, including its semantic and syntactic aspects. But the resemblance

³ According to O'Donnell and Jowett (1992) these 10 steps involve analysing (1) The ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign (2) The context in which the propaganda occurs (3) Identification of the propagandist (4) The structure of the propaganda organisation (5) The target audience (6) Media utilization techniques (7) Special techniques to maximize effect (8) Audience reaction to various techniques (9) Counterpropaganda, if present (10) Effects and evaluation

between both analyses ends here, for framing research is more comprehensive than propaganda analysis. Indeed, framing research has a wider scope; it covers all sorts of mass media communication, not just that which is biased or propagandistic.

The use of framing analysis to analyse media bias became widely known through the influential news studies by the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) published from the mid-1970s. The GUMG produced systematic content analyses of TV-news programs, especially those focusing on strikes and other perceived disruptions of social order. Their work showed that news representations (in this case the BBC, a public broadcasting company) involved considerable bias in relating the news of striking unionists. The Glasgow group's key argument was that the "inferential frames" of television news systematically distorted the perspectives of trade-unionists. One of the case studies produced by the GUMG surrounded the media coverage of the Glasgow dust cart drivers strike⁴. While this strike was undertaken to protest against precarious conditions of work and falling real wages, the media chose to focus on its disruptive effects on British social life. In this context, the dominant frame produced by the media was the "health hazard" frame, which emphasized the public-health risks posed by piled-up rubbish, while totally ignoring the plight of the workers. The fact that none of the striking dust cart drivers were interviewed on television exemplified the latent bias (Hallin 1987: 1545).

The study produced by the Glasgow Group was content analysis-based and informed by framing theory. Shaun Best described the group's methodology. For him, their content analysis involved producing a set of analytical categories, which could be objectively applied to recorded television news programmes. The information from the news programmes was fitted into the categories. The number of times each category appeared in the news programmes was counted and the numerical quantification was said to reveal the true meaning of the news (Best 2000). GUMG founder member John Eldridge (1995) strongly defended this methodology. According to him, content analysis is a methodologically unobtrusive measure, which can be used to analyse data without influencing what is produced. In addition, this methodology, as applied by GUMG, gave equal emphasis to latent meanings emanating from rhetorical and textual forms. Eldridge explained that the GUMG

⁴ In the autumn of 1974, heavy goods vehicles employed by Glasgow Corporation went in strike to get parity with rates that private drivers had won that summer in Scotland. Yet these drivers soon returned to work when the Glasgow Corporation promised that if national negotiations -then in progress- did not produce a settlement, they would be willing to reach a local agreement. But as time went, the drivers repeated their strike in January 1975. Most were dustcart drivers.

'did suggest that unspoken, unacknowledged assumptions, practices or perspectives help to constitute what Goffman had called the primary framework, whereby news talk becomes meaningful' (Eldridge 1995: 22). Robert Entman gives credit to this method. For him, 'content analysis informed by a theory of framing would avoid treating all negative or positive terms or utterances as equally salient and influential...Unguided by a framing paradigm, content analysis may often yield data that misrepresent the media messages that most audiences are actually picking up' (Entman 1993: 57). Most importantly, framing theory goes beyond studying media content to analyse issues of power and ideology, in the context of social and institutional interests.

But even before the Glasgow Media Group, the concept of framing attracted scholarly attention. In fact, since the 1960s, framing research has informed an extensive research literature concerning media content, including studies exploring the relationship between media and public opinion. Psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, communication and media scholars all deploy the framing concept. Yet only a few disciplines have understood frames as formal theoretical paradigms. Such fields include micro-sociology, cognitive anthropology, social psychology, and closer to the core of this study, the fields of political sociology and media sociology.

The micro-sociological approach became best known through the works of Erving Goffman, who contended that people act according to perceived social norms. In *Frame Analysis: Essays on the Organisation of Experience*, he identified individual frames as allowing human beings 'to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences' (Goffman 1974: 21). Therefore, according to Goffman, the framing of a social situation forms expectations, establishes norms and influences behaviour. Goffman claimed that individuals constantly classify and interpret their life experiences to understand the world around them. Goffman also argued that cultures generated "primary frameworks", which transformed 'what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful' (Goffman 1974: 21). In this context, frames offer a point of reference, which helps ordinary people comprehend the transmitted information. Goffman also contended that there were natural frameworks and social frameworks. Natural frameworks develop from "purely physical" experiences, whereas social frameworks result from associations with power (Goffman 1974: 22).

Besides the micro-sociological approach, cognitive anthropology is another scholarly field that directly focuses on framing. This field was particularly keen to explain the processes by which the human brain arranges information into a wider framework in order to make sense of the external world. In this context, cultural values, religious indoctrination, personal experiences, and educational background all contribute to the human framing of social reality. Schema theory was among the first paradigms in cognitive anthropology. This theory was initially developed by Educational Psychologist R. C. Anderson on the basis of research undertaken by Swiss Philosopher Jean Piaget. The latter argued that people use schemata (such as stereotypes, social roles, and worldviews etc.) to organise knowledge acquisitions and to provide a framework for future understanding. Roy Goodwin D'Andrade further expanded the "schema" theory, and developed strong propositions about individual cognitive processes. Indeed, according to D'Andrade, a schema acts as 'a procedure by which objects or events can be identified on the basis of simplified pattern recognition' (Perri 2005: 94). Accordingly, 'frames and schemata "activate" each other: linguistic forms bring schemata to mind and schemata are expressed in "linguistic reflexes"' (Casson 1983: 434).

Schema theory advocates, such as Rumelhart and Ortony, considered that schemas are very valuable tools when it comes to explaining behavioural patterns, representing knowledge and organising experience. Such conclusions stemmed from the fact that schemas constitute 'data structures' that form the 'generalized concepts underlying objects, situations, events, sequences of events, actions, and sequences of actions' (Rumelhart and Ortony 1977: 101). Brewer and Nakamura argued that the role of schema is most crucial in the process of knowledge construction and knowledge preservation. For these academics, '[schemas] are higher-order cognitive structures that have been hypothesized to underlie many aspects of human knowledge and skill. They serve a crucial role in providing an account of how old knowledge interacts with new knowledge in perception, language, thought, and memory' (Brewer and Nakamura 1984: 120). But it must also be acknowledged that schema theory has received considerable criticism over the years. Some critics concentrated on the fact that key concepts associated with this paradigm were inadequately specified (Brown and Yule 1983). Other critics asked whether schema theory's key concepts were able to explain all processes of understanding and representation or only certain aspects (Greene 1986). But the main criticism of the schema theory resides in the fact that it allows the development of an infinite number of associations, connotations, memories which can be attached to almost any concept (Perri 2005: 95).

The cognitive psychological perspective also induced psychologists to use the concept of framing in order to study expectations of subjects, and whether they had negative or positive orientations toward specific issues (McFarland and Miller 1994). One of those issues was the subjective perception of risks. This has been analysed in the context of the “prospect theory”⁵, which was developed by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky in 1979. This theory offered a platform for researchers to examine the factors involved in decision-making. Researchers had long been perplexed over how ordinary citizens make choices between alternative policy positions. Kahneman and Tversky (1984) examined the psychology of decision-making, and found out that the way choices were framed and presented to people were likely to determine the particular options selected. In this context, Kahneman and Tversky identified what they called “reference states”, or cues, resulting from one’s own experiences and habits, which influence choice selection. In accordance with this perspective, frames account for the ways people make judgments and decisions about risk. Frames specify the initial reference point of the status quo, and therefore play a major role in determining individual patterns of risk aversion, risk neutrality and risk willingness (Kahneman and Tversky 2000). Similarly, according to Adam Simon framing works exactly like the human memory; it creates links between concepts. Therefore, aligning concepts in a story has the ability to create a certain resonance. However, the cognitive psychological perspective has its weaknesses. This tradition is more interested in searching out the unknowns lying behind preference functions during the process of decision making, than in specifying what frames consist of or where frames come from. Furthermore, this approach is largely centred on the self, rather than social interaction. In the latter context, frames are implicated in societal-level power. Framing analysis need not be exclusively concerned with how individuals’ psychological structures operate as coping devices for message elements (Simon 2001).

The field of political sociology has also produced significant scholarly research on framing. Scholars belonging to this tradition disagree with the classic micro-sociological approach (Gamson 1992, Gamson & Modigliani 1987). Indeed, they consider the frame as primarily related to collective action not individual perception. In their view, frames are primarily about organising attitudes, views and ideas, a process that affects first and foremost group behaviour and collective action, rather than the sense making experiences of standalone individuals. Accordingly, frames play a major role in motivating or de-motivating collective behaviour,

⁵ *Prospect theory* is a theory that describes decisions between alternatives that involve risk, i.e. alternatives with uncertain outcomes, where the probabilities are known. See (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979).

because they are “social images” more than anything else (Gamson 1992: 6-8). Consequently, the proponents of this approach consider that frames can be analysed as follows: First, they must be viewed according to their moral stance vis-à-vis the subject matter (e.g. injustice). Second, frames must be viewed according to their conception of collective action, or what frames encourage people to do about any given problem. Third, frames must be analysed as a function of their identity component i.e. how frames construe issues of a collective “us” versus a “them” (constituted by another group with different interests and values) (Perri 2005: 95).

1.2- Towards a critical perspective on framing

My research follows those critical perspectives on framing which might inform the media sociology field of inquiry. Reviewing the media sociological perspective on news construction is important because it links with the cross disciplinary growth of framing studies. This growth, which is clearly noticeable since the 1990s, happened in disciplines such as communication (D’Angelo 2002; Entman 2003, Entman 2005; Scheufele 2004); journalism (Pan & Kosicki 1993; Reese 2007); sociology (Gamson 1992); political science (Norris et al. 2003) and political psychology (Iyengar 1991). The growing interest in framing research has partly stemmed from renewed academic attention to propaganda and media bias (Berenger 2004; Tankard 2001).

News frames and media sociology

The process of framing goes through several phases. The first is the organisational level. In this case, I am examining the organisational and occupational routines influencing the journalists’ framing of news. The second phase concerns in the inter-relationship between reporters and official sources, whereby the power of the latter, combined with the need for journalistic efficiency, structures how news organisations set the news agenda. The third and final phase resides in the wider political economy sphere, or more specifically in the corporate capitalist system, which sets the parameters of mainstream public opinion.

1. The media organisational level

A number of studies during the 1970s and 1980s examined the organisational and bureaucratic nature of news production and news manufacture. Edward Jay Epstein is among those who highlighted the importance of this phase. In his seminal work *News from Nowhere*, Epstein shows how ‘the organisational imperatives of network news, and the logics that proceed from these demands, irresistibly shape the picture of society in consistent directions’ (Epstein 1973: 265).

Epstein observed the inner workings of U.S. national network news between 1968 and 1969; he also interviewed dozens of journalists, editors and crewmen. He argued that news content did not merely mirror what happened in reality; rather it resulted from numerous organisational, economic, and technical constraints faced by television news producers. In this context, he observed that ‘the pictures of society shown on television as national news were largely – though not entirely – performed and shaped by organisational considerations’ (Epstein 1973: 258).

At the top of those considerations lay issues of internal power and hierarchy. Indeed, newsworthiness is determined by high ranked media executives, who choose the news agenda and push their choice down through the hierarchy. Epstein identified ‘certain uniform procedures for filtering and evaluating information and reaching decisions; and certain practices of recruiting newsmen and producers who hold, or accept, values that are consistent with organisational needs’ (Epstein 1973: 43). As a result, not much is left to individual journalists. The latter have merely to follow the chain of command, and to compete with each other, as to who will best meet the expectations of the hierarchy, otherwise they will be fired because no dissent is tolerated. Epstein provided the example of a high-ranked CBS manager who confided to him that ‘if a newsman begins to espouse ideas strenuously, even privately, after he is hired, “he does not last long”, and new reporters will be hired (Epstein 1973: 207). Such a process, observed Epstein, is a major tool of control, because only docile journalists with no dissenting political opinions will be employed.

The economic and organisational “logic” of network television also plays a determining role in structuring the scope and form of network news. Epstein reviewed these measures including the ‘government regulation of broadcasting and economic realities of networks’ (Epstein 1973: 43). Within news organisations themselves, many stories and items were seen

to be predetermined by the logistical limitations of news outlets. The latter, for instance, “prioritized” news occurring in locations, where television crews were already stationed. Other determining conditions ranged from work permissions, ease of access to news sources, to financial costs. Epstein emphasized the latter factor (which consisted of minimizing costs and maximizing viewership) because it often determined news story selection. In fact, news outlets would generally favour a news story that was the easiest available at the lowest cost. For instance, Epstein found out that ‘an analysis of the final [news story] choices at NBC... shows that with few exceptions, marginal stories that required little or no transmitting costs were chosen over stories that required both loop and mileage charges’ (Epstein 1973: 194).

The abovementioned constraints, as identified by Epstein, will inform the decisions of news producers of any given network (except for a few significant events in which the network news feels obliged to cover in the face of stiff competition). But overall, organisational limitations constitute an essential phase in news-making, hence the need to study organisations, rather than individual journalists, in news analyses. The latter have already ‘modified their own personal values in accordance with the requisites of the organisation’ (Epstein 1973: xiv).

Epstein was not alone in highlighting the interconnectedness of work routines, professional norms and values, and the institutional contexts in which news-making takes place. Gaye Tuchman, for example, reached similar conclusions in *Making News* (1978). She concluded that news items were merely “social constructions” of reality, and that newsworthiness resulted from a system of newsrooms routines that ultimately favoured certain perspectives rather than others. Tuchman defined news as the ‘product of a social institution... [and] of professionalism’ that transformed an observation or event into a ‘shared (therefore public) phenomenon’ (pp. 5-6). With an acerbic tone, Tuchman observed that news is less a report on a factual world than ‘a depletable consumer product that must be made fresh daily’ (Tuchman 1978: 179).

Epstein’s and Tuchman’s research remains relevant. Indeed, a recent U.S. study by Steve Jones, in which he reviewed a number of media studies produced in the 1990s and afterwards, shows ‘that about 50 percent of news came from Washington DC’ (Jones 2008: 236). Jones noted a shift during the period from 2002 to 2004. But after investigation, the latter was merely an indication that New York had become the primary location (instead of Washington DC) for most U.S. domestic news (76.2 percent). According to Jones, this demonstrates that

news networks still prefer news stories with cheap costs of production, and readily available logistics. Going after the news wherever it happens does not determine news content. Jones' conclusion is reminiscent of Epstein's own findings three decades earlier, in which he indicated that 'the organisational imperatives of network news and the logics that proceed from these demands, irresistibly shape the picture of society in consistent directions' (Epstein 1973: 265).

2. Media organisations and primary news sources

Influential studies produced by Sigal (1973), Gans (1979), Tuchman (1978), and Fishman (1980) identified a second phase of news framing. This second phase is an elites-led process of newsroom routines that favours certain events and perspectives over others. Indeed, sources of power, both within the media organisation and outside it, use both incentives and deterrents, to help journalists conform to group norms and the institutional status-quo.

The relationship between media organisations and primary news sources is a central focus of inquiry. For example, Leon Sigal, in his major work *Reporters and Officials, the Organisation and Politics of Newsmaking* (1973) observed that journalists rely to a great degree on official sources and routine channels. While such standard newsgathering techniques may be essential for journalists to do their work, the consequence, Sigal noted, was that journalists 'are exploited by their sources either to insert information into the news or to propagandize' (Quoted by Gamson et. al. 1992: 376).

Similarly, in *Deciding What's News*, American sociologist Herbert J. Gans explored the relationship between reporters and sources. He argued that the power of sources, combined with the need for journalistic efficiency, ultimately determined how news organisations defined news. Gans suggests that 'efficiency and source power are parts of the same equation, since it is efficient for journalists to respect the power of official sources.' According to Gans, officialdom has the upper hand in framing the news, as 'the news supports the social order of public, business and professional, upper middle-class, middle-aged and white male sections of society' (Gans 1979: 61). The under-class is represented as the disrupters of social order, while the powerful are pre-eminently represented as political figures. In this context, news production proceeds to constitute a coherent moral and social vision. Similar findings were presented by Mark Fishman, who discovered in his study of a Californian newspaper that journalists deferred to governmental bureaucratic organisations, from which they obtained the

largest part of their news. This prompted him to argue that ‘the world is bureaucratically organised for journalists’ (Fishman 1980: 51).

Gaye Tuchman’s *Making News* comprehensively demonstrates that news frames are born out of the dynamic interactions between journalists and sources. The conclusions drawn in this book were based on fieldwork that was conducted over a period of 10 years in newspaper and television newsrooms in an American East Coast city. Among the themes she investigated was the coverage of the women's movement and New York's fiscal crisis. Gaye Tuchman argued in a chapter entitled *News as the Reproduction of the Status Quo*, that news media is subservient to power centres because their survival depends on them (Tuchman 1978: 208-217). Indeed, journalists rely on the authorized knowers or “qualified informants”, as she calls them, because they depend on the ‘centralization of information in bureaucracies and the generation of facts by bureaucrats’ (Tuchman 1978: 88).

Tuchman also noted that vigorous negotiations characterize the process of news production. These negotiations involve journalists, editors and publishers, but more importantly they also involve officials and organisations with power and influence. This means that the primary sources of story material will have their point of view reprinted as fact. Similar observations have been made by other authors. Thus, Shoemaker and Reese (1996) state that ‘those with economic or political power are more likely to influence news reports than those who lack power’ (p.151). Soley, in a book entitled *The News Shapers* (1992), noted that ‘news makers such as government officials are individuals who are the legitimate focus of the news’ (p.14). For that purpose, journalists add touches of deference to statements made by those officials, describing them, for example, as “leading experts” or “noted foreign policy observers.” Soley observes that:

Some news shapers are former government officials; some are former politicians. Despite this, they are frequently described with impartial titles...their sole function is to provide commentary or analysis, although their statements are never described as such (Soley 1992: 2)

Soley sees in such “expert” advice merely a subterfuge to provide citizens with superficial knowledge as a substitute for real political involvement (Soley 1992: 27). According to Tuchman, this state of affairs is accepted by news outlets as part of their symbiotic relationship with the government, the main provider of news material. In fact, such symbiosis

is seen by reporters as an asset rather than a liability. Therefore, as Tuchman observed, journalists always seek to interview the rich and powerful. Reporters even go to the extent of pampering their powerful guests with soft questions, and are very careful with what they ask these sources. On the other hand, the leaders of grass-roots movements or those who oppose prevailing relations of power are ignored by the news media, or they are conferred no legitimacy. Tuchman called this process “symbolic annihilation”.

3. The political-economy of the news media

Apart from the two framing levels, discussed earlier, there is a third level, which is far more complex, yet crucial in the understanding of news framing on a meta-level. This level links the outcome of the news process to the economic structure of the news organisation. In this regard, worldwide connectedness has accelerated since the end of the Cold War, paving the way for new opportunities in the media field for transnational corporations. The latter had already experienced substantial growth prior to the 1990s because of media deregulation that occurred in the United States, Europe, and Australia. The new openings that became available to transnational media corporations after the fall of the Soviet Union on the international level meant exponential growth for these organisations. As a result, media critics, such as Ben Bagdikian (2000), have observed that a "private ministry of information" has emerged in the United States in the last twenty-five years, as ownership of major media has become increasingly concentrated. Holding a similar view, Robert McChesney outlines how major mergers and acquisitions have led to a massive concentration of media ownership, to the extent that the field is dominated by a few oligopolies, such as Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom, and News Corporation (McChesney 1999: 91). This has considerably constrained news production as the owners' 'constant drumbeat for profit, their concern with minimizing costs and enhancing revenues, invariably influences the manner in which news is collected and reported' (McChesney 2002: 306). As a result, a few media oligopolies have at present the determining say in the fields of television, radio, film, music, broadcasting, satellite, telecommunication, cable, newspapers, magazines, publishing companies, internet content providers, and other forms of converged digital media. This development has had a considerable bearing upon news reporting.

As a global news organisation, Cable News Network (CNN) went through these changes. While CNN was established in 1980 thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of its founder Ted Turner, the latter was forced two decades later to sell his shareholding rights in CNN as a

result of the gigantic merger between AOL and Time-Warner (January 2001). This development initially led to a decline in CNN viewership. In an interview granted to the *Atlantic Monthly*, Ted Turner blamed this situation on the meagre budgets allocated to international newsgathering. Visibly irritated, Ted Turner described the post-merger effects on CNN's journalism:

When CNN reported to me, if we needed more money for Kosovo or Baghdad, we'd find it. If we had to bust the budget, we busted the budget. We put journalism first, and that's how we built CNN into something the world wanted to watch...Top managers in these huge media conglomerates run their companies for the short term. After we sold Turner Broadcasting to Time Warner, we came under such earnings pressure that we had to cut our promotion budget every year at CNN to make our numbers. Media mega-mergers inevitably lead to an overemphasis on short-term earnings (Turner 2004).

Shifts in the political-economic environment in the Middle East have also had significant impact upon news media in the region. Prior to the 1990s, media ownership belonged primarily to the states and to a minor extent to political parties and the private sector. This meant that governments were directly in control of the editorial lines of the news media. In the few oases of pluralism in the Arab World (such as Lebanon and Kuwait), news media belonged to the private sector but was still subject to governmental pressures (Rugh 2004: 30-91). The situation changed in the early 1990s, when wealthy Saudi Arabian royals ventured into the media field, launching numerous satellite channels from Europe,⁶ thus circumventing Arab official censorship. But the real change only happened when a Saudi venture in news media between Saudi-owned ORBIT⁷ and the BBC, which aimed to launch "BBC Arab-World Television", failed in 1995 because of a political controversy provoked by Saudi official interference.⁸ Remnants of this project were recuperated by the Qatari government, and Aljazeera was born in November 1996.

Aljazeera started as a hybrid private-state entity, emulating the British-style format of the BBC. Aljazeera adopted an aggressive journalistic culture by investigating sensitive political, social, economic, and religious issues. This approach revolutionized news journalism in the Middle East. As a result, Aljazeera became the leading transnational satellite channel in the

⁶ Examples included the Middle East Broadcast Corporation (MBC) (1991) and The Arab Radio and Television (ART) (1994). These channels are entertainment-oriented and broadcast movies, soap operas, sport events etc.

⁷ Orbit was founded by Saudi Prince Khaled bin Abdullah bin Abdel-Rahman, a cousin of late King Fahd.

⁸ This project was unilaterally revived by the BBC in 2007, and thus BBC Arabic was launched in 2008.

Middle East with an estimated 70 million viewership. However, Aljazeera's funding by the Qatari government has always been perceived as a potential challenge to complete editorial independence, even if the space of freedom at the station is considerable. Aljazeera's journalists – such as New Zealander Trish Carter - deny the existence of interferences of any kind from the Qatari government.⁹ The freedom that Aljazeera enjoyed in the past has created a lot of tensions between Qatar and other Arab governments. These reached the extent of recalling ambassadors from Doha (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Kuwait, Algeria, and Egypt). However, each time an Arab government complained to the Qatari government about a particular program on Aljazeera, Qatari officials maintained that they could not interfere with Aljazeera's editorial independence (Lage 2005).

Yet again, increasing pressures from the United States and Saudi Arabia (Qatar's powerful neighbour) in recent years has resulted in a swell of “no-go areas” confronting Aljazeera's editorial line. Indeed, the station does not provide critical coverage anymore of countries like Saudi Arabia (Worth 2008). In addition, the engineer of Aljazeera's success, namely its first managing director Mohammed Jassem al-Ali, was sidelined in 2003 following heavy pressures from the United States (Sakr 2007). Last but not least, a “soft editorial shift” more sympathetic to the U.S. agenda is reported to having been taking place in 2007, when a new pro-U.S. Board of Directors took over. This board “includes the former Qatari Ambassador to the United States, Hamad Al Kuwari and Mahmood Shaman, who are both clearly sympathetic to the U.S. Agenda in the region,” (Friends of Aljazeera 2007). This has resulted in a change in Aljazeera's coverage vis-à-vis the situation in Iraq, which has become apparently softer (Worth 2008). In addition, Aljazeera seldom addresses the internal situation in Qatar itself (e.g. the impact of the global economic crisis on the country's investments overseas). These examples show an increase of “no-go areas” confronting Aljazeera's journalists, and underline the influence of the political-economic environment of news media in the framing process.

⁹ In an interview with ABC National Radio, Trish Carter, who worked previously at the New Zealand Television TV1, and worked for Aljazeera English, denied the existence of any interference from Qatari officials. For the transcript of the interview, go to:
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/mediareport/stories/2007/1896785.htm>

Myths, narratives and deep frames

After reviewing the levels of framing and their mass mediated manifestations, it is important to identify types of frames. These can be classified into three kinds: deep frames, meso-frames, and story frames.

Deep frames

Within given cultures and nations, narratives, myths, and folk tales are the objects of official manipulation. It is therefore not surprising to find that myths are often researched in the context of media studies, and most particularly within the body of framing research. Myths are indeed a particular kind of image-making which affect perception and imagination. London and Weeks (1982) illustrate the importance of myths. According to them:

Myth is an idea that occurs in a particular space and time and which provides a symbolic representation for social action. It may be observed as a naïve view of reality, as poetic imagination or truth. But whatever the nature of the perception, myth invariably contains a cherished memory that captivates the imagination (London & Weeks 1982: xii).

Roland Barthes is a philosopher who wrote extensively about the making of myths. In *Mythologies*¹⁰, Barthes used a semiotic approach to analyse popular culture and the formation of societal consciousnesses. He was particularly successful in exposing and demystifying the myths surrounding societies in general, although most of his comments were about France in the 1950s. For Barthes:

Myth is a type of speech; *everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse*. Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message: there are formal limits to myth; there are no “substantial ones”. Everything then can be a myth? Yes I believe this, for the universe is infinitely fertile in suggestions. Every object in the world can pass from a closed, silent existence to an oral state open to appropriation by society, for there is no law, whether natural or not, which forbids talking about things (Barthes 1972: 109; emphasis added).

So, in accordance with Barthes’ definition, myths represent a type of speech that is carried by a discourse. By speech, Barthes meant all modes of representation written, oral and visual

¹⁰ This book was first published in French in 1957. It was then translated and published in the UK by Jonathan Cape in 1972. This book is an important case study because it considers imperialism and colonialism not just Western capitalism.

(Barthes 1972: 110). The importance of Barthes' approach lies in the fact that a myth constructs forms of representation which are distinguishable from overt ideologically-loaded arguments. Myths are constituted by commonly accepted, routine lines of thinking. As an example, Barthes analysed a picture circulated by French colonial authorities portraying a Senegalese soldier showing his devotion to the French flag. For Barthes, this picture perpetrated the myth of the subjects' equality under the French Empire. This in turn justified and legitimised the colonial status quo because it indicated that subjects, no matter what their colour or ethnic heritage, respect their "motherland" and in turn deserve respect under the rule of the French Empire. This image effectively obscures the reality of abuses perpetrated for and by French imperialism. For Barthes, the picture/myth is able to 'transform the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature' (Barthes 1972: 141).

This transformation of reality disguises historical and ideological presuppositions by rendering them as self-evident statements. French Marxist Philosopher Louis Althusser noted this when he distinguished between two kinds of state apparatuses: Ideological state apparatuses (ISA), which include social bodies such as family, schools, religious establishment and media; and repressive state apparatuses (RSA), which include institutions such as the military and the police, which use force at the service of the state (Stevenson 2002). The former are adept in using modes of representation (myths, values etc.) to naturalize the social positioning and individual experiences of any given individual in a capitalist society. The combination of myths and ideologies give individuals the impression that they are in control of their values and beliefs, whereas the reality is that they are subjects formed through social processes, which instil in them sets of values, beliefs and norms (Stevenson 2002: 150).

The combination of myths constitutes culture, because culture is essentially "a signifying system"¹¹. In fact, Stuart Hall considered television and national culture as having a causal relationship, where one causes or produces the other (Hall 1992). Television thus contributes to the spread and preservation of dominant ideologies. The latter constitute 'the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation' (Hall 1996: 26). The circulation of mythologies and ideologies through mass media and television constitute what is often referred to as deep frames. These 'represent an internalized power structure, a deep-rooted belief system or a shared culture in a society'

¹¹ Culture is considered here a "signifying system" following Raymond Williams' definition. See: Williams, R. (1995). *The Sociology of Culture*. University Of Chicago Press p.13

(Hyun 2004). They represent 'the stock of commonly invoked frames...exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a social grouping' (Entman 1993: 53). Deep frames involves a multitude of ideological, political and cultural contexts, and their fusion produces images, from which individuals picture the world in their heads, and construct their conception of "us" and "them" (Kellner 1995).

There are many examples of deep frames, but for this research two are of particular relevance, namely the Orientalist frame and the terrorist frame.

1 The Orientalist frame

The origins and development of Orientalism will be detailed in chapter three. Here it is sufficient to note that Orientalism was a discourse in the service of power that used the rhetoric of "otherness" to justify political, economic and military imperialism. Western constructions of the Orient produced an underlying discourse, which positioned Eastern cultures and religions as inferior to the West.

While the Orientalist discourse can be traced to medieval times, research suggests that its presuppositions have permeated the American news media in the past few decades (Said 1981; Suleiman 1988; Kamalipour 1995; Wolfsfeld 1997). A similar pattern can be discerned in Western cinema and popular culture (Shaheen 2001). Orientalist clichés about Islam and Muslims regularly find their way to a worldwide audience through mass media. Audiences are constantly reminded of the backwardness, brutality and irrationality of everything that is Arab or Muslim (Karim 2000).

In the aftermath of the suicide attacks of 11 September 2001, the Orientalist frame was used by Western media to interpret Al Qaeda's attacks as an expression of the supposed clash between Western and Islamic civilization. The Orientalist worldview often permeated the media through the assessments of counter-terrorist experts (Puar and Rai 2002). Acts of violence emanating from Arab or Muslim groups were subsequently interpreted through the Orientalist prism, regardless of any social, political or economic analysis, as "Islam versus Christendom" (Ahmed 2003). It shall be noted that Orientalists reduce the phenomenon of the Islamic revival to issues of "fundamentalism" and "terrorism." Putting all Islamist¹²

¹² Islamism is a set of ideologies holding that Islam is not only a religion but also a political system; that modern Muslims must return to their roots of their religion. One of the early Islamist organisations is the Muslim

movements in the same mould is an Orientalist fallacy because these movements do not adhere to a uniform global ideology. In reality, they constitute clusters of different social groups with different social agendas and often rival ideologies.

Orientalists like to assume that the rise of the Islamist ideology indicates the incompatibility of Islam with modernity (Smelser 1963). However, other perspectives link the spread of Islamist movements to frustrations in relation to booming demographics, urbanization, and industrialization (Kepel 1993). Some academics connect the spread of Islamism to Western imperialism in the Middle East. For instance, Abbas Amanat notes that since the end of World War Two:

The area extending from Egypt to Turkey in the west and to Afghanistan in the northwest and Yemen in the south has suffered at least ten major wars—and that's not counting the U.S. engagement in Afghanistan [and Iraq] after September 11. Casualties have run into the millions. . . . The transforming effects of these crises haunted the last several generations in the Middle East (Amanat 2002: 28).

Even so, countering Western interference in Middle Eastern politics is not the first preoccupation of most Islamist groups. Instead, their first concern is to provide their constituencies with social and educational services along with economic institutions, such as investment companies and credit unions. In some instances (e.g. Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Algeria, Yemen, Egypt, Indonesia, and Malaysia), politically-active Islamist groups participate in elections, even when authoritarian regimes have no respect for democratic outcomes (Ghadbian 2000: 77). The tiny minority within the Islamist prism who espouse political violence are known as the Jihadist groups. Their appearance since the late 1980s resulted from U.S. foreign policy in the region. Of special significance was the American military presence near Muslim holy sites in the Arabian Peninsula (Bergen 2002: 100–101). Another major grievance is the perceived Western bias in favour of Israel (Bergen 2002: 21). The U.S. led wars (in 1991 and 2003) against Iraq and the intervening sanctions against the civilian population are also thought to have fuelled the anger of these movements (Bergen 2002: 22, 98).

However, such background considerations tend to be disregarded by the Orientalist perspectives of counter-terrorist experts. The latter, as primary news sources, influenced news

Brotherhood, which was founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna (1906 –1949), who was an Egyptian social and political reformer.

narratives, which failed to provide a nuanced and contextual understanding of Islamist movements (Karim 2002: 154). Consequently, past imagined narratives and ancient myths become connected to contemporary populations in the Middle East. Islam and Arabs were fashioned as a single cultural entity, without internal complexities, and most importantly as a perpetual threat to the Western world.

Putting blame upon entire Muslim populations for the deeds of a tiny –yet violent- minority has been a longstanding objective of Orientalists and Orientalism. This occurs when the news media use the label “Islamic terrorism.” Such a label is problematic because violence perpetrated by some Muslims cannot be considered as “Islamic”, as violence is not part of the essential metaphysical, religious or spiritual dimension of the Islamic faith. These acts cannot even be characterised as “Muslim terrorism” since terrorism is not a cardinal feature of Islam. It is true that Muslim people engaging in political violence may be labelled “Muslim terrorists”, but this could be done only if Christians, Jews, and others indulged in political violence are similarly labelled by the media. Such is not the case as numerous instances show. For example, Ultra-conservative Baruch Kappel Goldstein perpetrated the 1994 Cave of the Patriarchs massacre in the city of Hebron, murdering 29 Muslims at prayer in the Ibrahimi Mosque and wounding another 150 in a shooting attack. Yet, no mention of “Jewish terrorism” featured in Western media. A few months afterwards, Timothy James McVeigh and his associates perpetrated the Oklahoma City bombings in 1995. Yet, they were never referred to as “Christian terrorists” even though they belonged to extremist Christian militias (Karim 2000).

The suicide attacks of 11 September allowed Orientalists to present their perspective as accurate. While Al Qaeda sought to conduct a spectacular operation, their “propaganda of the deed” allowed the Orientalist discourse to influence news agendas especially in Western countries. Notions of chaos, violence and irrationality were attributed to the Oriental other, while the self was positioned as a teacher of democratic values. In this way, Western violence (even when disproportionate and astray in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia etc.) has been justified to a global audience.

The terrorist frame

The constant efforts made to link Islam and terrorism show the connection between the Orientalist and terrorist frame. The latter is another deep frame that is commonly used to

mobilise media bias against internal and/or external foes. While I detail the discourses on terrorism in chapter three, an overview of the terrorist frame is relevant here.

Historically, terrorism as act has been used since ancient times. As a tactic, terrorism was used by revolutionaries seeking power, as well as by governments seeking to maintain power. However, the term “terrorism” as such was first employed in the context of the French revolution, when members of the English gentry, such as Edmund Burke, labelled the French revolutionaries as “terrorists”. Ironically, Robespierre and the Jacobins did not consider the term as derogatory. It was an apt discussion of the revolutionary attempt to eradicate the previous monarchical power structures, and replace them with “democratic” ones (Oliverio and Lauderdale 2005: 153).

In England, Edmund Burke recommended purging the world from the “rule of the masses” (represented at that time by the nascent republics of France and the United States), under the pretext of terrorism.¹³ At that time, the aristocrat Burke recommended the launch of a military crusade to crush by force the emerging democracies, which represented a radical change in European power structures. A few centuries later, ruling elites’ responses to terrorism appear to have maintained a fairly consistent pattern. Annamarie Oliverio and Pat Lauderdale argue:

One of the most significant and ironic aspects to the nascent counter-terrorist intelligentsia is that their dominant ideas are structurally very similar to the prescriptions offered by Edmund Burke which he defined as terrorism. To be sure, weaponry is much 'smarter' and more deadly today than in Burke's time, but the dominant ideas guiding state definitions and policy about terrorism fundamentally have not caught up. In essence, there is little difference between the way the concept of terrorism is invoked in most contemporary democratic states' political discourses and the discourse of classic 18th-century intellectuals such as Edmund Burke (Oliverio and Lauderdale 2005: 161)

This state of affairs shows how the language of terrorism has become the deep frame from which to write 'the script for historical interpretations of national identity and political sovereignty' (Oliverio 1998: 6). By representing terrorism as illegitimate political violence contrasting with the legitimate force exercised by the state, ruling elites were able to reaffirm the legitimacy of the state both internally (against challengers of the status quo), and

¹³ Burke argued that these states were governed by a 'college of armed fanatics, for the propagation of the principles of assassination, robbery, fraud, faction, oppression and impiety' See: Ebenstein, W. (1969) *Great Political Thinkers*. New York: W.W. Norton. p.235

externally (against national liberation movements opposed to hegemonic foreign powers) (Porras 1995; Weinberger 2003: 65-66). According to Annamarie Oliverio and Pat Lauderdale, the existence of political violence reinforces the legitimacy of the state because it holds the monopoly of the use of force within its territory. Political violence is deployed to defer political, economic and social changes. At the same time, political violence helps to preserve existing interests by playing 'cultural constructions and socially organised processes, through symbolic forms' (Oliverio and Lauderdale 2005: 163)

By the late 19th century, the use of the term "terrorist" had become widespread. At that time, groups and individuals (primarily from an anarchist background) resorted to political violence against ruling elites as a way to express their grievances. Anarchist violence spread in Europe following the repression of the Paris Commune in 1848. As a result, anarchist militants became particularly potent in Tsarist Russia, where numerous acts of violence –including regicide- were perpetrated. These acts were replicated in France, Spain, Italy and the United States. As a result, the language of terrorism was widely employed by ruling elites to denigrate opposition to the status quo. By labelling violence as terrorism, the ruling elites committed an ideological act; state violence became a justifiable response, while a "terrorist" operation was turned into an act of gratuitous brutality (Meeuf 2006). The negative connotation carried by the "terrorist" label discredits automatically any individuals or groups to which it is affixed; it dehumanizes them, places them outside the norms of acceptable social and political behaviour, and portrays them as people who cannot be reasoned with.

After the suicide attacks of 11 September 2001, the deep frame of terrorism (or counter terrorism) defined the problem at hand. It diagnosed its causes, issued a judgmental stance, and suggested the solution (Entman 1993: 52). Unlike previous bombings, which had been framed as "criminal investigations"¹⁴, the 9/11 atrocities were defined as an act of war. The "war on terror" rhetoric depicted the 9/11 attacks as motivated by hatred of the U.S.A. for its freedoms and affluent way of life (McChesney 2002). This simplistic diagnosis followed the logic of mythologies, which selects and highlights certain aspects, while intentionally dismissing significant background information.¹⁵ Furthermore, the "war on terror" frame included a moral judgment of the terrorist as inherently evil. By linking terrorism with evil in

¹⁴ Examples include the bombings of the World Trade Center (1993), Pan Am 103 (1988), the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998) and the Alfred P. Murrah building (1995). See: Ryan, M. (2004). Framing the War against Terrorism: U.S. Newspaper Editorials and Military Action in Iraq, *Gazette*, 66(4), p. 364

¹⁵ This includes Washington's own covert and overt actions in the Middle East, which constitutes the primary cause for the prevalent anti-Americanism there.

contrast to expressions such as honour, trust, and faith, the nation states activities were justified. This moral judgment dehumanized the "evildoers" and made their grievances appear redundant. Indeed, terrorists were portrayed as monsters controlled by a malevolent force (Gunn 2004). The "war on terror" rhetoric also suggested a remedy, namely that the United States needed to step-up its military presence around the world, and to engage in a long term military crusade against "terrorism".

Robert Entman, who has long studied the process of framing, argues that the "war on terror" used by the Bush administration bought into play a powerful deep frame. For him:

the attacks of Sept. 11 gave the second President Bush an opportunity to propound a line designed to revive habits of patriotic deference, to dampen elite dissent, dominate media texts, and reduce the threat of negative public reaction, (in other words) to work just as the Cold War paradigm once did (Entman 2003: 424).

All in all, one can say that two deep frames characterised mainstream American discourse post 9/11: the Orientalist frame and the terrorism frame. Combined, both deep frames presumed a "clash of civilizations", whereby Islamic religion was positioned as hostile to modernity, and Arab peoples and cultures were stigmatized as violent. The Muslim World was deemed a permanent threat to the Western World; the logical solution was to "democratize," "modernize," and "civilize" the Muslim World through the use of force.

Contesting deep frames

Framing also gives place to "contests of representations" in the media, which constitute a "terrain of struggle" (Kellner 2005: xv). Indeed, it is common for ruling elites to create, use, and distribute hegemonic frames to reinforce their political power. These hegemonic frames often go unchallenged by other political contenders because of the lack of accessibility to mass media. However, sometimes those who challenge the hegemonic discourse gain a window of opportunity to provide their own counter-frames.

Contesting the Orientalist frame

The Orientalist frame, being an ancient deep frame, has been sometimes opposed and contested by competing perspectives. This happened particularly during the context of decolonization. The emergence of the communist bloc in the aftermath of World War Two placed Marxist ideologues in the forefront of the contest against Orientalists. As a result, anti-

colonial discourse gained such momentum that it inspired revolutionary political movements (from Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam to Patrice Lumumba in Angola). At that time, leftist intellectuals, such as Franz Fanon¹⁶, criticized the contradictions of Western thought, which advocated values such as democracy, liberty, and justice, while legitimising imperial discourses and practices. These criticisms latter evolved into critiques of Orientalist assumptions, which were deemed to have poisoned international relations by entrenching perceptions of Western superiority and Eastern subservience. The most direct attack against Orientalism was produced by its mirror image; Occidentalism. The latter constructs a monolithic image of “the West”. According to Finnish Scholar Pekka Korhonen, Occidentalism represents the “Oriental” perception of the West. In this perspective, Europe is seen as stagnant and the Orient as dynamic. For Korhonen, the only difference with Orientalism is that Occidentalism is not affiliated with colonial power, and so it is more defensive than offensive (Korhonen 1996: 159–160).

Sometimes Occidentalism enables extremist voices which reject everything coming from the West. For instance, Zaheer Baber describes how some Indian scholars (e.g. T. N. Madan and Ashis Nandy) rejected western forms of governance on the grounds that they represented a foreign cultural ideology which denigrated true Indian society (Baber 2002: 748-750). Similarly in Iran, the influential Iranian intellectual Jalal Al-e Ahmad launched the concept of “Westoxification” in the 1960s in order to describe the poisonous effect of Western civilization on other cultures (Buruma 2004). These radical interpretations consider the West as a monolithic entity that is immoral and without spirituality, grown rich by exploiting the East. It should be noted that Edward Said has warned against using this type of discourse to counteract Orientalism because in his view “the Orientals” gain nothing by constructing their own stereotypic “Occidentals” (Said 1978: 328).

In contrast, there was another constructive and oppositional critique of Orientalism, one that relied on a “progressivist” framework. As I will explain in chapter three, Egyptian Marxist philosopher Anouar Abdel-Malek criticised Orientalist scholars for the role they played in perpetuating colonialism as a myth of progress. Against this, the end of colonisation could be positioned as a progressive development for newly emerging nations. Progressive anti-

¹⁶ Frantz Fanon (1925 –1961) was a philosopher from Martinique. He was a pre-eminent thinker of the 20th century on the issue of decolonization. His works have inspired anti-colonial liberation movements for decades. Fanon’s book *Les damnés de la terre* (the Wretched of the Earth) (1961) had a major influence on the work of revolutionary leaders such as Ali Shariati in Iran, Malcolm X in the United States and Ernesto Che Guevara in Cuba.

colonialism also addressed the cultural needs of local communities, by stressing the need to revive native languages. This progressivist critique of Orientalism was also associated with the prospect of greater political freedoms, employment creation and widespread education. Such ideals underlay the emergence of the Non-Aligned Movement in the mid-1950s. Asian and African states, especially, saw themselves as independent from old empires and the Cold War blocs of capitalism and communism.

The combination of progressivist thought and local nationalisms created favourable conditions for pan-regional opposition to Orientalist postulates and prejudices about non-Western societies. Pan-Arabism, for example, called for Arab unity and freedom from colonial powers. As I outline in chapter three, pan-Arabism's main promoter, namely Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser, called upon fellow Arabs to be proud of their culture, heritage and belonging, and to stand up against foreign rule.

Contesting the terrorist frame

Presumptions of legitimate versus illegitimate violence (including terrorism) have also been challenged. In liberal societies, the only legitimate form of violence has been that used by the state. This means that war against other states became the only legitimate form of organised violence under liberal political theory (Tilly 1990). In practice, however, political conflicts often happened within states, and at times they escalated to reach the level of armed conflicts (between states and non-state actors). In these cases, opponents of existing regimes mobilised their resources to change the status quo through violent means. For their part, ruling elites also assembled their resources, including political and rhetorical means. One aspect of such deployment is the use of the "terrorist" label against opponents. To contest this label, adherents of political violence sought to gain respectability through the use of alternative terms such as "guerrilla", "liberation army", "freedom fighter" or "armed struggle". For instance, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) used a terminology that represented the group as a legitimate army with military structures and ranks. In its statements, briefings, and publications, the IRA would talk about an "army council," "brigades," "battalions," "companies" and "active service units." Members [held] ranks such as "commander," "brigadier," "quartermaster" etc. IRA statements described members, who [were] serving time in prison for violent acts, as "POWs" or as "political prisoners" (Cooke 1998: 7).

However, the collapse of the communist bloc in the late 1980s and the prevalence of the capitalist model undermined the rhetoric of armed struggle. The representatives of the dominant perspective were able to set the news agenda, and with it the terms of reference. As a result, the media were flooded with highly unfavourable references towards legitimate national liberation movements, and those who challenged the social-economic status quo (Weinberger 2003: 65-66). After the attacks of 11 September 2001, military retaliation became the only option on the table, and other alternatives were disregarded. There were few references to international law and domestic legal measures as a way to punish the perpetrators of 11 September 2001. More often, 'legal responses were condemned as a failed policy that provided terrorists with too many procedural safeguards' (McMillan 2004: 391).

While later chapters detail media coverage of the “war on terror”, it is important here to note that this powerful frame was subsequently challenged, particularly after the Iraq War. When attacks against American troops increased after the collapse of Saddam’s regime, segments of the U.S. public opinion demanded the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq. Although these voices were not powerful enough to provoke a change in U.S. foreign policy, a contesting frame still managed to find a place in the mainstream media. This frame was triggered by an infuriated mother, Cindy Sheehan- whose son was killed in Iraq on 2004. She challenged the hegemonic frame of the conflict by protesting outside President Bush’s ranch in late summer. At that point, the predominant representation of the war was one that showed the U.S. military supporting a legitimate government against terroristic groups. However, the Cindy Sheehan story highlighted the human cost of the war. The continuation of the war in Iraq means more victims, and therefore more broken-hearted families. Cindy Sheehan’s reported actions and testimony invoked a pacifist-humanist frame, which opposed the use of American troops in hegemonic wars of domination. On this view, resources devoted to the exercise of American military power should be spent on healthcare, education, and other domestic infrastructure.

Outside the United States, the “war on terror” frame was openly disputed in the European, Latin American and Middle Eastern public realms. At the forefront of these contesting frames was Aljazeera. During the U.S. war against Afghanistan from October 2001, Aljazeera emphasized civilian casualties resulting from military operations, and gave screen time to Al Qaeda and the Taliban (along with those of independent commentators). The causes and consequences of American intervention were regularly debated in Aljazeera’s current affairs

shows. As I will illustrate, Aljazeera also drew upon a Pan Arab frame which projected a worldview promoting the resilience of shared religious and cultural values in the face of foreign domination.

Framing and globalization

Globalization is a complex phenomenon that has stemmed from the increase in movements of capital, finance, trade, technologies, social movements, and cross border movements. Held et. al. (1999) identifies four spatio-temporal processes which make up the globalization phenomenon: *Extensivity* refers to the global reach of regional events, decisions and activities. *Intensity* concerns the magnitude of global interconnectedness. *Velocity* refers to the pace at which ideas, goods, information, capital and people are disseminated on a global level. *Impact* refers to the effect of distant events, decisions or activities upon local circumstances (Held et. al. 1999: 16–21). In terms of consequences, globalization has generated a set of outcomes, which include the promotion of consumerism, privatization of public services, corporate deregulation, displacement of traditional nation-states by global corporate bureaucracies, and global cultural homogenization (Cavanaugh and Mader 2002: 19).

The trend toward global cultural homogeneity is a particular source for concern. John Tomlinson considers that contemporary capitalism is a ‘homogenizing cultural force’ which spreads a culture of worldwide consumerism (Tomlinson 2002: 228). Management science professor Theodore Levitt advocated an emphasis upon cultural marketing, as the world was heading towards “a converging commonality” because of increasingly uniform needs and markets (Levitt 1983: 42-43). Interestingly, this shift toward commonality was also observed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).¹⁷ MacBride and Roach highlighted the fact that this organisation promoted international collaboration to advance ‘the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication and to that end recommend the free flow of ideas by word and image’ (MacBride and Roach 2000: 287).

From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, several UNESCO members argued for a more democratic information order, in which global media representations would be more equitable. This plea was expressed in the MacBride Commission, a UNESCO panel chaired

¹⁷ Founded in 1945, UNESCO has 193 Member States and six Associate Members. The organisation is based in Paris, with over 50 field offices and many specialized institutes and centres throughout the world.

by Nobel Prize winner Seán MacBride, which issued a report titled “Many Voices, One World” (1980). The “Mass Media Declaration” section of the report was formulated by Tunisia's Information Minister Mustapha Masmoudi. He considered that global news agencies gave priority to news from key Western nations at the expense of the rest. Moreover, four major news agencies controlled over 80 percent of global news flow, and a small number of developed countries controlled almost 90 percent of the radio spectrum. Masmoudi also expressed the frustration of Third World countries concerning the intrusiveness of satellite television broadcasting (Masmoudi 1979).

However, the move towards democratization of the media and a more egalitarian access to information was condemned by leading Western countries as a “communist” attempt to curb freedom media freedoms. Subsequently, the United States withheld its contributions from UNESCO in protest in 1984. Other countries, including Britain and Singapore, did likewise. All three countries pulled out from the agency in 1984 and 1985. Criticism of the UNESCO report had some substance. Some nations requesting a more democratic information order had a very bleak democratic record at home. In any case, the UNESCO call was ultimately rejected once the fall of the Soviet Union strengthened the West’s international influence. And, transnational corporations took advantage of this new geopolitical situation at a time when huge advances in information and communication technologies were enabling real-time delivery of information. The creation of such “complex connectivity”, has affected ‘people's sense of identity, the experience of place and of self in relation to place’ (Tomlinson 2002: 20). In these circumstances, major capitalist interests were able to shape mass consciousness on a global level because of their control over the media field (including television, radio, film, music, the internet, and other forms of digital media).

The fact that a few transnational companies control the ownership of a huge number of media outlets presents a clear danger to democracy. However, it should be noted that the majority of the viewers of global news organisations, such as CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, resides outside the United States. More than a decade ago, Robert McChesney noted that two largest media firms in the world, Time Warner and Disney, generated around 15 percent of their income outside of the United States in 1990. This figure jumped to about 35 percent by 1997, and is surely higher at the present time (McChesney 1997). For that reason, American-based global news networks do not present themselves as “American” but “international”. In fact, CNN

prohibited the use of the word “foreign” on and off the air. For them, no country, person, or language was foreign (Feist 2001: 711).

As a result, global television networks play an increasingly important role in determining policies and outcomes of world events (Gilboa 2005). As I will explain in chapter four, the term “CNN effect¹⁸” was coined to describe the response of world leaders to the pressure of real-time news coverage. Besides impacting on foreign policy, global news media has also changed the journalism business. Previously, there were three levels of journalism: local, national and international. Today, global news media changed the rules of the game by creating ‘a system of newsgathering, editing and distribution not based on national or regional boundaries’ (Reese 2006: 242). Furthermore, emerging technologies shrunk the size of broadcasting equipment and allowed greater mobility for crews and lower costs for the organisations.

An additional major change has been the real-time delivery of news coverage and the rise of the never ending news cycle. The ideological dimensions of real-time have been duly analysed (Hope 2006). Real-time networks of all kinds are essential features of contemporary global capitalism. In news media, this is reflected in the quasi-obsession with breaking news. It is true that journalism has long been associated with scoops and the need to be the first on a story. However, global news has intensified this process, to the extent that networks around the globe compete around the clock to get breaking news stories. Television news channels are also in competition with wire services such as Reuters, Agence France-Presse, and the Associated Press to break stories (Feist 2001: 712-713). This fierce competition has been extended to internet-based news organisations. These developments have transformed the roles of global news wire services. Today, news agencies produce pre-packaged news that is made available to journalists around the world through subscription. Such operations have been emulated by global television news organisations, such as CNN, CNBC, MSNBC, and Fox News Channel. They also make pre-packaged news available, alongside pictures and scripts for the use of other news outlets around the globe.

¹⁸ The term “CNN effect” became widely used soon after the U.S. intervention into Somalia (1992-1993). It describes the power that global media corporations have in terms of shaping the public opinion globally, and influencing decision-makers during times of international crises. Among the first scholars who analysed this term was Professor Steven Livingston in his book: *Clarifying the CNN Effect: an Examination of Media Effects according to Type of Military Intervention* (published by Harvard University in 1996).

Subsequently, news journalism increasingly reflects corporate, business-oriented culture. “Business-friendly” news artefacts have pervaded the media, inundating audiences with ‘advertising, infomercials, and other corporately sponsored current affairs programmes’ (Hope 2006: 279 - 280). No place is left for deep analyses or in-depth thematic coverage, and the overriding priority is low cost news production. As a result, news is given an infotainment touch in order to attract and please all sorts of customers for the purpose of out-manoeuvring the competition. The resulting problematic was observed by Picard (1998). According to him:

Amongst the main problems associated with concentration and commercialization are the uses of media for the political purpose of their corporate owners, the homogenization of news and emphasis place on mainstream voices, cross promotion of communication products and services and the increasing reliance on celebrity even in news and public affairs (Quoted in Graber, McQuail & Norris 1998: 208)

Hence, ethnocentrism and vivid representations are increasingly associated with news in general and especially international news (Lee et al. 2002: 2; Said 1997; Wolsfeld 1997). Given the global reach of global media, the cultural ethnocentrism conveyed in its programs is projected onto the global stage. This situation has numerous consequences in terms of news production. Among the most obvious are the domestication of the global news, the globalizing of the local news, and the contra-flow phenomenon:

- **“Domestication” of global news**

The production of global television news has generated debate between scholars and journalists. One concern is the fact that information from global news media undermines local and national broadcasters’ capacity to cater for the needs of local and distinct audiences (Masmoudi 1979; Mowlana 1986). On the other hand, detractors of such an approach provide the counterargument that global news is somewhat tailored to meet the unique demands of each culture, especially through the process of “domestication”. Domestication of global news happens through discursive means; events happening in faraway places are interpreted through the prism of “local knowledge” (Geertz 2000). In this context, news journalists participate in fitting news with frames of reference –both cultural and political- that are already in place for domestic audiences (Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh 1991). As Gans observed, journalists translate ‘information into news, they frame it in a national context, and thereby bring the nation into being’ (Gans 1979: 298). Lee et al. summarise well this condition:

In reporting foreign stories, correspondents naturally turn to their personal frame of reference based on their upbringing and their understanding of comparable events, historical antecedents, and equivalent concepts in their home culture. They make direct or indirect comparisons, draw analogies, and use metaphors or similar historical allegories to illuminate the ramifications of the foreign event on their home country' (Lee et al 2002: 47)

Not all events attract equal coverage; in particular countries certain events will attract more coverage than others. In an early study investigating the correlation between media coverage and international power, Immanuel Wallerstein distinguished between central, semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. For Wallenstein, the central nations were the United States, Britain and the Western powers; semi-peripheral nations included Canada, Australia, Japan; whereas the rest of the world belonged in the periphery. Wallerstein argued that media belonging to the first group defined the news agenda and controlled news media discourse. The latter group in particular was bombarded by incoming flows of words and images (Wallerstein 1976: 461-479). Against this backdrop, Galtung and Vincent observed that 'reporting about the periphery countries will be not only scant and quantitatively insignificant, but also highly negative, and even more so for news about periphery people in periphery countries' (Galtung & Vincent 1992: 8-9). Similarly Robert Stevenson and Donald Shaw noted that 'nations considered more like us in terms of economic philosophy, political system, values, languages, and so forth tend to be evaluated more favourably relative to those least like us' (Stevenson and Shaw 1984: 88).

To a large extent, contemporary reporting about foreign countries still originates from central nations. The latter dictate the range of news agendas and impose representations of foreign nations in accordance with the global dominant discourse (Lee et al. 2002: 171). Hence, the "domestication" of global news is believed to reinforce the existing geo-political hegemony (Thussu 2002: 205).

- **Globalizing the local**

Globalizing the local is the second facet of global news' hegemony. It has been widely acknowledged that news discourse creates feelings of identity and common belonging (Anderson 1991). It lets people relate to each other due to shared interpretations of common experiences (Fishman 1980). Because American news media, whether in print (New York

Times, Washington Post, Time, Newsweek et al), or in television (CNN, Fox, ABC, CBS, NBC) largely sets the news agenda on a global level, the ensuing coverage carries primarily an American point of view. Hence, it is imbued with core social values and dominant ideologies from the United States. Consequently, the exercise of hegemony becomes extrapolated from the national level (i.e. within the United States) to the global sphere, “radiating” global audiences in the process, leading to the creation of a “global imagined community” or a “global consciousness” (Robertson, 1992), albeit one with strong American inclinations. As such, global news media play the role of “global cultural actors” i.e. ‘producers and messengers of meanings, symbols, messages’ (Schudson 2003: 24).

This state of affairs reflects the fact that the world is dependent on Western technology, investment, advertising, and content. Capitalism and consumerism have been heavily promoted at the expense of the cultural values of peripheral and semi-peripheral nation-states. As Thussu has noted, U.S. media dominance prevails because of the investments and partnerships made by their media players in foreign media. Additionally, the prevalence of a hegemonic system favours American formats of advertising, genre, content, and ideology (Thussu 2000: 167-188). Due to its technological superiority, and the massive economy of scale it achieves in producing mass-news, American based corporate media continues to dominate the field, and shapes national cultural identities over the rest of the world. This process ultimately influences how peripheral and semi-peripheral populaces represent themselves, their communities, nations, as well as their construction of “others”.

- **Contra-flow**

However, hegemony is not absolute and opportunities occasionally arise for contenders to put their counter-frames across. Thus, attempts to counter the hegemonic information flow on a global level continue to take place. Those attempts have been defined by some theorists under the framework of “contra-flow” theory. This term has been defined as the non-western media flow that counters the previously established one-way western information flow to non-western countries (Azran 2004). Since the mid-1990s, there has been a burgeoning media activity in the non-Western world emanating from the so-called third world countries. For example, ZEE News (an offshoot of ZEE-TV) targets the expatriate Indian community worldwide; teleSUR is a pan-Latin American television network based in Venezuela; Globo News (subsidiary of TV Globo International, the major Brazilian television company) which operates in many world regions; CCTV (in Mandarin) and CCTV 9 (in English) provide the

Chinese perspective on international news for audiences worldwide. Most prominently, Aljazeera represents a non-American, non-Western news perspective for Middle Eastern audiences.

The emergence of those new voices on the world stage has undeniably disrupted the near-monopoly traditionally enjoyed by American corporate media. Contra-flows have also given a voice to the voiceless; people of peripheral countries that were constructed in accordance with dominant Western discourses. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington, ruling elites in the United States were disturbed by the availability of alternative media voices. The attempt to frame those attacks along Orientalist lines (as being motivated by a hatred of American freedoms) was not internationally successful. This failure can be explained by the existence of very potent counter-frames in Europe, Latin America and parts of the Asia-Pacific.

In the Middle East, Aljazeera was the main source of counter-frames. It highlighted the civilian carnage and the desecration of Arab/Muslim sovereignty and heritage by American military imperialism. During the Iraq war for example, American audiences mainly watched frames that emphasized the bravery of American and coalition soldiers acting on behalf of oppressed Iraqis. Meanwhile, viewers of Arab news networks saw - for the most part - images of 'wounded and screaming Iraqi women and children; captured or terrified Iraqis' (Hanley 2003: 6).

This clash of frames was not just about meanings and representations, it was first and foremost a major political encounter between two projects with global (or at least transnational) ramifications. On one hand, political and military elites echoed the neo-conservative commitment to pre-emptive war and ultra-expansion in the Middle East. On the other hand, the pan-Arab perspective opposed any foreign hegemony over the Middle-East. Aljazeera's articulation of this perspective provided an incessant challenge to the globally projected U.S. standpoint. This only enhanced Aljazeera's reputation of independence and professionalism throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even Europe.

News and information contra-flows can have a definite impact in the global arena. For example, Aljazeera's think tank, also called the Aljazeera Centre of Studies,¹⁹ organised in

¹⁹ The Aljazeera Centre for Studies was created in 2006 to fill the role of strategic think tank for the Qatar based channel. It aims to enhance academic research surrounding Arab media, as well as Arab strategic thought.

2006 a seminar entitled “Islam and the West: For a Better World”. This event, which was broadcasted live on Aljazeera Mubashir, gathered intellectuals from the West and from the Arab World from various political and religious persuasions.²⁰ All of them ridiculed the view that Islam and the West were engaged in a clash of civilizations. This position as proposed by Samuel Huntington was refuted on the basis of historical and empirical evidence.

Italian academic Fabio Rugge challenged the idea that the importation of Western values would modernise the Arab/Muslim World. For him, the Arab World - like other non-Western nations - suffers from the “curse” of importing ready-made political systems that were not readily suitable to local circumstances. Algerian intellectual Abbas Aroua criticised Huntington’s clash of civilisations thesis by citing numerous examples of Arabs/Muslims siding with Western/Christian forces against fellow coreligionists. He highlighted the fact that international relations are ultimately shaped by national rather than religious interests. Aroua also noted the presence of numerous perspectives both within the Muslim World and within the West. He also urged people from all backgrounds to seek a “positive peace” based on conflict resolution rather than a ‘negative peace’ based on conflict settlement (the ending of violent actions rather than the addressing of root causes). For Aroua, positive peace was the prelude to healing collective traumas²¹, which were played upon by war-mongers from both sides (Aljazeera Centre of Studies 2007: 57-63)

The growth of satellite television and non-traditional media outlets in the Middle East means that Arabs can now see the world through Arab lenses; a shift which includes notions of common destiny and interconnectedness, but is also inherently opposed to colonialism and foreign political interference. In short, Aljazeera represents more than just another manifestation of media resistance. It underlines a “crisis in hegemony” experienced by the United States in the global arena.

²⁰ The event gathered many intellectuals, such as Italian Academic Fabio Rugge, French Philosopher Louis J. Cantori and Syrian Philosopher Burhan Ghalioun. The proceedings of this event were also published in a book. See: Aljazeera Centre of Studies (Ed.). (2007). *Islam and the West: For a Better World*. Beirut, Lebanon: Arab Scientific Publishers, Inc.

²¹ Aroua considers that violent acts that were perpetrated in the United States (11 September 2001), in Spain (11 March 2004) and in the United Kingdom (7 July 2005) have provoked “collective trauma” in the West. Similarly, massacres in Afghanistan and Iraq, the violence that continues to unfold in Palestine and episodes such as “Guantanamo”, Abu Ghraib also cause “collective trauma” in the Muslim World.

1.3- Related approaches to media constructions of reality

The hegemony theory

Numerous theorists have sought to explain the production of meanings for the purpose of cultural domination. Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is among the most influential, thanks particularly to his theory of hegemony. This term derives from the historical contexts in which Athens exerted its influence over other Greek cities. Gramsci employed the term to explain the failure of revolutionary movements in Europe in the early 20th century. Gramsci was able to analyse how, within capitalism, the dominant ideologies of ruling elites permeated national institutions and civil society. Gwyn Williams best illustrates Gramsci's position in this context:

By 'hegemony' Gramsci seems to mean a socio-political situation, in his terminology a 'moment', in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestation, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious, is implied (Williams 1960: 587)

In other words, hegemony according to Gramsci describes the complex ways through which the dominant order maintains control over ideas, creating a signifying system that expresses the values of the ruling elites. These values become "common sense" for the masses (Gramsci 1997: 258). Thus, control within capitalist societies occurs, not only through political and economic violence or coercion, but also through dominant ideology, which prompts lower classes to adhere to commonsensical values and myths.

Unlike other Marxist formulations of the class struggle, Gramsci did not portray the masses as duped, passive, and easily brainwashed by dominant elites. Instead, he considered hegemony as an ongoing process between dominant and dominated classes. Such process is conflictual, and thus its outcomes are at times subject to change. In Gramsci's opinion, the ruling classes push their ideologies downward, but this does not mean that there is no resistance from subordinated groups and classes. Instead, in given circumstances they may fundamentally reject political and economic orientations of the elites. Then, other and more coercive means may be implemented. Gramsci expresses this when he talked about the limits of syndicalism:

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed - in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic- corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical- political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity (Gramsci 1997: 161)

Gramsci's themes were adopted by British sociologist Stuart Hall and his associates of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham. Consequently, Gramsci's ideas were drawn upon to explain how generalizations and stereotypes attributable to the ruling class were reproduced through the media system. For Hall, the media constituted an "apparatus of signifying" i.e. there are always people, who whether by owning the media or by writing the texts, are in control of the way meanings are constructed (although this control is not absolute).

In a key paper titled "Encoding/Decoding", Stuart Hall argued that the dominant ideology is typically inscribed as the "preferred reading" in a news media text. But, echoing Gramsci, this reading is not automatically adopted by readers, as the social situations of readers/viewers/listeners may lead them to adopt different stances. As a result, Hall suggests three possible decoding positions: dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional (Hall 1980: 136-138). In the case of the dominant-hegemonic position, systems of representation, which are tied to ruling structures of power, are totally accepted by the viewer. With respect to a negotiated position, the dominant definitions are identified, but while some are adopted others are resisted. The oppositional reading identifies the dominant definitions, but rejects them in preference to their own.

The encoding/decoding model received its fair share of criticism. Some scholars noticed definitional ambiguities and the under-theorization of "decoding" (Nightingale 1996: 34). Others raised scepticism about the way a "preferred reading" could be established. For instance, Shaun Moores asked: 'Where is it and how do we know if we've found it? Can we be sure we did not put it there ourselves while we were looking? And can it be found by examining any sort of text?' (Moores 1993: 28). Nonetheless, one of the major contributions of Hall's model is that it 'situated structures of production, text, and audience (reception)

within a framework where each could be read, registered and analysed in relation to each other' (Nightingale 1996: 22). Furthermore, to Hall's credit, his understanding of hegemony as applied to the media was not absolutist.

Douglas Kellner (1990) summarized Hall's approach in this context. According to him:

The hegemony model of culture and the media reveals dominant ideological formations and discourses as a shifting terrain of consensus, struggle, and compromise rather than as an instrument of a monolithic, uni-dimensional ideology that is forced on the underlying population from above by a unified ruling class. ... The hegemony approach analyses television as part of a process of economic, political, social, and cultural struggle. According to this approach, different classes, sectors of capital, and social groups compete for social dominance and attempt to impose their visions, interests, and agendas on society as a whole. Hegemony is thus a shifting, complex, and open phenomenon, always subject to contestation and upheaval (Kellner cited in Gamson et. al. 1992: 381).

So, one can say that Stuart Hall considers the media to be a site for production of meanings, which involves a struggle over the meanings. The media does not constitute a means for imposing a deterministic fixed order. Instead, the produced meanings reflect a process of articulation. This process means that the media are involved in the making of a collective identity for the purpose of attaining a political end. This collective identity can be re-articulated again and again according to different historical conjunctures, for identities are 'not an essence but a *positioning*' (Hall 1990: 226).

The propaganda model

In the United States, studies undertaken during the 1980s by Daniel Hallin, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky revealed how the mainstream media tend to downplay dissenting news and opinion. For instance, in his analysis of the Vietnam War reporting, Daniel Hallin argued that a "reverse inverted pyramid" of news existed in relation to the Vietnam War coverage. The nearer the information was to the truth, the further down in the story it appeared (Hallin

1986: 78). Such a perspective was explained in depth by Herman and Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent* (1988). Instead of looking at journalistic conduct and public opinion as the main determining variables for media behaviour and performance, the media was seen to depend heavily and uncritically on elite information sources, and to act on behalf of elite interests. The propaganda model helps us to understand the complex relationships among the news media, political elites and the public in debates over American foreign policy. The propaganda model's utility was reinforced by media behaviour in the post 9/11 period, when the U.S. elites clearly set the news agenda, while media outlets failed to question governmental policy (Boyd-Barrett 2004; Miller 2004; Klaehn 2002).

The propaganda model identifies five filters as shaping the news media output, namely ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and ideology. Firstly, Herman and Chomsky argue that all mainstream media outlets belong to large business entities. Not only are major multinational corporations constantly acquiring broadcasting stations and media outlets, mega-mergers are taking place amongst multinational corporations, further exacerbating the phenomenon of media concentration.

The second filter points to the fact that advertisers want their ads to appear in a business-friendly environment. Consequently, stories colliding with their business interests are marginalized or excluded. Noam Chomsky further analyses this filter in other writings. For him, media corporations have inverted the equation: their primary business market is to attract advertisers and 'the product they sell is audiences, with a bias towards more wealthy audiences, which improve advertising rates'. In other terms, big media players 'are corporations "selling" privileged audiences to other businesses' (Chomsky 1989: 8). In fact, most newspapers contain more ads than articles, and sometimes these advertisements are even packaged into articles. In these circumstances, one can understand why the media becomes reluctant to run articles or programs that harm corporate and governmental interests.²²

The third filter or the reliance on elite sources when constructing the news has been well documented (Gans 1979; Sigal 1973). Government and the major business corporations routinely feed visuals and information to reporters. This takes the form of press releases, copies of speeches, reports, and press conferences. In this regard, Herman and Chomsky

²² An example of how this filter operates fully appears in the case of Bill Maher's show 'Politically Incorrect', in which he cracked some jokes about 9/11. Subsequently, this television show was boycotted by its major advertisers, and the show had to be cancelled, even though Maher apologized for being politically incorrect, precisely as the title of his show indicates.

observe that 'the large bureaucracies of the powerful subsidize the mass media, and gain special access by their contribution to reducing the media's costs of acquiring the raw materials of, and producing, news.' In the case of government agencies like the Pentagon's public-information service, Herman and Chomsky argue 'the subsidy is at the taxpayer's expense, so that, in effect, the citizenry pays to be propagandized in the interest of powerful groups such as military contractors' (Chomsky & Herman 1988: 18, 22). Furthermore, Chomsky notes that 'if you look at the sources reporters select, they are not sources that are expert, they are sources that represent vested interests' (Chomsky et. al. 2002: 13).²³

Another "filter" is what Chomsky and Herman call "flak," which literally means the bursting shells fired from anti-aircraft artillery. This metaphor refers to negative "public" responses to media stories or programs. It can take many forms, such as letters, phone calls, speeches, and lawsuits. The most serious forms of flak are related to institutional power. In fact, a number of elite-sponsored organisations have been formed for the specific purpose of producing flak. Examples include the Media Institute, Accuracy in Media, and Freedom House (Goodwin 1994: 106-107). The U.S. government also directly resorts to flak by harassing reporters, editors and media owners when they challenge the official line (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 28).

The fifth and final filter of the propaganda model concerns ideology. When *Manufacturing Consent* was published in 1988, the main ideology was anticommunism. According to Chomsky and Herman, this does not simply mean that the media held negative views on the communist bloc and its allies. Ideological pressure also marginalized anyone who challenged the political, economic and social status quo (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 29). Indeed, groups and individuals deemed too critical of American foreign policy, could be vilified and smeared by the media. So the ideological filter means the marginalization of voices that are not sufficiently in line with the prevalent view, and the limitation of debate within establishment choices. Despite the fall of the communist bloc, the fifth filter as control mechanism is still

²³ A striking example of this practice appeared in the 2003-study conducted by the American media watch agency, FAIR, which analysed numerous news programs studied (ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, CNN's Wolf Blitzer Reports, Fox's Special Report with Brit Hume, and PBS's News Hour with Jim Lehrer). This study concluded that official voices dominated U.S. network newscasts during the War on Iraq, while opponents of the war were notably underrepresented. The study observes that nearly two thirds of all sources were pro-war, while 71 percent of U.S. guests favoured the war. Anti-war voices were 10 percent of all sources, but just 6 percent of non-Iraqi sources and 3 percent of U.S. sources. So viewers were six times more likely to see pro-war sources than anti-war one. When taking in consideration the U.S. guests, the ratio increases to 25 to 1 (Rendall & Broughel, 2003).

valid. Anti-communism has been since replaced by ‘a dichotomy of otherness’ (Klaehn 2002: 161). From the mid-1990s onwards, Islam filled the spot of otherness (Sciolino 1996: 4.1).

There are certainly shortcomings associated with the propaganda model, although it retains general validity. Herman and Chomsky concede that their model does not assume an explanation for the detailed workings of the mass media (Herman & Chomsky 1988: 304). Among the limitations of the model is the assumption that elites express solidarity over primary principles in foreign policy, and hold only minor disagreements over the way these principles should be acted upon. There are many instances in which differences among the elites are not "minor" (as presumed by the model) but major. For instance, the decision-making process leading to the 2003 Iraq War showed patterns of conflict between the different branches of the executive. There were many battles between the State Department and the Defense Department, as well as between the intelligence community and the White House over the proper course of U.S. foreign-policy. As elite opinions were divided, journalists were too. For example, some of the *New York Times* editorials were occasionally sceptical of the official reasons for going to war with Iraq, whereas inside articles perpetuated the official claims surrounding the weapons of mass destruction, and did not investigate those claims properly (Ravi 2005: 46, 60).

This deficiency in the propaganda model has been addressed by the “indexing model” (Hallin 1986; Bennett 1990; Zaller & Chiu 1996; Robinson 2002). Its main proposition is that the spectrum of debate in the news is a function of the spectrum of debate in official Washington. For that reason, critical news coverage of governmental actions would only appear in those rare moments when officials in Washington were publicly and vocally divided on core issues. On the other hand, news media have the greatest impact on the policy process when policy is uncertain. Daniel Hallin (1986) demonstrated the soundness of indexing in his analysis of the Vietnam War coverage. According to him, critical news media coverage occurred only after sections of the Washington political elite turned against the war. Hallin also developed the concept of three spheres: consensus, legitimate controversy, and deviance. He argues that news media coverage, taking its cue from political elites, rarely produces coverage within the deviant sphere, but rather either reflects ruling elite consensus or their internal differences of opinion.

Another supplement to the indexing model has been proposed by Robert Entman in *Projections of Power*. For Entman, the “cascading model” is a complex system, in which

issue agendas and story angles start at the top of the executive (the White House) and flow downwards, to the network of non-administration elites, then on to news organisations, to reach finally the public. The way the public reacts to those frames provides a feedback from lower to higher levels, and may lead sometimes to a frame adjustment. For Entman, U.S. Presidents exercise enormous power in framing public debate, while the media disseminate the dominant discourse, which means that non-elites have hardly any chance to contest the dominant frames (Entman 2004).

The propaganda model presents another imperfection: it fits the American situation best, rather than other political environments which may have a wider range of viewpoints across media outlets. Indeed, when Herman and Chomsky articulated their model, they based it on their observations of the American media system, in which 'money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public' (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 2). All their case studies were based on American media coverage and its linkage to foreign policy during the Cold War period. In fact, most of the examples cited were drawn from an earlier work done by Chomsky and Herman which highlighted the fact that human rights abuses perpetrated by pro-US regimes were downplayed by U.S. media (unworthy victims), while those committed by pro-Soviet states were overstated (worthy victims) (Chomsky and Herman 1979: 12, 37). In contrast, media behaviour is slightly different in environments where more anchored traditions of dissent exist, such as in the United Kingdom. Robin Burrett provides a good analysis of British media behaviour during the run-up of the 2003 War in Iraq. In his study, he found out that there were clear and significant differences among different media outlets regarding the legality and suitability of the war (Burrett 2004).

There is also an additional shortcoming associated with the propaganda model: it omits recent developments in military propaganda since 1990, especially the information dominance paradigm. While the propaganda model clearly recognizes the heavy dependence of the media on official sources, it does not conceptualize the emerging Psyops doctrines, which make the military and media networks virtually indistinguishable in times of war (Thussu 2003). The fusion between the media and military was first noticed during the 1991 Gulf War, when CNN featured live coverage from the enemy's capital, a new technical standard for media war coverage. The digital transmission of footage via cellular technology and mobile satellite equipment provided real-time coverage of military events. The Pentagon saw in these

developments a major opportunity; it allowed the targeting in “real time” of audiences with the desired message (Toffler & Toffler 1993: 171). Subsequently, the relationship between media and military was further strengthened during the 2003 Iraq War. In this war, the military leadership were as much concerned with how military power was captured by the camera, as it was with unleashing its power against the enemy.

1.4- Analysing frames: a methodological discussion

In the context of the discussion so far, this study seeks to firstly, analyse the mobilisation of media bias that occurred during the 2003 Iraq conflict, and to secondly, analyse media contestations of this bias. Framing research is the main analytical tool that is used for this research. Framing theory is very suitable for this study because it involves a close reading of the influence of institutional power structures on media content. Accordingly, it involves a close scrutiny of media sources, and the crucial role they play in shaping content. Sources define the issue and set the boundaries delimitating that particular issue. Furthermore, framing research allows the scrutiny of syntactic structures; discourse structures; visual representations; thematic structures (causal themes); and rhetorical structures (styles adopted by journalists and news programme procedures). Such approach uncovers the frames that project particular cultural values, military agendas and political orientations.

This study is conducted in three stages. The first aims at specifying the research topic and conducting a comprehensive literature review in relation to the main issues at stake. Hence, I have considered various works on framing theory, propaganda, media bias, along with works pertaining to deep frames, such as Orientalism and terrorism, which pervaded the mainstream media in the post-9/11 era. The theoretical issues were important to form the groundwork, from which an exploration of global media behaviour could be launched.

The second stage consisted of collecting material on CNN and Aljazeera. CNN was selected for this research because it is the perfect example of an American, yet global, news organisation. CNN reaches more than 150 million television households throughout 212 countries (TimeWarner.com, 2000). It is seen by many as carrying the U.S. hegemonic discourse, being referred to as “the war channel”, especially after its memorable coverage of the 1991 Gulf War. On the other hand, Aljazeera was selected because it is the leading transnational satellite channel in the Middle East, with an estimated 70 million viewership. Aljazeera became known worldwide for carrying an alternative discourse. Therefore, the

background of both television channels was reviewed, and the political-economy of both news outlets was examined. The larger picture that emerged enabled the researcher to understand the influence of institutional power structures on media content, and its crucial role in the mobilisation of media bias.

The third and final stage of this research consists of analysing news coverage from the two networks. In particular, I examined 24-hour live coverage broadcasts by CNN and Aljazeera during the first 42 days of the 2003 Iraq War. The coverage began from the start of hostilities on 19 March 2003 until the President Bush's declaration that major combat operations had ended on 1 May 2003.

Within the chosen footage, I critically compare CNN and Aljazeera's coverage of the following events:

- "The decapitation strike" (19 March 2003)
- The "shock and awe" campaign (21 March 2003)
- The U.S. bombing of Aljazeera's office in Baghdad and the U.S. bombing of foreign journalists in the Al-Rashid hotel (9 April 2003)
- The toppling of the Saddam statue (10 April 2003)

My general objective is to capture the competing and clashing frames of Iraq War coverage.

Levels of frames

The levels of frames investigated throughout this study are as follows:

1. Deep frames

As I have explained, deep frames represent internalized power structures which take their strength from deep-rooted belief systems within any given society. Obviously, dominant ideologies play a major part in constructing discursive artefacts, and are part and parcel of deep frames. It is a matter of fact that events are framed within ideological, political and cultural contexts to produce representations that construct conceptions of "us" and "them" (Kellner 1995). The deep frames analysed in this research are the Orientalist frame and the terrorist frame as transmitted in U.S. news media, and above all CNN. In addition, the deep frame that is conveyed in Arab news media, especially Aljazeera, is pan-Arabism, although

the relationship between Orientalism/terrorism and pan-Arabism is oppositional. The relationship between Orientalism/terrorism and Occidentalism is that of a mirror image.

2. Meso Frames

Meso-frames constitute the second framing level. Semetko and Valkenburg have distinguished a series of meso-frames, such as the conflict frame, the human interest frame, the economic consequence frame, and the morality frame. The conflict frame is predominant during times of war and conflict. This frame works in binary terms (good vs. evil, us vs. them etc.). It puts greater emphasis on ‘conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest’. The conflict frame includes numerous sub-frames, such as the military frame which focuses on military prowess in times of war, praises the power of military technology and the courage of the troops. The human interest frame brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event (Semetko & Valkenburg 2000: 95). This meso-frame is important because war coverage may focus upon the plight of the victims. This trend has been observed in the past, such as in CNN’s coverage of the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo. Aljazeera also emulated this pattern in its coverage of Afghanistan, in which it focused primarily on the human tragedy involving Afghan civilians (Browne 2003: 25).

From their part, George Lakoff and Alan Johnson identified another meso-frame, which they called the “metaphor frame.” In their approach to analyse discourse, they argue that 'human thought processes are largely metaphorical', in the sense that individuals tend to understand particular things in terms of other things, and convey these “pre-packaged” meanings to discuss a wide array of subjects (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 6).²⁴ The metaphor meso-frame includes numerous sub-frames, among which is the “nation as a person” metaphor. As will be indicated later, George Lakoff (2003) argued that this sub-frame is deeply ingrained in U.S. foreign policy. In his overview of recent military conflicts such as in Iraq, the U.S. official rhetoric conflated the war with this nation with war against Saddam Hussein.

3. Story frames

The third level of frames is formed by story framing, which is a storytelling technique that organises the story into a set of shorter stories. According to Kirk Hallahan, story framing

²⁴ The functions of conceptual metaphors were highlighted by Kimberly Fisher (1997). According to her, metaphors play a multitude of roles: ‘(1) they are a part of the discourse which develops in any given culture... (2) they highlight some aspects of an event or issue to which people apply a frame, while hiding others; (3) they organise experiences, values and beliefs of all members of a culture in a systematic and coherent way.’

involves: ‘(a) selecting key themes or ideas that are the focus of the message, and (b) incorporating a variety of storytelling or narrative techniques that support that theme’ (Hallahan 1999: 207). This process also includes a temporal element, which is built into the sequential ordering of events, as well as the mentioning of characters. Both are linked to one another and to an overarching structure (Jezierski 2004: 7).

Story frames are generally shaped to convey newsworthiness, which is traditionally determined by a set of news values, such as impact, timeliness, prominence, proximity, conflict etc. These values aim to attract the attention of the audience by giving meaning to events, and to translate particular occurrences into public events, so that they become socially and situationally organised. As Marilyn Lester observes, ‘framing stories is not a literal description of occurrences. Rather, it is an interpretive device for actually assembling the essence of the occurrence, as well as the written depictions thereof’ (Lester 1980: 992)

Patterns of language and imagery

As this research involves the scrutiny of competing and clashing news frames, it is important to draw upon knowledge in areas such as discourse analysis, keyword analysis, rhetoric analysis, visual semiotics, and narrative structures.

1. Discourse analysis

For the sake of practicality, I follow the definition of discourse offered by British discourse theorist Norman Fairclough. According to him, discourse is broadly speaking the ‘use of language as a particular form of social practice’ (1995: 54). But, in a narrow sense, discourse represents ‘the language used in representing a given social practice from a particular point of view’ (1995: 56). In the case of this research, this definition means that discourse analysis investigates not single texts, but the regularities, rules and conventions that are common amidst news texts. And because this study focuses on the coverage of satellite television channels, namely CNN and Aljazeera, the news texts that will be scrutinized consist of titles, bylines, “breaking” news strips and so on. The methodology used in this context follows the premises of van Dijk’s topical macro structures²⁵ (van Dijk 1988: 17). According to Fairclough, critical discourse analysis systematically ‘explores often opaque relationships of

²⁵ For Van Dijk, discourse analysis starts with the study of the text structure. Thus, according to Van Dijk, media themes are usually organised through abstract schemes of component categories. These categories, such as Heading, Brief Review, Main Event, Context and History of Event, are called a macrostructure.

causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes' (Fairclough 1995:132). More specific to the core of this study, Fairclough contends that media discourse analysis can illuminate representations, identities and relations. It particularly answers the following questions: How is the world (events, relationships, etc.) represented? What identities are set up for those involved in the program or story (reporters, audiences, 'third parties' referred to or interviewed)? What relationships are set up between those involved (e.g. reporter-audience, expert-audience or politician-audience relationships)? (Fairclough 1995:5)

2. Keyword analysis

This field, which is central to the analysis of news frames, was developed by Raymond Williams in *Preface to Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). This was a compilation of files on individual words, which Williams regularly updated from the 1950s onwards. In the first edition, Williams analysed 110 keywords, and an additional twenty-one entries were included in the second edition (1983). These keywords were selected according to their complexity, and their impact on major cultural debates, because keywords are central to cultural processes of understanding and negotiation.

Keywords thus hold an intrinsic importance, which is in turn reflected in people's vocabulary choice. In this context, Williams outlined five criteria that make a keyword: (1) it is currently used to articulate and negotiate meaning while also invoking authority from the discipline it originates from; (2) it is construed differently on different occasions of use; (3) it gives a recognised identity to social practices, beliefs, value systems, and preferences; (4) it is actively contested in social debates and arguments; (5) it is "part of a cluster of interrelated words" which form together the terminology for a particular topic (Durant 2008: 135-137). The latter criterion, namely clustering, is of particular importance for this research. Indeed, clustering means that there is a linkage between the different words, which relate to each other in a given context. The semantic interplay that results from clustering suggests the existence of a struggle between social actors over semantic definitions.

Therefore, in order to reveal the cues contained in the analysed news frames, it is very important to use cluster analysis, which focuses on the frequency and intensity of key terms in a given news text. This helps to get underlying meanings subsumed in "symbolic mergers" (Burke 1984: 232). Cluster analysis is a powerful tool when it comes to identifying the

meanings most central to the rhetoric. This method uncovers the meanings meant by those who use them. In the case of this study, the contest of news frames that happened during the 2003 Iraq War includes a repetition of certain keywords, which when clustered provide a fairly good overview on what the newscasters from CNN and Aljazeera meant.

3. Rhetoric analysis

Rhetoric derives from Greek *Rhema*, which can be translated as ‘public speech’. Rhetoric refers to any linguistic feature, whose main function is to persuade the audience to adopt a particular point of view. Rhetoric operates through devices appealing to a symbolic consensus based on common sense and the shared consciousness of audiences. In *The New Rhetoric*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that rhetoric’s primary objective is to have an effect on audiences by echoing their values, thereby disposing people to act, or bringing them to act. In their opinion, to focus on audience and to form a precise idea of the audience is the condition for achieving an effective argument (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 19-20).

On television news, one can say that rhetoric is ubiquitous yet more sophisticated than, let’s say, the printed media. Television, news ‘coats itself with the rhetoric of objectivity,’ ‘and newsmen consciously create the impression they “mirror reality”’ (Smith 1977: 147). This appearance of objectivity generates feelings of trust from the audience, and often the message goes unchecked. Such trust is further reinforced as the news media rely on panoply of technologies that reinforce their image of objectivity and factuality. Yet, when one takes a closer look, rhetorical strategies and techniques immediately suggest the existence of bias in more than one form.

In television news media, rhetoric operates through "interpretive packages" that are found in assembled frames. A package ‘offers a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame and positions in shorthand, making it possible to display the package as a whole with a deft metaphor, catchphrase, or other symbolic device’ (Gamson and Modigliani 1989: 3). Therefore, narrative structures and language choices are analysed, with particular attention allocated to presuppositions, lexical selections, stereotypes, quotation techniques

etc.²⁶ Further attention can be given to subtle rhetorical techniques such as the use of ‘metaphors, slow motion filming, sombre dress, tone of voice, graphics’ (Smith 1977: 148).

4. Visual semiotics

The aforementioned rhetorical techniques cannot be understood without again referring to the seminal works of Roland Barthes. He is one of the early contributors to the semiotics of visual communication. Barthes’ systematic model of signification concerns a process, which ‘binds the signifier and signified, an act whose product is the sign’ (Barthes 1973: 48). Barthes set up two orders of signification, which he referred to as denotation and connotation. Denotative signs are practically non-coded quasi-literal messages. On the other hand, signs are connotatively interpreted when audiences refer to specific contexts and/or backgrounds to decode the underlying meanings grounded on history, culture, or latent mythologies. It should be noted in this context that signs are strung together in codes as Stuart Hall describes them, or mythologies in the words of Roland Barthes. These codes or mythologies constitute systems of meaning that are shared by the members of a culture.

Besides denotation and connotation, Barthes discusses another level of analysis for visual semiotics, namely anchorage and relay. Both these notions are connected to the ideological settings that influence the production of the linguistic message. Through these concepts, Barthes offers a framework that conveys the contextual relationship between images and verbal text (Barthes 1977: 38). For Barthes, meanings of images are always related to linguistic texts, because without the support of language, images are open to all sorts of interpretations. He further explains:

All images are polysemous: they imply a "floating chain" of signifieds. Every society develops techniques to fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs. The linguistic message serves as one of these techniques (Barthes 1977: 38-39).

Therefore, Barthes argues that any form of language, whether it is a heading, a headline, or any other form of text or comment has the function of “anchoring” the desired meanings into

²⁶ For further information, see: Mumby, Dennis K. & Carole Spitzack (1983) Ideology and Television News: A Metaphoric Analysis of Political Stories. *Central States Speech Journal* Vol. 34 (3): 162-171.

the minds of the public, by directing the audiences' interpretations and handling any vagueness that may arise. Anchorage thus elucidates the visual meaning by allowing the creator of the media news discourse to control the production of the meaning (Barthes 1977: 40). Another Barthesian key concept is that of relay. Here, 'text and image stand in a complementary relationship; the words, in the same way as the images, are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level' (Barthes 1977:41). As a result, the verbal and imagistic constituents are complementary and both contribute to shaping the overall message in a relationship of reciprocity. However, anchorage and relay are not mutually exclusive concepts. They sometimes operate in parallel. In some instances the primary relationship between the image and the verbal text is one of anchorage, with some element of relay, or vice versa.

To sum up, the methodology used in this research in relation to the analysis of patterns of language and imagery is multilayered, encompassing discourse analysis (based on the framework of Fairclough and Van Dijk), keyword analysis (based on Raymond Williams' *Keywords*) rhetoric analysis (relying on the concept of "interpretive packages" as formulated by Gamson and Modigliani), and visual semiotics (rooted in the Barthesian concepts of "Anchorage" and "Relay").

Such a multifaceted approach provides a sophisticated framework for understanding the language, tone, and the meanings behind linguistic and visual cues, symbols and myths (as revealed in the content of the examined television news samples). Added to the other methodological tools earlier discussed, namely framing analysis. One can scrutinise television news context against the wider political economic context. More specifically, it is possible to reveal the interconnections between elite and political power, news creation, and the mobilisation of media bias, particularly during times of war and conflict.

Hence, the contribution of this research is in using the aforementioned sophisticated framework to uncover the workings of U.S. military propaganda in the context of the 2003 Iraq War, and showing how military propaganda practices worked in duo with framing processes adopted by American news media generally, and CNNI in particular. Similarly, Aljazeera's counter-framing of the American military propaganda, which undermined the legitimacy of U.S. military-media warfare on the global stage, is analyzed by using the same framework. The cross-cultural examination of how rival satellite television networks covered the same world event constitutes the originality of this study.

Chapter2

2- War, propaganda and the mobilisation of frames

This chapter examines how propaganda flourishes in times of war, and thus considers how propaganda campaigns are symbiotically connected to the prosecution of war. The primary focus will be the Revolution of Military Affairs (RMA). This concept, which emerged during the Vietnam War and took shape in the 1990s, introduced information warfare as the new paradigm for military propaganda. The 2003 invasion of Iraq (and the opposition it generated) was the first real test of cutting edge information warfare techniques. The invasion and conflict happened in a media-saturated environment and involved the mobilisation of deep, meso and story frames against formidable counter constructions of meaning. Although manipulation and distortion of facts have always been central to warfare, the RMA gave unprecedented attention to media and communication as a militarised space.

Finally, this chapter discusses how frame mobilisation might conceivably be countered in a warfare situation. An important precondition in this respect is a functioning public sphere counterpoised to the practices of propaganda and information warfare. As originally envisioned by Jurgen Habermas, the concept of the public sphere allows citizens to foster political debate and political action. In this context, critical journalism – based on speaking the truth to power – can serve as an anti-propaganda resource. And because propaganda is necessarily linked to processes of othering (as with the Orientalist frame, or its mirror image the Occidental frame), critical journalism and oppositional public spheres give voice to marginalised “others”.

2.1 - Military propaganda and psychological warfare

Two thousand years ago, Sun Tzu's²⁷ *Art of War* emphasised the need to subdue the enemy without fighting. He thus revealed the centrality of propaganda within military thought, since ultimately, victory or defeat resides in the mind. This view was shared by a third century Chinese military theoretician, who stated that ‘in military actions, attacking minds - that is the primary mission; attacking fortifications, that is a secondary mission. Psychological war is the

²⁷ Sun Tzu (personal name Sun Wu), a military strategist and general who served the state of Wu near the end of the spring and autumn Period (770–476 BC).

main thing, combat is secondary' (Thomas 1999: 23). Reliance on deception was common in ancient history. Thus, Alexander the Great would try to weaken the leadership and morale of his foes, by killing or capturing the enemy king as soon as possible. Likewise, Genghis Khan gave priority to disinformation, by emphasising local agents as a fifth column ahead of his advancing troops. They would spread rumours amongst the local people, convincing them of the invincibility of Khan's army. They also convinced the locals that Khan and his troops would give lenient treatment to those who surrendered. The tactics were successful, as Khan Armies' conquered large areas of the world (Owen 1978: x, xi).

In the modern age, during World War One, the axis powers employed propaganda strategies with some success. For instance, Austrian leaflets and agent provocateurs undermined Italian morale immediately preceding their disastrous defeat at Caporetto in 1917. On the Allied side, Britain's first Ministry of Information (MOI) was established, and concerted propaganda activities were led by Lord Northcliffe, the founder of modern popular journalism, and the owner of *The Daily Mail* and *The Times*. The Allies' psychological warfare was especially effective against the polyglot Austrian army. Their cohesiveness was shaken by the dissemination of anti-Austrian national feeling among Magyars, Czechs, Poles, and other peoples serving as soldiers. And, at the close of the First World War, many Germans concluded that British military propaganda had significantly contributed to their defeat.²⁸

During World War Two, military propaganda became more sophisticated. The term psychological warfare itself entered the modern military lexicon as a 1941 translation of the German term *Weltanschauungskrieg* (literally worldview warfare). The activation of this concept has been described as 'the scientific application of propaganda, terror and state pressure as a means of securing an ideological victory over one's enemies' (Daugherty and Janowitz 1958: 12). For both the Axis and Allied powers, the development of mass radio communications provided exceptional tools to target both the troops and the civilian populations, alongside leaflets. Strategically, psychological warfare was employed to 'increase the fighting spirit of friendly populations, weaken domestic and international support for the enemy's war effort, and persuade the government of the enemy side to cease hostilities on terms acceptable to the friendly side' (Hosmer 1999: 218). To achieve such an effect, Psyops operations require professionals from different backgrounds with linguistic and cross-cultural skills, some military experience and area knowledge (often in the form of

²⁸ According to British historian Niall Ferguson, both German political and military officials, such as Adolf Hitler and General Erich Luddendorf, adopted this view (Ferguson 1998: 212).

educational, journalistic or business experience in the target nation). Psyops teams also include researchers with backgrounds in psychology, sociology and political science in addition to creative personnel such as writers, artists, photographers, and cameramen, who actually create the messages (Macdonald 2007: 39).

After the Second World War, numerous wars of decolonisation and liberation took place in which the psychological component was crucial. For instance, the Chinese leader Mao Tse Tung frequently asserted that ‘the mind of the enemy and the will of his leaders is a target of far more importance than the bodies of his troops’ (Blaufarb & Tanham 1989: 6-16). The use of psychological warfare was also the main component of counter-insurgency efforts. For instance, the British successfully waged psychological warfare against communist insurgents in Malaya (now Malaysia), and it was there where General Gerald Templer said: ‘the shooting side of the business is only 25 percent of the trouble, and the other 75 percent lies in getting the people of this country behind us.’ Through the Department of Information Services, new tools were used to carry an all-out psychological war. Using printed publications, radio programs and newsreels the government managed to reach people in rural areas where communist insurgents were the most active, thus denying them a crucially needed public support (Quoted in Stubbs 1989: 183). The French experience is vividly highlighted by Gillo Pontecorvo’s film *The Battle of Algiers* (1965), which realistically portrays the urban struggle between French troops and Algerian nationalists.²⁹ The latter mounted a campaign of terror against French settlers in order to force their departure. On the other hand, the French colonial forces relied upon state terrorism via torture, intimidation, and mass indiscriminate punishment against the population. The battle for the city eventually ended in 1957 in apparent triumph for French troops when they killed the insurgents’ leader and destroyed his network. However, insurrection continued throughout Algeria, and the French ultimately lost the war in Algeria because they had lost the battle for hearts and minds.³⁰

²⁹ The scenes of that movie represent the fierce and vicious battle that took place between the colonial French forces, under the authority of Colonel Mathieu -the character based on General Jacques Massu, and the Algerian guerrillas under the leadership of Ali La Pointe, who organised a network of armed cells and entrenched them within the Casbah, the Muslim section of Algiers. The strongest scene in the movie ‘The Battle of Algiers’ comes when three FLN (National Liberation Front) women wear Western clothes in order to infiltrate the European Quarter and plant explosives in two caf  s and an Air France ticket office.

³⁰ It is no coincidence that the Pentagon organised in 2003 a screening of *The Battle of Algiers*. Facing difficult times in countering insurgency in Iraq, they urged participating military and civilian experts to consider the issues at the core of the film – winning battles through brutal and repressive means without ultimately losing the war for hearts and minds. See: Kaufman, M. T. (2003, 7 September). What Does the Pentagon See in ‘The Battle of Algiers?’ *New York Times*.

2.2 - Military - media relationship: The U.S. experience

Before the 1960s, the U.S. military-media relationship had few major difficulties.³¹ In Vietnam however, the relationship broke down particularly during the 1968 Têt offensive. Although the Vietcong failed to achieve their immediate military and political objectives in this offensive (namely fomenting popular uprisings and assuming control within South Vietnamese towns and cities), the associated television coverage within America undermined public confidence in the war. Prospects for the U.S. military appeared to diminish (Hosmer 1999: 218). However, Daniel C. Hallin rejects this simplistic explanation. His extensive research into a major random sample of 779 television broadcasts from August 1965 to January 1973 revealed a different pattern. For Hallin, the media kept an 'intimate institutional connection' with the government in the early period of the Vietnam War, and thus heavily favoured the official perspective. The tone of coverage only changed when opposition to the Vietnam War moved from the fringes of society into the social mainstream including factions within the political elite (Hallin 1984: 19-23). From the military perspective, the presence of war correspondents, had advantages and disadvantages. They could persuade the public to support the war effort but negative reportage sapped the will of Washington's political elites and the morale of troops on the ground. Therefore, the Pentagon decided to change its way of handling the media. In the 1983 Grenada Campaign, media were simply excluded from covering the initial operations, provoking outrage among American news outlets. Consequently, a panel investigating the military-media relationship was established in 1984; they subsequently recommended the creation of a media pool system (Hill 1997: 10). This was designed to give a select group of journalists' early access to military operations. In the 1982 Falklands conflict for example, only twenty-nine journalists accompanied the British Task Force amidst heavy censorship measures (Taylor 1992: 116-117). This impressed the U.S. high military command. So when on 20 December 1989 President Bush Sr. sent American troops into Panama to oust General Manuel Noriega, a media pool system was employed. The Pentagon restricted the movement of the media pool by confining them to a U.S. base in Panama during the first hours of fighting. When they were released, the heaviest combat phase was already over (Soderlund et. al 1994: 597). This situation obliged the

³¹ During the Second World War, despite the fact that the U.S. military maintained a tight control on the media, patriotic feelings constituted a common platform for military and reporters. However, during the Korean War, reporters were no longer interested in merely conveying the official version of facts. This development prompted General MacArthur's decision to impose formal censorship. Yet this step was not entirely effective and numerous military operational details were leaked by reporters (Lafferty et. al, 1994: 7-9).

correspondents to rely on the Pentagon's pictures and information (Johns & Johnson 1994: 63-64)

During the First Gulf War in 1991, the U.S. military dealt with the media through a system of pools and formal briefings, whereby information was submitted to the public only from the Pentagon. Almost everything went according to plan. The press pool, which included about 1600 journalists in Saudi Arabia, ran smoothly. There was however a major technological innovation, namely the introduction of live war television coverage. The Pentagon was well prepared to make war a "staged event". Thus, the start of the air campaign was scheduled for U.S. prime-time television. American audiences knew through CNN that Desert Storm had begun; half an hour before the formal announcement by the Pentagon (Van Tuyll 2002: 234). President Bush Sr. was reported to be delighted, 'when the raid on Baghdad came through live on television at the time he had ordered it' (Taylor 1992: 32). The military arranged, months in advance, the types of stories the press would cover during the different phases of the campaign. The focus in the build-up phase was to be on personal interest stories concerning the deployed troops. Later, coverage of the air campaign emphasised the success and spectacle of hi-tech weapons deployment (Wolfsfeld 1997: 133). There were however a few false notes in the Pentagon's symphony. Peter Arnett on CNN undermined U.S. military propaganda, by referring to images of Iraqi civilians hit by American bombs and missiles. There was also exasperation from journalists, who expected to cover the war alongside fighting units, but ended up attending boring press conferences in which very little information was given. In the pools, military escorts accompanied journalists at all times, and often interfered during interviews with servicemen. Reporters critical of the military were blacklisted. For example, John Laurence, from the U.S. television network ABC, was refused access to troops after he reported equipment problems and ammunition shortages. One can speculate that if Desert Storm had not ended in such a record time (100 hours), the discontent of the participants in the press pools could have damaged media-military relationships.

Operation Restore Hope in Somalia was supposed to introduce new arrangements with the media, however difficulties arose from the outset. For many military commanders, the whole American intervention was implemented as a result of media pressure. However, a series of content analysis investigations (Livingston and Eachus 1995; Mermin 1997) subsequently criticised this view. These studies showed that both television and print media paid little attention to Somalia until the Bush Sr. administration took the decision to intervene there.

During operations in Haiti (1994) and Bosnia (1995), the military - media relationship was more harmonious. The press willingly complied with most of the military's operational security concerns, and adhered to the concept of "embedded media"; an arrangement that has a long history. An embedded reporter lives with a unit throughout the period of operations; in return he must not only respect soldiers' privacy, but also avoid reporting on anything that has to do with intelligence collection, special operations, or casualties (Porch 2002).

The Kosovo War differed from other 1990s conflicts, such as Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda; these were described as intra-state crises involving the collapse of civil society. By contrast, the intervention of NATO in Kosovo, much like the 1991 Gulf War, was portrayed in the media as the action of 'a "benevolent" West, led by the USA, liberating citizens from a dictatorship' (Thussu 2000: 345). Nonetheless, NATO still found difficulties getting this message across as it was constantly challenged by Serbian regime declarations, disseminated through the internet by Serbian citizens. They successfully put forward their version and interpretation of events in European and American chat-rooms and other discussion forums (Badsey 2000). Independent non-embedded journalists were also a source of concern for NATO. For example, Paul Watson (Los Angeles Times) and John Simpson (BBC) reported regularly on the effects of bombing on Serbian civilians.

2.3 - From Psyops to Information Dominance

At the end of World War II, the Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces, General Eisenhower expressed his admiration for the effectiveness of psychological warfare in winning the war (Gough 2003: 9). Classified U.S. governmental records revealed the scope of psychological warfare. It included measures, ranging from counterinsurgency to assassinations and covert operations. In short, it was all about merging violence and propaganda. In a memo written on 24 October 1953 by U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower to his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, psychological warfare is said to range 'from the singing of a beautiful anthem, up to the most extraordinary kind of physical sabotage' (Emorys 1997).

In U.S. military manuals, the tactical and operational side of psychological warfare "Psyops" emerged as a distinct sub-discipline. This entails the formulation, conceptualization, implementation, and evaluation of government-to-government and government-to-people persuasion. The purpose is to influence the opinions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviours of a

target audience. Joint Publication 1-02 of the U.S. Department of Defence defines Psyops as ‘planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning and, ultimately, the behaviour of foreign governments, organisations, groups or individuals’³². During the 1960s and 1970s, the United States military employed Psyops against Viet Cong controlled areas in South Vietnam. Messages in the native tongue were broadcast over loudspeakers, on the ground and from aircraft circling overhead. Millions of leaflets were dropped from airplanes, and posters were passed out to villagers in regions infiltrated by the Viet Cong. They were encouraged to give up their guerrilla ways, return to their villages, and give support to the (non-Communist) South Vietnamese Government. Although there were defections, success was limited. This has been attributed to tensions between Psyops practitioners and conventional commanders, who were sceptical of such practices (Jeffery 1996). Another plausible explanation was that the U.S. forces were ‘out-Psyoped’, since the American public’s will to fight was successfully weakened by North Vietnam and its allies (Valley & Aquino 1980). After the Vietnam debacle, the U.S. military commanders decided to widen its Psyops capabilities and objectives. Psyops was designed to reduce moral and combat efficiency within the enemy’s ranks; to promote mass dissension within and defections from enemy combat units and/or revolutionary cadre; to support cover and deception operations undertaken by U.S. forces and their allies; and to promote cooperation, unity and morale within U.S. forces and allied units (as well as within resistance forces behind enemy lines). The results were striking twenty years later³³ (Goldstein and Findley 1996).

In U.S. military circles, news organisations and television reporters were blamed for the Vietnam defeat.³⁴ During and after the Têt offensive in 1968, most correspondents portrayed Vietnam as a quagmire for the U.S. army (such that public support for the war was undermined). This latent impression shaped the U.S. military attitudes toward the news media for decades. The U.S. military media relationship was substantially reorganised in the lead up

³² Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: GPO, 23 March 1994).

³³ In the 1991-Gulf war, the U.S. forces waged an all out Psyops campaign. After dropping 29 million leaflets, and the considerable use of radio, loudspeakers and Commando Solo, 44 percent of Iraqi army deserted i.e. approximately 80,000 soldiers.

³⁴ An opinion poll showed that 64 percent of the military officers strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that “news media coverage of the events in Vietnam harmed the war effort”. See: Aukofer, F., & Lawrence, W. (1995). *America's Team, the Odd Couple: A Report on the Relationship between the Media and the Military*. Nashville, TN: Freedom Forum First Amendment Center. p.31

to the 1991 Gulf War. French cultural theorist Paul Virilio in *Desert Screen* (2002) analysed this process:

[The 1991-Gulf War] was prepared by a total control of the electromagnetic environment above Iraq, and by a complete jamming of telecommunications that must have made Radio Baghdad inaudible. It was necessary that the Gulf War begin, on the night of 16 January, with the destruction of the army's communications centre, situated in the Iraqi Capital, the laser-guided bomb launched towards its objective in total impunity by a 'stealth' airplane.

In this conflict where, for the first time in history, the various satellites played a major role, the control of communications outweighing the control of the geographical territory of the enemy, the five weeks of aerial bombardment demonstrated less the will to raze towns (as was once the case) than the will to eliminate the entire Iraqi communication and telecommunication infrastructure – the ground offensive itself becoming a simple formality, a sort of postscript to a "total electronic war" that was bound to influence all of public opinion, thanks to the control of the media by the Pentagon (Virilio 2002: 95-96).

In this war, U.S. military commanders saw the capacity of the news media to be a 24/7 wartime player. More importantly, the media as such formed part of the battlefield. As a consequence, military planners sought to make media spin a central component of wartime operations (Felman 1992; Aukofer and Lawrence 1995: 45).

The contemporary information warfare paradigm was pioneered during the 1991 "Desert Storm" campaign. To this end, sanitization was a major objective and outcome. Instead of allowing a realistic representation of war, the Pentagon provided infrared images of Baghdad with assorted flashes and lights. This positioned the war as an arcade videogame. As Steve Best and Douglas Kellner observed, 'the Gulf spectacle was "post-modern" because it managed to blur the distinction between truth and reality in a triumph of the orchestrated image and spectacle...[and]... exhibited a heightened merging of individuals and technology, previewing a new type of cyber war that featured information technology and "smart" weapons' (Best & Kellner 2001: 73).

In the United States and the Western countries, information warfare was premised on the fact that citizens were spectators of war rather than mass participants. Thus, wars are no longer experienced directly in the West; rather they are viewed from afar. Western populations tend to 'spectate from a safe distance, empathizing but not experiencing, sympathizing but not

suffering' (McInnes 2002: 55, 62). So, while the theatre of operations is situated everywhere, operational outcomes are partly decided in living rooms. From a military perspective this 'theatricalisation' requires the news spectacle to fit military plans and strategies. In fact, military organisations themselves seek to produce the spectacle by making it an integral part of strategic planning (Weber 2002). The military-devised strategies involve total control over information, or information dominance, in all theatres of war.³⁵ By the late 1990s, this concept had become part of the "Revolution in Military Affairs" (RMA).

The purpose was to boost the capabilities of the United States armed forces by creating smaller networked units equipped with information age technologies (Czege 2006: 16). In simple terms, the digital and communications revolution triggered a shift in military consciousness. Alvin and Heidi Toffler prefigured this change. In *The Third Wave*, they argued that the first wave of warfare was about control of lands, the second wave was about the control of productive capacity, whereas the third wave of wars is about the control of knowledge (Toffler & Toffler 1993: 141). Information dominance entered the military lexicon under different appellations. These included: Media Warfare³⁶, the use of media outlets including the internet to disseminate propaganda or support deception operations; MindWar³⁷, the deliberate, aggressive convincing of all participants in a war that victory is inevitable; SoftWar³⁸, the use of global television to shape another nation's view of reality; Neocortical Warfare³⁹, the influence over, and the regulation of, the consciousness, perceptions, and will of the adversary's leadership; Perception Management⁴⁰, the manipulation of information that shapes perceptions of reality; Orientation Management⁴¹, the manipulation of the information as both a target and a weapon. These multiple terms, often indicating the same practices, were

³⁵ This quest was further reinforced whenever there was negative media coverage of U.S. military operations such as Peter Arnett's Al-Amiriya coverage in 1991, or the Black Hawk incident that ended the U.S. military presence in Somalia in 1994. These episodes were disastrous for the U.S. military because of their impact on the American living rooms.

³⁶ Wheatley, G. and Hayes, R. (1996) *Information Warfare and Deterrence*, Washington DC: National Defense University Press. p.3

³⁷ Valley, P. E., & Aquino, M. A. (1991). From PYOP to MindWar: The Psychology of Victory. In W. Cooper (Ed.), *Behold a Pale Horse* (pp. 368-380). Sedona, AZ: Light Technology Publications.

³⁸ BBC, The I bomb, (video 30min, BBC Horizon 1995)

³⁹ Szafranski, C. R. (November, 1994). Neocortical Warfare? The Acme of Skill. *Military Review*.

⁴⁰ Molander, R. C., Riddile, A. S., & Wilson, P. A. (1996). *Strategic Information Warfare: A New Face of War* Santa Monica, CA: RAND. P. 22-23.

⁴¹ Stein, G. J. (1996). Information Attack: Information Warfare in 2025. In *2025 White Papers: Power and Influence*. Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press. p. 91-114

confusing. Academics added to the problem by coining their own appellations such as, Virtual War (Ignatieff 2000) and MIME Net⁴² (Der Derian 2001).

A central point of confusion was the blurred distinction between information warfare and information *in* warfare. The latter simply involves the use of information technology to instil combat operations with unprecedented economies of time and force. There was also confusion between information dominance and information superiority. According to Jim Winters and John Giffin, of the U.S. Space and Information Operations Directorate, ‘Dominance implies “a mastery of the situation,” superiority “only an edge.”’ For Winters and Giffin, ‘when dominance occurs, *nothing done makes any difference*’ this meant that ‘we have sufficient knowledge to *stop anything we do not want to occur, or do anything we want to do.*’ (Miller 2004b: 8) (Miller’s emphasis). Information dominance is a comprehensive concept. It includes operations, such as ‘the employment of the core capabilities of electronic warfare, computer network operations, psychological operations, military deception, and operations security, in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to affect or defend information and information systems, and to influence decision making’ (Sieting 2003 :56). In the ‘immaterial battlefield of perception,’ as Paul Virilio terms it, information itself becomes ‘a separate realm, potent weapon, and lucrative target’ (Whitehead 1997). This indicates that information dominance will involve at least three distinctive functions: ‘Perception Management where information is the message; system destruction, where information is the medium; and information exploitation, where information is an opponent’s resource to be targeted’ (Bellamy 2001: 61).

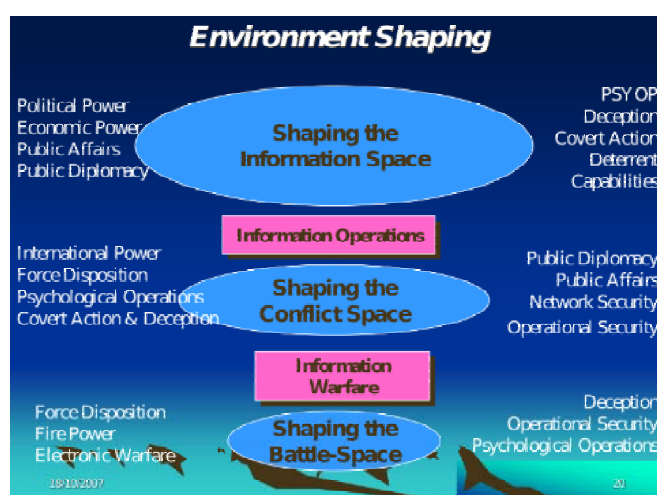


Figure 1: Information warfare and environment shaping (Dearth 2002: 8)

⁴² Abbreviation of the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network.

Undeniably, the information dominance paradigm surpasses earlier manifestations of propaganda. While traditional propaganda practices involve crafting the message and distributing it to government or independent media, information dominance requires ‘the gathering, processing, and deployment of information.’ This incorporates all other propagandistic activities conducted by the state, such as public and civil affairs, media relations and public diplomacy. This entails the integration of traditional propaganda and psychological operations into a much wider conception of information war. And information war becomes integrated into the core of military strategy (Miller 2004b: 8-9). In this regard, Bruce Berkowitz wrote that ‘today the ability to collect, communicate, process and protect information is the most important factor defining military power’. Having the edge in this feature is more important than armour, firepower, or mobility (quoted in Hiebert 2003: 244). This state of affairs undeniably blurs the boundaries between news and psychological warfare (Arkin 2002).

2.4 - Information dominance after 11 September 2001

Research has shown that the post 9/11 information environment was shaped by the information dominance paradigm (Hiebert 2003; Brown 2002; Taylor 2003). To understand this development, it is necessary to subdivide the paradigm as follows; Perception Management (information is “our” message); Information Exploitation (information is an opponent's resource to be contained); and System Destruction (information is the medium of the “enemy” to be destroyed) (Bellamy 2001).

Perception management

Perception Management is about shaping the Information Space in both politics and conflict. It involves practices which are truth-telling and truth-corrupting in the areas of operational security, cover and deception and psychological operations. This means that lethal and soft power mechanisms operate hand in hand. However, the overriding objective is to ensure the dominance of a certain interpretation of reality (Dearth 2002).

Following the events of 11 September 2001, perception management was contracted to the Rendon Group, a private public relations firm, which had promoted the 1991 Desert Storm campaign. They immediately focused on the 24/7 updating news cycle as a vehicle for shaping opinions. Rendon helped create Coalition Information Centers (CIC) based in

Washington, London and Islamabad, in order to monitor news flows from different geographic localities and time zones. The CIC also prepared daily press releases and responses, and commissioned opinion polling in the Muslim World. In addition, they sought to give key members of the U.S. administration a profile on major Arab Networks (Foer 2002). At the same time, the Pentagon authorised certain operations for their visual Psyops-effect. For example, in late October 2001 images of the U.S. Army Rangers parachuted into a Taliban airbase near Kandahar were broadcast around the globe. This operation was described by some senior military officials as a television show, designed to persuade domestic audiences and world opinion that the United States was winning the war (Campbell 2003).

The Rendon Group was also instrumental in setting up the Pentagon's Office of Strategic Influence (OSI).⁴³ This office coordinated the distribution of news releases and devised foreign advertising campaigns (as well as covert disinformation programmes designed to plant pro-American stories throughout the international media, even if they were false) (Campbell 2003). In February 2002, this plan was uncovered by the *New York Times*. Worldwide indignation and domestic political fallout was sparked by the revelation that journalists were involved in a large scale disinformation campaign. Because of this, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld was forced to abolish the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI) less than five months after its establishment. Yet the same programs and practices intended for (OSI) continued under other names, as the Pentagon was committed to the policy of coordinating perception management on a high-level (Fair 2002).

But this was not all; Middle Eastern audiences were targeted through the United States Broadcasting Board of Governors (B.B.G.) .This new broadcasting authority launched Radio *Sawa*, an Arabic entertainment and news station in March 2002. Its mix of Western pop music, sports, weather, and short newscasts, was designed to influence the perceptions of younger Arabs concerning the "American way of life".

Information exploitation

This covers a wide range of actions, such as withholding information, omission, and censorship. These measures intensify during battlefield situations. For example, during the

⁴³ The New York Times reported in 19 February 2002 that the Pentagon was using the Rendon Group to assist its new propaganda agency, the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI). See: (Dao & Schmitt 2002: A1, A10).

Afghanistan campaign when reports emerged that U.S. military actions had caused civilian fatalities, the Pentagon immediately bought exclusive rights to high resolution satellites photos. This prevented the circulation of embarrassing photographic evidence (Campbell 2001).

The U.S. administration stepped up its censorship measures, to the point where Condoleezza Rice requested American news outlets to be 'very careful about what they say' (Schechter 2002). The mainstream media zealously complied with those directives, and became in many instances mere transcribers of official utterances. Journalists did not challenge the official pro-war line, or even demand hard evidence for statements concerning the Afghanistan campaign. Most journalists did not question the administration's failure in preventing the 9/11 attacks. Instead, corporate media organisations adhered to the militarization of foreign policy. Opposing opinions and viewpoints were curtailed. Voice of America (VOA) was prevented by the State Department from broadcasting an interview with the Taliban leader Mullah Omar (the interview took place on 21 September 2001). The Bush presidency also tried to stop Aljazeera from broadcasting taped interviews with Bin Laden. During the 2003 War in Iraq, CBS News anchor Dan Rather was strongly criticized for granting an interview to Saddam Hussein (Rich 2003) and war correspondent Peter Arnett was fired from NBC after stating on Iraqi national television that the American military plans had failed (Jensen 2003). Along with media, American universities were pressured to restrict debate concerning America's new imperial ventures (Bello 2001).

System Destruction:

Information warfare literature specifies that the primary objective is to undermine the adversary's will and capacity to fight. Thus, neutralising the enemy's communications and control facilities becomes a priority. Because media outlets relaying the enemy's perceptions effectively boost the enemy's morale, they are considered as primary targets from an information warfare perspective. In this context, during the 1991 Gulf War American aircraft silenced Iraqi radio broadcasts by targeting stations, transmission towers, and power plants in Baghdad. Similarly, during the Kosovo War (1999), NATO aircraft attacked the Serbian Radio and Television headquarters in Belgrade (22 April 1999).⁴⁴ Likewise, during the 2001 Afghanistan War, U.S. cruise missiles destroyed the Taliban's main radio station in Kabul (8 October 2001). Aljazeera's office in Kabul was also destroyed in December 2001 by an air

⁴⁴ Ten Serbian technicians and engineers died in this attack.

attack. Regarding the latter incident, Major Samuel Morthland emphasised the need to prevent Al Qaeda from getting its message out (Morthland 2002: 40). Likewise, for military propaganda specialist Robin Brown, the attack on Aljazeera made perfect sense from an Information Warfare perspective. Its main advantage is that ‘it removes an enemy outlet’, although he acknowledges that its side-effect damages “the broader U.S. brand” with its claims of democracy and freedom of speech (Brown 2002: 46).

2.5 – Counter mobilisation: Propaganda, war and the public sphere

In the quest to critique propaganda and communication campaigns, many perspectives have been developed. The “watchdog” or “fourth estate” model assumes that the media is an independent monitor of military behaviour during war. American news media organisations have often depicted themselves as the defenders of citizens’ rights and the public interest against the hidden agendas of elites. However, Philip Knightley’s historical review of the military-media relationship, suggests that “fourth estate” principles have been marginalised. Field reporters generally served the designs of the military establishment. This was evident during the Vietnam War, even though the media is perceived to have played some role in pressuring the Presidency to withdraw troops. The propaganda model of Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman suggests that media organisations serve ruling power structures; rather than the public interest. Studies of numerous military conflicts confirm that American television overwhelmingly relays the perspectives of the Pentagon (O’Heffernan 1993; Paletz 1994). However, this line of argument predates the information dominance paradigm (whereby information becomes an element of combat power). Thus, a third model of communicating conflict has been proposed suggesting that military and media networks have converged to the point where they become virtually indistinguishable (Thussu 2003; Miller 2004b).

Both the propaganda model and the information dominance paradigm represent a serious threat to fourth estate principles. More broadly, by circumventing the informed, rational, and reflective judgment of the citizens, propaganda and information dominance undeniably erodes the democratic process. In this context, Jürgen Habermas outlines and argues on behalf of a public sphere created through dialogic critical-rational discourse (Habermas 1989). Oliver Hahn identifies three conceptions of the public sphere: the traditional sceptical model, which discounts the existence of a public sphere; the liberal-representative model, in which the media is understood to serve as intermediary institution between politics and citizens; and the deliberative-discursive model, which regards the public sphere as being shaped by relations of

power involving national media domains (Rosenwerth et al 2005: 13-14). The public sphere is expressive of deliberation mechanisms which give legitimacy to democratic politics. For Habermas, 'a legitimate decision does not represent the will of all, but is one that results from the deliberation of all. It is the process by which everyone's will is formed that confers it legitimacy on the outcome, rather than the sum of already formed wills' (Habermas 1989: 446). Democracy thus entails collective decision-making processes, in which individuals have the opportunity and the necessary information to form reasoned judgments. These will be taken in account by ruling institutions before making decisions (Thompson 1995: 255). The concept of the public sphere contrasts with the view that democracy is primarily a voting exercise, in which fixed preferences and interests compete via fair mechanisms of aggregation.

In this regard, media institutions contribute to the development of a public sphere not only as a means of information but also as a means of expression. Media organisations ought to act as an agency of representation by allowing diverse social groups to express their views. They should promote open debate on given issues and outline various alternative arguments and actions (Thompson 1995: 257). These principles constitute a serious challenge to propaganda and opinion management, since everyone, including marginalized groups, is allowed the opportunity to participate in decision making processes.

One central attribute of propaganda (in contrast to the public sphere) is that of untruthfulness. In a working democracy those who hold public office are supposed to persuade the citizens of the rightness of their views, and they are supposed to do so without misleading. They can decently appeal to their superior knowledge in some matters, but in general they are obliged to gain citizens' assent by telling the truth. By truth, I mean the correspondence between what is thought, believed, judged, or said and what is the real state of affairs in the world. The imparting of truth and truthfulness is an esteemed value which, of itself, transcends mere utility. Since ancient classical times, truth and truthfulness have been the necessary ingredients of knowledge and understanding (Allen 1993: 18-26). By contrast, propaganda systematically disregards this superior epistemic value. If there is a connection between truth and propaganda, it is a twisted one: it achieves 'the advantage of a lie without telling a literal untruth' (Gaffney quoted in Baker & Martinson 2001: 150). Stanley Cunningham emphasises this point when he notes that 'propaganda uses facts and poses as truthful information; it instrumentalizes truth; it does falsify, but in ways that involve the use of truths and facts as

much as possible' (Cunningham 2002: 98). So truth – from the perspective of a propagandist - is reduced to the status of a means. Propaganda does not burden itself with the various theories of truth; it stays outside any framework of truth, and remains eminently practical. Propaganda also involves the construction of falsities on a large scale, and is often synonymous with terms such as distortion, exaggeration, disinformation, and deception. On the other hand, truth telling is among the principal features of journalistic ethics. In fact, 'all the ethical codes begin with the newspaperman's duty to tell the truth under all conditions' (Christians et al 1987: 49). As such, journalists work to create an informed and active citizenry. They have to seek the truth and to report it accurately. They should not be deliberate carriers of propaganda and fraud.

In light of the discussion so far, the problem with the information dominance paradigm is that it is not limited to the enemy; rather it extends to friendly and neutral audiences (i.e. local public spheres). Consider NATO's definition of 'Psyops;' it includes activities 'conducted in peace, crisis and war and directed toward friendly, hostile, potentially hostile or neutral audiences. Normally, the objectives of strategic psychological activities are long-term and political in nature, they aim to undermine the adversary's, or a potential adversary's readiness for conflict and will to fight. Reducing the opponent's war-making capability is also advanced by gaining the support and cooperation of neutral and friendly populations' (Collins 2002: 44). The spreading of falsehood within the public sphere seems to be widely accepted within military ranks. In 1995, the *Freedom Forum First Amendment Centre* found that 60 percent of 1,000 U.S. officers surveyed agreed that 'military leaders should be allowed to use the news media to deceive the enemy, thereby deceiving the American public' (Macdonald 2007: 156). The distorted communication and deception that results from such endeavours represents an assault on the trust invested by the public in the media. This trust is itself a social good to be protected; all societies have injunctions against fraud (Bok 1989). Therefore, even in times of war and insecurity, responsible journalism should be aware that information warfare undermines democratic politics. Consequently, the commitment to truth telling must be very high in the journalists' agenda. Robert McChesney reminds us of the fact that 'war is the most serious use of state power: organized, sanctioned violence'. Therefore, according to him, it is important to evaluate 'how well [war] is under citizen review and control' which 'is not only a litmus test for the media but for society as a whole' (Nichols and McChesney 2005: 37).

To counteract the devastating effects of untruthfulness in communication, Sherry Baker and David Martinson have proposed an ethical test named TARES; an acronym consisting of five principles: Truthfulness (of the message), Authenticity (of the persuader), Respect (for the persuadee), Equity (of the persuasive appeal) and Social Responsibility. This test can be seen as a valid attempt to protect the public sphere from the taint of military propaganda. Here, the principle of truthfulness not only requires the persuader's intention not to deceive, it also requires that people receive the truthful information they legitimately need to make informed decisions about the destiny of their countries. As for source authenticity, this requires every communicator to take responsibility for their own actions (rather than concealing the origin of communication as is often the case with black and grey propaganda).⁴⁵ In these cases, biased communication becomes the norm since governmental organisations assume no responsibility over it. Respect for the persuadee contrasts with the propagandists view that that ordinary people are objects of manipulation. Respect also implies that the content and execution of persuasive appeals should be equitable (rather than targeted against a given population). Finally, the social responsibility part of this test requires the communicator to consider the wider public interest. Responsibility to community should overrule self-interest and profit. It is also a reminder to governmental agencies – including military institutions - that they should promote understanding, dialogue and cooperation among constituent groups (instead of stereotyping them for the purpose of propaganda) (Baker and Martinson 2001: 148-175).

In every society there are beliefs related to societal goals, aspirations, conditions, norms, and values which reflect the outlook of dominant groups. These beliefs are publicly prominent and play a defining role in the process of “othering”. They tend to be reflected in language, stereotypes, images, myths and collective memories (Bar-Tal 2005: 13-15). The process of “othering” defines and secures one's own identity by distancing and stigmatising those who are different. Its purpose is to reinforce the “normality” of dominant groups, and to externalise the difference of others. The mainstream media contribute to this process; news journalists often construct normalcy and difference through stories of villains, victims, and heroes. Implicitly, “people like us” are positioned in opposition to the “others” (Hallin 1986a). In periods of conflict, societal beliefs are highlighted to ensure dominance and victory. One's own deeds are portrayed in a positive light, whereas the other side's are linked to atrocity, cruelty, and viciousness. Furthermore, one's own group is often portrayed as the victim of the

⁴⁵ While in white propaganda the source is known and is usually official; in black propaganda it is concealed and a false source is suggested; in grey propaganda the source is obscured.

opponent. One's own goals are just while those goals of one's opponent are illegitimate and/or evil (Bar-Tal 2005: 17).

During the Cold War, Western audiences constantly received images of an implacable Soviet enemy who was bent on conquering the world and whose basic values conflicted with the principles of democratic countries. At that time, especially in the United States, labelling someone a "communist" was to deprive him or her of his fundamental rights, as reflected in the slogan "better dead than red" (Porras 1995: 301). The phobic fear of the communist "other" prompted Western states to equate belief in communism with treason, thus institutionalizing the invasion of privacy of citizens. McCarthyism in America illustrated such paranoia, as it divided Americans along Manichean lines: they were either suspects or surveillance eyes for the state. Perpetuating the "otherness" of counter-hegemonic discourses facilitates the official task of delineating the limits of the political space, and of writing 'the script for historical interpretations of national identity and political sovereignty' (Oliverio 1997: 6). To this end, the prevalence of anti-communist imagery did not just perpetuate animosity during the Cold War period, it contributed to the maintenance of Russian and Eastern European stereotypes for years to come (Ibroscheva 2002). After the fall of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of the communist menace, American elites felt the loss of an "other" to compete against. This anxiety was clearly expressed by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell; in a 1991 interview; 'Think hard about it. I'm running out of demons. I am running out of villains. I am down to Castro and Kim IL Sung' (Quoted in Gibbs 2004: 315). Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait and the prosecution of "Desert Storm" created new opportunities; the "othering" of Iraqis, Arabs and Islam skyrocketed. During that war, Iraqis were dehumanized as a pestilence to be removed; an impression conveyed by an American pilot, who boasted of killing the "cockroaches" (Muscati 2002: 132).

After the 1991 Gulf War, Western official discourse started brandishing the menace of Islamic fundamentalism. This rhetorical strategy met little resistance as prejudices already existed in the European and American psyche. Indeed, Islam was perceived to represent an obstacle to Western hegemony with its non-Christian philosophy (Butko 2006: 149). In addition, Islamism replaced Marxism as the ideology of the dispossessed in the Muslim countries (Ali 2000: 25), while Islamist movements adopted an uncompromising stance against pro-Western regimes in the region (Hippler & Lueg 1995: 131). Western decision

makers were also anxious about the Muslim world's perceived demographic advantage. During the 1990s, approximately one billion Muslims contributed to a majority in more than forty-eight countries, and were a rapidly growing minority in Europe and America (Esposito 1994: 19). As the new "other", Islam was perceived as the main enemy within the West (embodied by the Muslim minorities) and outside the West (embodied by the Muslim World). As a result, many Western politicians denounced Islam as a threat to Western civilization. For instance, French Defence Minister Francois Leotard declared in 1994: 'Islamic fundamentalism is as dangerous today as Nazism once was' (Hashemi, 2002). Also, Willy Claes, the then Secretary General of NATO, stated in 1995 that 'Islamic fundamentalism is at least as dangerous as Communism was. Please do not underestimate this risk' (Hashemi, 2002). Similar remarks were made by the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who claimed that 'the danger of fundamentalism...is one of the greatest dangers we are facing today.'⁴⁶ Therefore, Islam was the implied target of Psyops and information campaigns, cultivated by military elites.

2.6 - Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the evolution of military propaganda throughout history from the era of Sun Tsu to the Vietnam War. Two facets are important here, firstly war propaganda, whose aim is to strengthen local morale by strengthening beliefs in the justness of one's cause, and secondly psychological warfare which aims to demoralise and terrorise the enemy. The latter was variously refined in World War Two, subsequent wars of liberation and during the Vietnam War.

I have also reviewed U.S. military-media relations. Mostly, American mainstream media have supported their military during war. Only in a few instances, such as in the later periods of the Vietnam War have elements of the media become critical of the war effort (after that opposition to the war moved from the fringes of society to elites' factions). In military accounts, however, bitterness about the Vietnam experience compelled new ways of handling journalists and media organisations. With *Desert Storm* (1991), the military understood that the media *was* the battlefield; media space was battle space. Hence concepts such as information dominance became essential tenets of waging modern war.

⁴⁶ See: The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Press Conference of the President and Chancellor Helmut Kohl," 9 February 1995, 8.

The chapter also discussed the implementation of U.S. information warfare after the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the various strategies implemented. These consisted of promoting one's own information (perception management) while containing or destroying the enemy's information. The Rendon Group played a prominent role in this regard by monitoring news flows from different geographic localities and producing daily responses. The group also helped set up a propaganda arm for the Pentagon, namely the Office of Strategic Influence. Moreover, the State Department had also actively participated in strategic perception management campaigns by creating the position of Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. More directly, the U.S. military bombed media offices (including Aljazeera's) during the invasion of Afghanistan in an effort to dominate the information space. However, these efforts proved inadequate as opinion polls conducted in various Muslim countries revealed predominantly negative feelings toward the United States foreign policy.

Finally, this chapter reviewed how military propaganda might be conceivably counteracted in a warfare situation. The existence of a lively public sphere is a prerequisite to such a development as it paves the way for critical assessments of the war effort and it emphasises the importance of ethical journalism. Nonetheless, military propaganda has ways to circumvent public scrutiny especially when it plays upon the fear of the "other" and exploits its resonance among the public. Attention in the following chapter is devoted to the Orientalist and counter terrorist worldviews since they represent the platform upon which the process of othering is constructed.

Chapter3

3- Orientalism, terrorism and American media discourse

Chapter two discussed U.S. military propaganda and its evolution into information warfare. The latter commonly involves the mobilisation of deep frames concerning belonging, identity and othering (us vs. them, West vs. East). In this context, it is crucial to examine the rhetorical processes at work. In this chapter, I will review the development of Orientalist ideology and critique its foundations with particular references to Edward Said's works. I will also examine particular manifestations of American Orientalism, and examine its later fusion with official discourses on terrorism.

3.1- On Orientalism

During the seventh century, Muslim conquests sharpened geopolitical tensions within the Christian Byzantine Empire.⁴⁷ Disputed control of the Mediterranean Sea was a constant mutual concern. The European position was exemplified by a series of crusades from the 11th to the 13th century⁴⁸. As their lands were invaded, Muslims incurred deep seated feelings of humiliation (Maalouf 1984: xiv). Early Muslim historians were shocked by crusader atrocities⁴⁹ and by their untrustworthiness vis-à-vis treaties.⁵⁰ Having coexisted with Christians from the East for centuries (in the Levant and Egypt), the Muslim side refused to equate the crusades with Christianity as such. Instead, they regarded specific European nationalities, namely the Franks, as perpetrators of war because they constituted the majority within the crusaders' ranks. The crusades were termed "Frankish Wars" by Muslim historians (Maalouf 1994; Hillenbrand 1999). Meanwhile, the crusades were seen by papal clerics as an

⁴⁷ In 636, the armies of the Roman Emperor Heraclius were defeated in the Levant. Palestine was conquered in 636; Syria and Egypt in 640; Armenia in 693; North Africa in 698; and Spain in 711.

⁴⁸ The First Crusade stemmed from the preaching of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095. Subsequently, Jerusalem was captured in 1099 and a series of crusader states established at Antioch, Edessa, Tripoli and Jerusalem. However, Jerusalem was recaptured by a Muslim army under Saladin in 1187. The crusaders were decisively defeated with the Muslim capture of Acre in 1291.

⁴⁹ The Archbishop of Tyre describes as follows the crusaders' mass killing of Muslims and Jews in Jerusalem in 1099: 'regardless of age or condition, they laid low, without distinction, every enemy encountered. Everywhere was frightful carnage, everywhere lay heaps of severed heads [...] It was impossible to look upon the vast numbers of the slain without horror; everywhere lay fragments of human bodies, and the very ground was covered with the blood of the slain. [...] It is reported that within the Temple enclosure alone about ten thousand infidels perished'. Quoted in Stannard, D. E. (1992). *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World*. New York: Oxford University Press p.178

⁵⁰ Two of the main Muslim historians of that period, namely Ibn al-Qalanisi and Usama ibn Munqidh agree on that particular point. See Christie, N. G. F. (1996). *The Presentation of the Franks in Selected Muslim Sources from the Crusades of the 12th Century*. M.Litt. dissertation, University St. Andrews.

opportunity to forge a Pan-European Christian identity against a threatening Islam (Djait 1986: 109). This worldview underpinned the emergence of Orientalist discourse, which came to shape the Western psyche long after religious fervour declined.

The root word 'Orient' derives from a Latin word *Oriens*, meaning the rising of the sun; "the East" is invoked only in the most general sense. Figuratively, according to the online version of the Oxford English Dictionary, the term 'Orientalism' meant in the past: (1) 'Oriental style or quality; the character, customs, etc., of oriental nations; an oriental trait, feature, or idiom' and (2) the 'Knowledge of the languages, cultures, etc., of the Orient.' (Oxford English Dictionary [online]). Broad neutral definitions like these referring to academic traditions were the most readily accepted for a long time, yet according to Edward Said, Orientalism includes at least three categories: academic, general and corporate (Said 1979: 2-3). Said regards the latter category as instrumental in forging Orientalism as an ideological discourse rather than an intellectual endeavour. Corporate Orientalism defines for Europeans what the Orient is about, and how it should be institutionally and educationally explained. For Said, this discourse exemplifies the 'Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Said 1979: 3). Such is confirmed by historical evidence. Within the British Empire for example, scores of academics worked to spread and stabilise British colonial rule overseas. The architect of Britain's Educational Policy in India, Thomas Macaulay, concisely articulated the methods of British imperialism: 'We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellect' (Macaulay 1835)⁵¹. Some contemporary authors such as Gauri Viswanathan argue that British colonial hegemony in India rested ultimately on the teaching of English literature, and not on the exercise of direct force (Eaton 2000: 63).

Because of this linkage with colonialism, Orientalism as a discipline started to carry a negative connotation especially after the wave of decolonization in Asia and Africa, and the proliferation of nationalisms. Anouar Abdel-Malek, an Egyptian Marxist philosopher, wrote an article entitled *Orientalism in Crisis* (1962), in which he argued that Asian anti-colonial movements after World War II had exposed the intimate relationship between Orientalist scholars and the colonial powers. Previously, this close association had legitimised the Western appropriation of Asia's treasures (texts, manuscripts, and artefacts) for Western

⁵¹ Quoted in *Macaulay, Prose and Poetry*, selected by G.M. Young (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 716-18

libraries, museums and archives. At the same time, Orientalists depicted Asians as obstacles to, or supporters of, development and civilization. Abdel-Malek points to the crisis of Orientalism during the post-colonialist era. The collapse of colonialism had uncovered the metaphysical and essentialist mythologies of Orientalism contained within religious and historical texts. Orientalists had positioned the Orient as an object of knowledge and domination. In his later writings, Abdel-Malek echoes Foucault by stressing 'the organic interrelation between *power* and *culture*', observing that 'never in history have we witnessed power without culture' (Abdel-Malek 1977: 60; original emphasis). As a solution, Abdel-Malek advocated more specialised disciplinary inquiry that could address both the Orient and Occident from a universalistic perspective.

Another pioneering critique of Orientalism was developed by the Palestinian Islamic academic A.L. Tibawi. His two important articles on this subject, namely *English-speaking Orientalists* (1964) and *A second critique of English-speaking Orientalists* (1979), clearly demonstrated the Orientalists' misunderstanding of the Orient in general and Islam in particular. Tibawi analyses the historical background of mutual hostility between the Islamic and the Christian world. He argues that Christian missionaries formed an alliance with the classical Orientalists in order to represent Islam and Muslims in offensive terms. Thus, according to Tibawi, the Orientalists misunderstand Islam completely; because of this, it is impossible for a Western scholar to adopt a fresh point of view on Islam (Tibawi 1979: II-V).

Bryan Turner, the English Marxist scholar, also objected to Orientalism. In *Marx and the End of Orientalism* (1978), Turner argued that Marxism can demolish Orientalism and transform the existing theoretical models about the "Orient" into 'proper objects of theoretical work', with the provision that Marxism purges itself of Orientalist bias (Turner 1978: 82). Some remarks made by Marx and Engels were interpreted as justifying colonialism. For example, in *Capital*, Marx made reference to British colonial officers who regarded the use of violent exogenous force as means of bringing "progress" to stagnant Asia. Marx shared the view that Asia was trapped in a state of despotism and civilizational decline. He relied on these colonial sources to develop his theory of the Asiatic mode of production. The revisions proposed by Turner include the elimination of 'teleological versions of Marxism which, for example, treat history as a series of necessary stages and thereby relegate the Middle East to a stage prior to "real history" ' (Turner 1978: 8).

It is important to note that these scholars approached Orientalism from particular points of view; Abdel-Malek Egyptian-Marxist, Tibawi Palestinian-Islamic, and Bryan Turner English-Marxist. However, they all reached the same conclusion: Orientalism as an academic discipline was deeply flawed, in crisis, and in need of radical reform. This conclusion was also shared by Professor Edward Said, a primary contributor to the debate surrounding Orientalism. His major work *Orientalism* (1979) critically examined Orientalism via Foucault's notion of discourse⁵². Said delineated the European constructions of the "Oriental", and the ways in which Orientalist discourse became, in Foucault's terminology, a regime of truth⁵³, which remoulded the complexities of the Orient into a manageable entity. In his view, 'without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period' (Said 1979: 3).

Orientalist discourse thereby constructed narratives and images that served to reinforce feelings of unity among one's own imagined community, while assuming superiority over the other. Said considered Orientalism as a generic descriptor for Western conceptions of the Orient. It was, he stated, 'a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the orient, the East, "them")'(Said 1979: 43). Charles Paul Freund goes further by saying that 'Orientalism transforms the East and its people into an alien "other"'. In his view, that other, usually a dark other, was in every way the inferior of the West: unenlightened, barbarous, cruel, craven, enslaved to its senses, given to despotism, and, in general, contemptible' (Freund 2001: 3).

This deep seated binary opposition between Orientalism and its other constitutes hegemony in its purest form. Drawing from Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall points out that hegemony as an ideological force involves 'the power to represent someone or something in a certain way within a certain regime of representation' (Hall 1997: 259). Said's notion of hegemony is also

⁵² According to Foucault, discursive practices delimit the field of objects, defining a legitimate perspective and fixing the norms for the elaboration of concepts. In order to produce a statement in a discourse, one has to adapt to the constraints, focus on a subject and claim authority: 'one would only be in the true if one obeyed the rules of some discursive "policy"'. See Foucault, M. (1971). *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language*. Vintage. p. 224

⁵³ Foucault points out that: 'each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements (...); the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true'. See Gordon, C. (Ed.). (1980). *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge*. Hertfordshire, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf. p. 131

drawn from the writings of Antonio Gramsci. In his view, hegemony is a form of cultural control, wherein ideas are not enforced through coercion but through consent. Gramsci considers that the political society (the police, the army, legal system, etc.) takes the leadership of civil society (the family, the education system, trade unions, etc.) within a capitalist mode of production. Gramsci suggests that capitalist relations of power are maintained not just through political and economic coercion, but also ideologically, through a hegemonic culture in which the values of the bourgeoisie became the "common sense" values of all. Gramsci's ideas seem to have deeply influenced Hall and Said's critique of Orientalism. For Hall, Orientalist 'truth' resided in the power of writers and academics to tell stories of the Orient, claiming that they successfully represented it (Hall 2004: 236). Similarly Said observed that: 'In any society not totalitarian, certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others' (Said 1979: 7). In this regard, European hegemony has affected Orientalist ideas about the Orient by constantly 'reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness'. This superiority has been achieved through the constant repetition of entrenched presuppositions and idioms by European scientists, scholars, missionaries, traders and soldiers (Said 1979: 7); these idioms underpinned Orientalist myths and doctrines, which in turn imprinted the so-called Oriental character (despotic, irrational etc.) in the Western mind.⁵⁴

Overall, Edward Said made three important claims in *Orientalism*. Firstly, in spite of claiming to be an academically oriented discipline, Orientalism has in fact functioned to serve political ends, and more especially imperialist endeavours. Secondly, Orientalism helped define Europe's self-image. Thirdly, Orientalism has produced a false description of Arabs and Islamic culture. The resulting Western imagery of the Orient has produced a discourse that has evolved into a kind of imagined binary ontology; an ontology that has remained strong despite contemporary manifestations of globalization.

⁵⁴ Edward Said supports this argument with numerous examples of racist and imperialist views contained in the Orientalist discourse. For example, Said analysed Arthur James Balfour's 1910 speech to the House of Commons, which claimed that Egyptians 'are a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves' (Said 1979: 35). Thus, Said explains that Balfour's supremacy was associated with British knowledge of Egypt and not principally with military or economic power.

3.2- Orientalism and the representation of Islam and Arabs

Orientalists' writings provide a distorted picture of Islam as religion. The distortion began with Christian missionaries, who sought to devalue Islam relative to Christianity. For centuries, conflict in the Mediterranean was mainly interpreted through religious rhetoric, and Islam was portrayed as the anti-Christ, in spite of the existence of numerous commonalities between the two religions (Hurd 2003: 25-41). Echoes of this discourse continue to resonate. This occurs when Muslim culture is positioned as a threat to national identity and to local ways of life. For example, the building of a mosque in Lodi (Italy) in 2000 triggered a hostile response from Cardinal Biffi. He stated on the primetime television news of RAI (the Italian public service broadcaster) that Muslims are not 'part of our humanity' (Cere 2002: 133).

Christian missionary writings of the early 19th century pictured Islam as a Christian heresy and Muhammad as a fraud and charlatan. For example Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* argues that the prophet of Islam was deluded by the devil into the belief that he was a prophet. For Bayle, Muhammad was quite simply an impostor, while Herbelot, the writer of *Bibliothèque Orientale*, declared 'this is the famous impostor Mahomet, Author and Founder of a heresy, which has taken on the name of a religion that we call Mahometan' (Almond 2003: 412-413). Such judgements had a major impact on Orientalism and contributed to a long-lasting Western antipathy toward Islam. Other "oriental" faiths such as Buddhism and Hinduism have generated a fair amount of sympathy and interest in the West. Islam on the other hand, despite being closer to Judaism and Christianity, and claiming the same Abrahamic source, was misjudged and misrepresented by most of the Orientalists. Although centuries of wars have produced a legacy of animosity between the world of Islam and the Christian West, there was much common ground. They both claim a universal message and share much of the same Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman heritage (Gerges 2003: 588). Furthermore, there was considerable cultural exchange between Muslim and Christians from the 8th century onwards. It is a matter of fact that the Christian civilization received significant technological and scientific contributions from Islam (Turner 2003: 17). Robert W. Cox notes that 'it was through contact with the higher culture of Islam that the Christian West recovered knowledge of Greek philosophy' (Cox 1992: 151). In this regard, Arab Institutes in Cordoba, Seville, Granada, Valencia and Toledo attracted the great Christian thinkers of that time, including Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, and Gerbert of Aurillac (later to become Pope Sylvester II). This side of history is rarely explored by

Orientalists, most probably because the animosity helped to forge Christian self-identity (Almond 2003: 416).

Said provides case studies of how Orientalists have handled Islam. He analysed for example the works of Renan, who claimed that 'the sword of Muhammad and the Koran are the most stubborn enemies of Civilization, Liberty and the Truth which the world has yet known' (Said 1979: 151). The idea that the spread of Islam is inherently forceful is quite common among Orientalists. Isaac Barrow (1630-1677) declared that Islam 'diffused itself by rage and terror of arms; convincing men's minds only by the sword, and using no arguments but blows' (Almond 2003: 417). A recent version of this viewpoint was articulated by Pope Benedict XVI at an address at German University (12 September 2006). Pope Benedict quoted criticism of Islam and Prophet Muhammad by the 14th century Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Palaeologus.⁵⁵

The assumption that Islam was spread by the sword implies that Christianity was spread through divine help. This Orientalist reductionism overlooked evidence that the sacred texts of Islam forbade coercion in areas of religion. The Koran clearly states: "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (Koran 2: 256) and also states: "Say: "The Truth is from your Lord." Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject [it]" (Koran 18: 29). This is why Muslim administrators did not forcibly convert people from other religions. Christians and Jews lived without persecution in Islamic lands for centuries. When the Muslim armies captured Jerusalem in 638, Caliph Omar assured the Patriarch that Christian lives and property would be respected. When Jerusalem fell to the crusaders in 1099, the majority of the population was still Christian (Jones & Ereira 1996: 54). Muslim tolerance explains the existence of sizeable Eastern Christian communities, such as the Coptic Christians in Egypt and the Maronite Christians in Lebanon⁵⁶. The Christians lived in peace and harmony with their neighbours for centuries. In *Muhammad, a Western Attempt to Understand Islam*, Karen Armstrong argues that 'in the Islamic empire Jews like Christians had full religious liberty; the Jews lived there in peace until the creation of the State of Israel in our own century. The Jews

⁵⁵ The passage, in the English translation published by the Vatican, is as follows: 'Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached' (Pope Benedict XVI, 2006).

⁵⁶ Lebanon's President is Christian by the terms of the Lebanese constitution despite the fact that the two thirds of the country's inhabitants are Muslims. Likewise, the Christian Coptic community in Egypt is well represented in power, and has many ministers which hold key jobs. They have enjoyed their religious and cultural freedoms since ancient times.

of Islam never suffered like the Jews of Christendom... [There is] a history of 1,200 years of good relations between Jews and Muslims' (Armstrong 1992: 209).

As with Islam, the Orientalists heavily distorted the Arab image. They have long described the experiences of the Arabs, in ways which deprive the Oriental Arab of any individuality. Through their monopoly of knowledge, Orientalists perpetuated the myth that the Arabs did not provide any meaningful contribution to history. The history of the Arabs was subsequently depicted as a timeline containing no creative intelligence. This erroneous portrayal of Arabs happened because of Orientalism's essentialist assumption that it was possible to define the qualities of Arab peoples. In fact, there has never been any such thing as a monolithic Arab World. As Nadine Naber has pointed out, there are twenty four countries and a configuration of religions, including 'Maronites, Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Jews, Sunnis, Shi'a, Druze, Alawites, Nestorians, Assyrians, Copts, Chaldeans, and Baha'is. Naber also identifies different ethnic groups such as the Berbers, Kurds, Armenians, Bedu, gypsies and many others with different languages, religions, ethnic and national identifications and cultures. All of these are 'congealed as Arab in popular Western representations, whether or not those people identify as Arab' (Naber 2000: 43).

3.3- American Orientalism

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said concentrates mainly on the French and British varieties of the 19th and early 20th centuries. He only partly addresses American Orientalism on the grounds that it only emerged in the post-World War II period, when the United States became the pivotal Western superpower (at the expense of Britain, France and Germany) (Said 1979: 290). This argument holds some substance insofar as the academic institutionalisation of Orientalism is concerned. Yet, if one regards Orientalism as a discourse in the service of imperial power over the Orient, and if one considers Orientalism as central to the Western self-image, then the omission of an earlier American Orientalism is surprising.

Subsequently, Said duly addressed American Orientalism in *Culture and Imperialism*. He carefully distinguishes imperialism from colonialism, while at the same time linking the two terms. He defines imperialism as 'thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others' (Said 1993: 7). This definition allowed him to argue firstly, that imperialism had survived the dismantlement of the colonial empires, and secondly, that the repetition of the old imperialist attitudes underpinned

America's interventions in the developing world (Said 1993: xxiii, 63, 241-42). Said depicts America 'as an immigrant settler society superimposed on the ruins of a considerable native presence' (Said 1993: xxv). Contrary to American self-perceptions of their nation as an anti-imperial opponent of the British Empire, Said points out that the United States was founded upon a successful imperial conquest. For him, the American Revolution was not anti-colonial but an effort from local American colonists to get their share of the colonial pie. Thus, the American move to become an empire was hardly surprising. *Culture and Imperialism* demonstrates how European colonial empires and their American offshoot combined culture and politics, knowingly or otherwise, to produce a system of domination that complements military power.

Adhering to Said's paradigm, John Kuo Wei Tchen has provided a more detailed historical evolution of American Orientalism in his examination of Chinese migrants in American literature. In *New York Before Chinatown: Orientalism and the Shaping of American Culture, 1776-1882*, Tchen points out that Orientalism has played a significant role in the formation of American cultural identity and American racial attitudes. Specifically, Tchen distinguishes between three overlapping and successive cultural formations. First of all, 'patrician Orientalism' refers to the fact that the American founding fathers liked to possess oriental things (porcelains, tea sets, silk) because it conferred a "distinguished" social status (Tchen 1999: 13). A 'commercial Orientalism' then emerged during the period of 1825-1865. The Oriental "other" was routinely represented in the penny press, theatre, and museums. The aim was to satisfy consumer curiosity about Oriental "exoticism". Finally, by the 1870s, 'political Orientalism' changed the framing of Orientals in relation to white people away from 'desire-imbued and ambiguous representation' to that of 'an exclusionary and segregationist discourse' (p. xx).

Fuad Sha'ban has investigated American 'political Orientalism' in his book *Islam and Arabs in Early American Thought: the Roots of Orientalism in America* (1991). He defines American Orientalism as a descendant of European heritage and influence, yet with uniquely American characteristics. For Sha'ban this form of Orientalism projects a dual image, namely "the vision of Zion" and "the dream of Baghdad" (Sha'ban 1991: xi, 23-26). The vision of Zion refers to the popular American self-image derived from the Old Testament, as God's chosen people. They had fled tyranny and established a new city on a hill (Sha'ban 1991: 141-143). The metaphor of 'a city upon the hill' used by John Winthrop in his famous 1630 sermon *A*

Model of Christian Charity, captures the Puritans' sense of exceptionalism. They believed their undertaking to be divinely ordained. Winthrop also identified the exemplary lessons of this special experience for the rest of humanity. The city, after all, was on high ground with the 'eyes of all people' upon it. In this regard, it is common to find the comparison between the Pilgrim Fathers' trip to the New World and the Biblical Tribes of Israel's flight to the land of Canaan. The settlements of the Pilgrims and Puritans were generally thought of as a "new Israel." Many writers embraced this discourse. Consider for example Herman Melville's mid-19th century statement that 'we Americans are the peculiar chosen people - the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. God has predestined, mankind expects, great things from our race. Indeed, the political Messiah has come. But he has come in us' (quoted in Sha'ban 2003: 24). The sense that Americans were God's own people in God's own country is the hallmark of a religious conviction that classifies America as the exemplary modern nation.

The editor and essayist John L. O'Sullivan (1813–1895) exemplified this outlook. He declared that America's divinely sanctioned project was to overrun the continent and then to establish 'on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man' (Davidson 2005: 159). O'Sullivan coined the expression "manifest destiny" to justify the annexation of Texas and the claim to Oregon territory in 1845. During the 20th century, his famous phrase was frequently invoked to conjoin the will of God with the national objectives of the United States. This constituted one of the founding myths of American politics. Said noted the 'correspondence...between the nineteenth-century doctrine of Manifest Destiny...the territorial expansion of the United States...and the ceaselessly repeated formulae about the need for an American intervention against this or that aggression since World War Two' (Said 1993: 288).⁵⁷

Manifest destiny undeniably encapsulated feelings of American exceptionalism and fostered public belief in the essential union of American virtue and power. Political-religious statements abound in U.S. national rhetoric to the extent that Robert Bellah labelled this language the "American civil religion" (Bellah 1974: 75). American presidents often invoked manifest destiny in their speeches when mobilising their people for war. Richard Nixon did so explicitly, whereas Presidents George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton inferred their commitment to manifest destiny when they, respectively, prepared for the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the

⁵⁷ For example, the U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, a strong proponent of manifest destiny, intervened militarily in places as diverse as Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and the Panama Canal zone, while invoking ideas of racial superiority to suppress "minor" peoples (i.e. native Americans, Mexicans, Filipinos etc.)

1999 military campaign in Kosovo (Coles 2002). For example, Bush Sr. states several times ‘You know...America is a nation founded under God. And from our very beginnings we have relied upon his strength and guidance in war and in peace. And this is something we must never forget’ (Coles 2002: 412). Likewise, Clinton referred to the "chosen nation" as an analogy for America shortly after the bombing of Kosovo had begun. On the observance of Passover, Clinton made an analogy between America and God’s Promised Land. In that speech, Clinton stated: ‘all Americans can draw inspiration from the story of Passover. It reminds us of our ongoing journey to build our own Promised Land, where all people are free to worship according to their conscience and where our children can grow up safe from the shadows of intolerance and oppression’ (Coles 2002: 414). Therefore, it was no surprise when President Bush invoked America’s divine destiny in his State of the Union Address subsequent to the 9/11 attacks (29 January 2002): ‘Americans will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right, true and unchanging for all people everywhere...In a single instant, we realized that this will be a decisive decade in the history of liberty—that *we have been called* to a unique role in human events’ (emphasis added).

The other American Orientalist dimension considered by Sha’ban is the “dream of Baghdad.” This represents the combination of romance and exoticism deriving from ‘a long, cumulative tradition of the imaginary world of The Arabian Nights’ (Sha’ban 1991: 177). In this clichéd fantasy, Muslim women are represented as sensual and submissive. Said had already noted the 19th century Orientalist portrayal of Muslim women as ‘the creatures of a male power-fantasy,’ in which ‘they express unlimited sensuality, they are more or less stupid, and above all they are willing’ (Said 1979: 207). Sha’ban points out that a commonly printed book in the United States during the 19th century was a translation of the Arabian Nights. That collection of fables and fairy tales, often coloured by the sexual desires of the translator, was taken as an accurate portrayal of a timeless, exotic, and mystical East. Tales of harems, genies, and magic carpets found their way into most American homes and libraries.

The works of Bayard Taylor (1825-1878) also exemplify this trend. Taylor travelled throughout Europe, Mexico, Palestine, India, China and Japan. He published twelve best-sellers about his travels, including *A Journey to Central Africa; Life and Landscapes from Egypt to the Negro Kingdoms of the White Nile* (New York, 1854); *The Lands of the Saracen; Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily and Spain* (1854); and *A Visit to India, China and Japan in the Year 1853* (1855). Taylor was very forthcoming about his experiences, gave

countless speeches and seminars all over the United States, and wrote many columns in newspapers and literary magazines. Most importantly Taylor is considered one of the first American Orientalists. *Journey to Central Africa* was the first of Taylor's Oriental books, from which he drew extensively in a series of lectures, entitled *The Arabs*. Taylor's encounters with the Arab Islamic world were framed, categorized and then represented for his audience through historical generalizations.

Taylor's representations evoke the Orient firstly, as the dream location for sensuality, secondly, as an escape from American society, and thirdly, as a realm of fixedness, constancy, and immutability (Moran 2005: 181). Those representations with the strongest legacy derive from the Middle East's supposed pseudo-libertarian depravity in the Middle-East. Here, Taylor's Orient embodied the traditional Christian criticism of Islam. The European clergy tended to consider the prophet of Islam as perverse. For example, Dominican Friar Humbert of Lyons (c. 1300) stated that 'Nor did Mahomet teach anything of great austerity... indeed he even allowed many pleasurable things, to do with a multitude of women, abuse of them, and suchlike' (Daniel 1984: 70). Papal propaganda during the crusades contained similar sentiments. Muslim women were depicted 'as defiled and wanton whores and seductresses,' whereas Muslim ease with sexuality was seen as 'offensively non-ascetic behaviour' (Stannard 1992: 179).

But beyond these medieval echoes, the sensual imagery also mirrors Taylor's own desire and that of his readership. As Holly Edwards suggests, 'he presented himself as a charismatic adventurer, causing Victorian women to swoon, and becoming, in a straight-laced nineteenth-century way, a sort of sex symbol, anticipating the stardom of Rudolph Valentino, who also rose to fame in Arab dress' (Edwards 2000: 120). It is striking to see how this Orientalist myth was reversed during the 20th century. As Karen Armstrong suggests, the post-Christian West saw itself as sexually liberated compared to sexually-repressed Islam, and as such Islam is frequently denigrated as a sexually repressive religion (Armstrong 1992: 230).

Another image of American political Orientalism, not considered by Sha'ban, is that of the "barbarian" Oriental. A good example of this trend is Susanna Rowson's 1794 play *Slaves in Algiers*. While one initially expects the play to handle the serious topic of slavery in the context of the United States, the entirety of the play takes place on North African soil. The main topic of Rowson's theatrical production concerns the plight of "white" Americans held as slaves in the 1790s by the "barbarian" Algerians. Rowson never acknowledged that the

Moroccan government (one of the so-called Barbary States) was among the first countries in the world to diplomatically recognize the newly independent United States.⁵⁸ Even if one disregards this oversight, the fact that Rowson singles out the practice of slavery in Algiers already constitutes Orientalism in action. Indeed as Darby argues 'various forms of forced labour remained common in Europe and America until well into the nineteenth century: assignment of convicts in Australia, black slavery in the USA, serfdom in Russia, and impressed service in the British Navy could all be compared with slavery in North Africa, and not necessarily to the advantage of the West' (Darby 2003: 126).

Slaves in Algiers' Orientalist discourse is built into a constructed narrative about an imagined enemy, through the creation of a threatening image of the "other". The barbarity of North Africans is constantly invoked in the tales of captivity, which cast them as demonic, amoral and inhuman. Yet these same tales never questioned the institution of slavery in America, which was economically dependent upon black slavery from Africa. If slavery was uncivilized in North Africa, was it not equally uncivilized in America? At the same time, *Slaves in Algiers* effectively creates a new form of national and racial identity in a transatlantic context; this discourse served to reinforce feelings of superiority among the American public in relation to the "other". The very notion of Barbary captivity emphasises the victimisation of the Christian and the inhumanity of the Muslim. This shaped the mindset of Americans regarding the Muslim Orient in general, and this was reflected in the immense success of James Riley's 1815 captivity story, *Sufferings in Africa*.⁵⁹ Through these narratives, America inherited the ancient ideological schisms between Christianity and Islam. Their supposed animosity was reflected in economic struggles over trade and shipping rights. This 'had been framed in Europe as a fight between Christian knights and Islamic pirates in which both sides justified enslaving each other' (Baepler 2004 : 219). Islam was often constructed as the 'alien' in the construction of Western identity. It serves as the other against which Westerners have struggled to organize a collective self (Hurd 2003: 26-27). In addition, these narratives helped create a sense of political unity against non-western outsiders. This in turn justified the establishment of a huge American navy with a global reach. This political ploy is confirmed by Jared Gardner, who argues that the conflict with the "Barbary" pirates served to deflect attention from the sharpening tensions between Republicans and Federalists.

⁵⁸ The king of Morocco Muhammad Ben Abdullah officially recognized the American government in 1777, only a few months after independence. The United States established a consulate in Morocco in 1797.

⁵⁹ Riley's story of despair and hope has influenced many American statesmen in history. When Abraham Lincoln listed the books that had most influenced him, one was *Sufferings in Africa* by James Riley. Riley's account of his life as a slave is thought to have influenced Abraham Lincoln's attitude toward slavery in the United States.

He states that 'all sides could unite in abhorring the pirates, and Federalists and Republicans alike used the cause to unify Congress and the public in support of the establishment of a navy...At a time when the nation had much more serious threats to confront, the Algerian captive and the exotic, "oriental" background of this first American "war" united the nation in outrage and indignation' (Gardner 1998: 32–33).

3.4- Contemporary Orientalism

In 1798, convinced of their own superiority and authority, Napoleon and his troops invaded Egypt. This historical episode has been described as a 'turning point for Orientalism' (Kolluoglu-Kirli 2003: 100), and 'the start of modern Orientalism' (Said 1979: 120). In fact, this invasion provided the formative moment for the discourse of Orientalism and opened the door to European domination of the Orient, prompting Said to observe that 'with Napoleon's occupation of Egypt, processes were set in motion between East and West that still dominate our contemporary cultural and political perspectives' (Said 1979: 41-42).

There are three main reasons for regarding this late 18th century event as the start of modern Orientalism. Firstly, Europe at the time of Napoleon's Egyptian invasion had progressed beyond the zealous religiosity of the Crusades, and the Biblical framework previously devised to interpret the Orient was no longer in vogue. People were no longer divided into Christian and heretics, and new classificatory terms such as "Asiatics" were introduced (Said 1979: 119). This shift in classification redefined Europe's engagement with the Orient from 'the narrowly religious scrutiny by which it had hitherto been examined (and judged) by the Christian West' (Said 1979: 120). Yet this secularization did not lead to the complete abandonment of the old religious concepts; they were simply 'reconstituted, redeployed [and] redistributed in the secular frameworks' (Said 1979: 120). As Said points out, this occurred because the impulse of modern Orientalism was religious, and the old supernaturalism had been naturalized (Said 1979: 121).

Secondly, Napoleon's invasion of Egypt is important because it represents a 'truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another' (Said 1979: 42). In contrast to the older Orientalism, which relied on imaginary narratives and unusual tales of voyagers, this time it was the power/knowledge nexus that led the modern Orientalist endeavour, as one hundred and fifty handpicked scientists, artists and engineers (known as the savants) accompanied the 55,000 troops of the Napoleonic expedition (Smith 2006). Those 'chemists, historians, biologists,

archaeologists, surgeons, and antiquarians' were, according to Said, 'the learned division of the army' (Said 1979: 83–84). They 'provided a scene or setting for Orientalism, since Egypt and subsequently the other Islamic lands were viewed as the live province, the laboratory, the theatre, of effective Western knowledge about the Orient' (Said 1979: 43).

Thirdly and most importantly, Orientalism moved from the cultural sphere to the political, becoming intertwined with imperialism. As Said explains, 'European awareness of the Orient transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic and even military (Said 1979: 210). Orientalism, and more particularly its "corporate" offshoot, informed Western political involvement in the Orient, preparing the ground for, and sustaining, Western imperial hegemony over Oriental regions. Thus the new relation between the West and the Orient was based on power and dominance, and Orientalism served as the ideological vehicle for dominance over the Orient. The apogee of this hegemonic relationship was reached in 1914, when colonialism claimed about 84 percent of the earth's surface (Said 1993: 8). In order to administer these newly acquired spaces, colonial authorities further encouraged Orientalism's development and institutionalization.

From the mid-20th century, a pivotal geo-political shift affected Orientalism. As a consequence of World War II, the United States replaced Europe as the world's dominant region. Orientalism became an American enterprise rather than a European one, and its institutionalization was conducted through the development of "Area Studies" (Kolluoglu-Kirli 2003: 107). Said argues that area studies, and especially those devoted to Middle East and Islamic studies accumulated knowledge upon Orientalist assumptions. Subsequently, stereotypes about Islam and Arabs were transmitted from one generation to another, and were able to survive revolutions, world wars, and the literal dismemberment of Empires (Said 1979: 222).

Inheriting the Western Orientalist apparatus has had a direct impact on American policy makers' perceptions. It has prompted the tendency to underestimate the peoples of the region, and to dismiss their legitimate nationalist aspirations.⁶⁰ Hence the Truman Doctrine (1948) and the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957) were directed not just against the communist bloc, but also Third World national liberation movements that aspired to achieve national independence. In Iran, this point was illustrated by the overthrow of the democratically

⁶⁰ These aspirations were considered as 'manifestations of oil-inspired economic arrogance, anti-Semitic rabble-rousing, or oriental affinity for revolutionary despotism' (Little 2002: 314)

elected Mohammad Mossadegh by the CIA in 1953. In *All the Shah's Men*, Stephen Kinzer, depicts Mossadegh as a nationalist leader whose entire political career was shaped by two ideas: placing Iran on the path of democracy and establishing Iranian control over Iranian resources. Yet, Mossadegh's national dream was swiftly repressed, and the U.S. sent a clear message to the Middle East that it was less interested in democracy than in a compliant regime. The CIA-restored Shah was celebrated as an "enlightened" and "modern" ruler by the *London Times*, while its counterpart *New York Times* provided an Orientalist-tainted editorial judgement⁶¹ (Chomsky 1992: 50).

Edward Said has traced the continuation of Orientalist thought among American academics. A case in point was Harold W. Glidden's 1972 article in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* entitled the 'Arab World'.⁶² In four pages, he made generalisations about a hundred million people and thirteen hundred years of history, and purported to uncover 'the inner workings of Arab behaviour.' They were said to be conformist, hierarchical, egoistic, dishonest and prone to violence and revenge. There were within academia some attempts to correct this distorted image. For example, Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples* (1991) provided a 14 century overview of Arab peoples. His approach is methodical and meticulous and emphasises the contextual background required to understand the rich history of an entire people and culture (especially the important Arab contributions to world civilisation in the areas of science, architecture and philosophy). Hourani's work examined the gap between the Arab period of early Islam and the modern era. He also corrected the stubbornly resistant stereotype that Arabs were a bunch of rural Bedouins by highlighting the rich urban legacy of Arab culture in cities such as Fez, Tunis, Cairo, Damascus and Baghdad.

Despite this contribution, essentialist Orientalist discourse became omnipresent within American literature and the mass media. Arab identity was reduced to Islam and Islam to a religion of fanatical incitement. During the 1970s Said observed that while 'it is no longer possible to write learned (or even popular) disquisitions on either "the Negro mind" or "the Jewish personality," it is perfectly possible to engage in research, such as "the Islamic mind," or "the Arab character" (Said 1979: 259–262). A good example of this trend was *The Arab*

⁶¹ In its editorial of the 6th of August 1954 the *New York Times* wrote: 'Underdeveloped countries with rich resources now have an object lesson in the heavy cost that must be paid by one of their members which goes berserk with fanatical nationalism. It is perhaps too much to hope that Iran's experience will prevent the rise of Mossadeghs in other countries, but that experience may at least strengthen the hands of more reasonable and more farseeing leaders [...]' (quoted in Chomsky 1992: 50)

⁶² See: Glidden, H. W. (1972). The Arab World. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 128, 984-988.

Mind (1974), written by the Zionist scholar Raphael Patai. He used psychological and cultural generalisations to claim that Arabs' alleged backwardness was rooted in mental configurations. They are said to have a 'sense of marginality which never allows an Arab to detach himself from his traditional culture' (Tuastad 2003: 592). Patai died in 1996, but his book was revived in 2002, just in time for the war in Iraq. This time, it was tagged as "the bible of the neo-cons on Arab behaviour," and was said to be a "required reading" by U.S. policy makers and military personnel in order to understand Iraqi behaviour (Hersh 2004: 42). Writing the foreword of this new edition, army colonel Norvell B. De Atkine says that Patai's book informs his briefings for military teams deployed to the Middle East. In his view, the book deciphers the Arabs' "seemingly irrational hatred" and "rejection of Western values" (Patai 2002: x-xviii).

Patai's book recalls the works of another contemporary Orientalist, Bernard Lewis, prolific author and political commentator on the Middle East. Described as the *New York Times* reviewer and "doyen of Middle Eastern studies", Lewis gained major prominence after the Al Qaeda suicide bombings of September 11, 2001. Various reports referred to his close ties with Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz and other senior figures in the Bush administration.⁶³ Edward Said was Lewis' most outspoken critic, and had clashed with him over previous decades (as exemplified in a famous 1982 exchange in *The New York Review of Books*)⁶⁴. Said's criticism of Lewis, was not that he was ignorant, but that he was arrogant and contemptuous of Muslims, and disguised political agendas within scholarship. In an interview, Said went as far as to call Lewis a scholar-combatant, alongside Fouad Ajami and Daniel Pipes (Said 1991).

Lewis' bestselling book *What Went Wrong* (2002) re-affirmed ideas he had expressed since the publication of *Islam and the West* (1993), namely that democracy and modernity are incompatible with Islam; that Muslims feel humiliated because of the West's superiority, and that Muslims are nostalgic for the ancient past. As is habitually the case with Orientalist scholarship, Lewis ignores the historic Western role in Middle-Eastern affairs, as exemplified by the legacy of colonialism or the occupation of Arab territories by Israel (only mentioned once in *What Went Wrong*). For him, these are merely illustrations of a vicious "blame game", in which Arabs/Muslims, while not wanting to learn from the "infidels," gratuitously project

⁶³ See: Buruma, I. (2004, October). Lost in Translation. *New Yorker*. See Also: Gresh, A. (September, 2004). A L'Origine d'un Concept. *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

⁶⁴ See: Lewis, Bernard, "Orientalism: an exchange", in *New York Review of Books*, no. 29, 1982, pp. 49-56.

their failures into criticisms of European imperialism and American policies concerning Israel (Lewis 2002: 151-60). Lewis avoids any serious contextual analysis of the ongoing crises in the Middle East. This shortcoming is highlighted by As'ad AbuKhalil who criticised Lewis for deriving his assessment of the Palestinians' political predicament from a de-contextualized interpretation of a 9th Century Arabic manuscript (AbuKhalil 2002: 18). This kind of essentialist presumption undermines Lewis' scholarly understanding of Middle-Eastern affairs. Some of Lewis' critics like Nader Hashemi believe that Lewis tries to project a line back to medieval and early Islamic history, so that the impact of the British and French colonialists, and the repressive rule of many post-colonial leaders are ignored' (Hirsh 2004).

However, by highlighting Lewis' shortcomings, I do not adhere to the so-called Occidentalists⁶⁵ thesis, which tends to blame the "West" entirely, while exonerating Arabs and Muslims from their due responsibilities within particular crises. In this regard, I endorse Said's view that:

the absence of democracy and the culture of violence that now are prevailing in the Arab world are Arabs' responsibilities to rectify, but because the West has important even massive interest in the Arab world and as it regularly intervenes to protect those interests... a certain responsibility for what is taking place, and continues to occur there, must also be borne by the West (Said 1992).

These comments reflect the views of other scholars, such as the Moroccan philosopher Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, who contends that Arabs can fully enter the age of technology, participate in production, and aspire to express their role in the world, but only once they succeed in building a model of Arab unity based on social justice and democracy. This prescription did not prevent Al-Jabri from highlighting various external obstacles, such as American hegemony and the role of Israel in obstructing Middle Eastern development (Fritsch-El-Alaoui 2005: 47-48).

But nuanced voices, such as Al-Jabri's, had little public opportunity to press their point, whereas Lewis' ideas underpin respected canons of knowledge about the Middle East. He conceived of a "Clash of the Civilizations" decades before Samuel Huntington. At a Middle

⁶⁵ Occidentalism is a recent field of study of the discourse constructing Europe or "the West." Bryan Turner states that Occidentalism rejects anything associated with the West, which means the implicit abandonment of the heritage of modernity. See Turner, B. S. (1997). *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism*. New York: Routledge.

East conference at Johns Hopkins University in 1957, he declared that 'we shall be better able to understand this situation if we view the present discontents of the Middle East not as a conflict between states or nations, but as a clash between civilizations' (Glass 2004). At that time, he did not have the ear of American policy makers, who were busy containing the Soviet Union. Moreover, Washington had still some credibility in the Middle East (despite its role in toppling the nationalist Iranian prime minister in 1953). The United States prevented colonial powers France and Britain from returning to the Middle East (during the 1956 Suez crisis). As Glass observes, Lewis' reference to the Christendom-Islam split found an audience among American Cold War warriors only when they lost their Soviet nemesis (Glass 2004).⁶⁶

During the 1950s and 1960s, the United States sought to counteract communist and nationalist forces by building diplomatic connections with Middle Eastern regimes (Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, and Pakistan). In 1955, *The Central Treaty Organization* (CENTO, or the Baghdad Pact) was established to include Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran, as well as the United Kingdom. CENTO's main goal was to contain the Soviet Union along its southwestern frontier. As a result, the United States established communications and electronic intelligence facilities in Iran, and began operating U-2 intelligence flights over the U.S.S.R. from bases in Pakistan.

At the same time, the Soviet Union stepped up its efforts to gain local allies in the Middle East, and slowly succeeded in gaining a strong foothold in the region (Egypt until 1974, Syria, Iraq after 1958, Algeria, Libya after 1969, Southern Yemen etc.). As result, Washington perceived that a majority of Arab states were on the side of the enemy. This consolidated the United States – Israel alliance, which further alienated the peoples of the Middle East. From the 1970s, the relationship between the United States and Middle Eastern states was strained by the 1973-1974 Arab oil embargo, the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1979, and the Iranian student takeover of the American Embassy in Tehran. The ensuing hostage crisis, which fatally damaged Carter's presidency, contributed to the election of Ronald Reagan to the White House. He was determined to compensate for Jimmy Carter's alleged lack of leadership, and came to office with the Middle East high on his agenda (Crenshaw 1995).

⁶⁶ Nonetheless, Orientalist ideas imbued news media and popular literature throughout the 1980s. For example, the former war correspondent- David Pryce-Jones in *The Closed Circle: an Interpretation of the Arabs* (1989) claimed to show "how Arab society functions". According to him, Arab society and politics derive from the "closed circle" of tribalism, excessive reliance on violence, self-aggrandizement, and other unsavoury characteristics. David Pryce-Jones asserted that 'there is no acceptable definition of a modern Muslim' (p.xi); 'an Arab democrat is not even an idealization, but a contradiction in terms' (p.406); and 'Islam and representative democracy are two [...] incompatible ideals' (p. xi).

Ironically, since the mid 1970s, the United States encouraged Islamism⁶⁷ as a counter-weight to communist influence in the Middle East (Marquand & Andoni 1996). Ronald Reagan even invited the leaders of the Afghan Mujahedeen to the White House praising them as “the moral equivalent of America’s founding fathers” (Al-Azm 2004: 115).

However, Reagan also rhetorically threatened Libya and Iran and all those who supported them. As a result, there was a marked increase in acts of political violence from Middle Eastern militant groups, and far more Americans were killed during the 1980s than the 1990s (Lizza 2004). For example, following the U.S. military intervention in Lebanon (29 September 1982), suicide bombers attacked the U.S. Embassy in Beirut (18 April 1983), killing sixty-three people. Later that year (23 October 1983), a 12,000-pound bomb destroyed the Marine barracks in Beirut killing 241 Americans - the most deadly terrorist strike against the United States until 11 September 2001. Other violent incidents⁶⁸ combined with U.S. military interventions in Lebanon (1983) and Libya (1986), along with covert actions against Iran, further soured relations between the United States and its Middle Eastern detractors. This heated environment fuelled, according to Burke III, a “new Orientalism” with a new object of fear and study: Islam. By the end of the 1980s, the mass media had established a simplistic monolithic Islam opposed to the West.

Accordingly, Bernard Lewis published in 1990 an *Atlantic Monthly* article entitled ‘Roots of Muslim rage.’ He reduced complex political, economic and social dynamics to a simplistic leitmotif: the “rage” of Muslims at “us” happens because “what is evil and unacceptable [to them] is the domination of infidels over true believers” (Lewis 1990: 53). Such oversimplifications ignore particular political grievances in the Middle East by framing all resentments in terms of religious difference and conflict. The resuscitation of such prejudices became a discernable pattern after western politics lost its “other” with the collapse of organized communism (Turner 2002: 109). Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990 provided the perfect pretext for a new American geo-strategic objective: reshaping the Middle East so as to control energy sources. Oil and construction companies supported this objective as did neoconservatives and pro-Israel lobbyists imbued with Orientalist ideas.

⁶⁷ I define the term Islamist as follows: Organizations of dedicated and trained Muslims, who call on others to be more observant and who are willing to struggle against corruption and social injustice. See Esposito, J. L. (1998). *Islam: The Straight Path* (3rd ed.): Oxford University Press US. p.170

⁶⁸ Examples include: the attack on a restaurant near an airbase in Spain which killed 18 American soldiers; the hijacking of TWA 847, in July 1985; and the Achille Lauro incident, in which Palestinian militants commandeered a cruise ship and killed a disabled American man.

By the early 1990s, neo-conservative ideas and attitudes had become a political force in the United States. Declarations of American exceptionalism and the desire to employ military power permeated Washington's political elites (Halper and Clarke 2004: 67). Geopolitical interests in the Middle East brought together neo-conservative doctrine and the prejudices of Orientalist scholarship. This bond rests upon 'a hatred of Arabs and Muslims, an identification with Israel, and racism towards decolonized "Third World" people of the global South, who are seen as inferior, primitive [and] backward' (Abdulhadi 2004: 85-86). An important consequence of the neoconservative-Orientalist convergence was the resurgence of crude medieval-style rhetoric, highlighting the opposition between Islam and Christianity as a looming problem for the West. Samuel Huntington best exemplifies this outlook. In *The Clash of Civilizations*, he declares that the possibility of dangerous clashes between East and West rests upon the fundamental differences that exist between two civilisations—'The West and the rest—and more specifically 'between Muslim and Asian societies on the one hand, and the West on the other' (Huntington 1997: 183). Huntington presupposes that the West's global power is diminishing, and argues that rearmament strategies are necessary.

Initially, the academic community soundly criticized Huntington's book on numerous grounds. Some authors maintained that civilizations should be thought of as processes or tendencies rather than as fixed and bounded essences (Cox 2000). In this regard, Edward Said explains that 'Huntington...wants to make "civilizations" and "identities" into what they are not: shut-down, sealed-off entities that have been purged of the myriad currents and counter-currents that animate human history.' He went on to observe that 'this history not only contains wars of religion and imperial conquest but also expressions of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing' (Said 2001). Similarly, Ishtiaq Ahmed deplores how Huntington's worldview downgrades human purpose to tribal instincts which negate 'the long and arduous struggle of human beings to transcend the bounds of race, religion, caste, sect and language'. For Ahmed, the "clash of civilizations" thesis denies the notion of universal human rights and the spirit of internationalism and global solidarity that humanity has long struggled to achieve (Ahmed 2003).

From an international relations perspective, some academics remarked that foreign policy decisions were made by governments not civilizations (Abrahamian 2003: 530). Others put forward evidence which falsified Huntington's thesis. Islamic Iran, for example, has sided in recent years with Orthodox Christian Russia against the Muslim republic of Chechnya. Iran

also took the side of Orthodox Christian Armenia against Muslim Azerbaijan, while backing Hindu India in its confrontation against Muslim Pakistan (Cornell 1998: 51). Showing the empirical shortcomings in Huntington's thesis, Chiozza meticulously researched all the conflicts that took place from 1946 to 1997, including the first eight years of the post-Cold War era. The findings of this study reveal that disputes between groups belonging to different "civilizations" are in general less likely to happen, while countries belonging to the same civilization are more conflict prone (Chiozza 2002).⁶⁹

Huntington's book exemplified how Orientalist treatments of Islam pervaded popular literature during the 1990s. For example, in *God Has Ninety Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East* (1996), Judith Miller (who has covered the region for twenty-five years for *The New York Times*) provides accounts of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Algeria, Libya, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Iran. Yet despite her extensive experience in the region, Miller's account is full of double standards. When referring to pro-American regimes such as Saudi Arabia or Jordan, Miller legitimizes their crushing of internal opposition by depicting such actions as a "strategic decision." She also comments that it was 'natural that the king, or any ruler, would try to survive' (Miller 1996: 340-341). Yet, the repressive deeds of an anti-U.S. regime, such as Syria, are depicted as "state terrorism" (Miller 1996: 15-16). Miller omits local contextual analysis by classifying Arab rulers in terms of their distance from Washington. In the case of Egypt, Miller does not consider the political, economic and social grievances behind the rise of violent political movements there. For Miller, only Arab tradition and mentality can explain turmoil in the region. In this regard, she repeats Lewis' claim that Arabs like to avoid blame for their circumstances 'by spinning elaborate conspiracy theories' (Miller 1996: 355). Miller described the American-supported Egyptian ruler Hosni Mubarak, who has a poor human rights record, as 'a patriot who wanted only the best for Egypt,' and stated that she 'found his candour disarming' (Miller 1996: 44).

⁶⁹ Other researchers reached similar conclusions. For example, Ted Robert Gurr (1994) has employed systematic analyses to assess the validity of Huntington's perspective for explaining violence within states. His findings disprove Huntington's claims. Of the 50 most serious ethno-political conflicts being fought in 1993-94, only 18 meet Huntington's criteria. In the Middle East, for example, only one active internal conflict (Palestinians in the Occupied Territories) was waged between peoples from different civilizations, while five (two in Iraq, and one each in Iran, Morocco, and Turkey) were within a single civilization. Another study that tested Huntington's hypotheses regarding states' involvement in militarized interstate disputes between 1950 - 1992 concluded that states in four of the eight civilizations (singled out by Huntington) fought more among themselves than with states in other civilizations. See: Russett, B., Oneal, J. R., & Cox, M. (2000). Clash of Civilizations: Realism and Liberalism Déjà Vu? *Journal of Peace Research*, 37(5): 589, 602.

Another example of 1990s Orientalist writing is Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld*. In my view, Barber's chapter on Islam is a more sophisticated version of the Lewis/Huntington paradigm. Undeniably, Barber conducts a good analysis of the correlation between global corporate capitalism and fundamentalist movements throughout the world. Yet, when he handles the issue of Islam, Barber regurgitates classic Orientalist themes. He states: 'although it is clear that Islam is a complex religion that by no means is synonymous with Jihad, it is relatively inhospitable to democracy and that inhospitality in turn nurtures conditions favourable to parochialism, anti-modernism, exclusiveness, and hostility to "others," the characteristics that constitute what I have called Jihad' (Barber 1996: 204). Critics of Barber, reproach to him his lack of evidence (Barber refers only to the Quran and 7th century Medina) and the fact that he omits the events of the last 100 years. Khaldoun Samman argues that 'an individual living in 1850 would not be able to recognize the same Islamic real estate some 70 years later, no matter how much he read the Quran' (Samman 2005: 166).

The preceding examples demonstrate how Orientalism continues to pervade the prevailing knowledge/power nexus albeit in more subtle ways. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the American global posture gave pre-eminence to the Middle East for various strategic reasons. Therefore, the official discourse drew upon Orientalist rhetoric as a way to establish an Arab/Islamic "other". Past imagined narratives became associated with present populations in the Middle East, and ancient myths were refashioned to identify Islam and Arabs as a single cultural entity, without internal complexities, and most importantly without any systemic relationship to the larger world. Contemporary Orientalism continues to focus on the Arab/Muslim Orient and has legitimized U.S. imperial policy since the suicide bombings of September 2001.

3.5- Definitions and discourses of terrorism

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the words "terrorism" and "terrorists" were first used in 1795 to characterise state violence in post-revolutionary France. Thus, the systematic use of terror was initially understood as a coercive technique or method of subjection used by rulers to control the people. In the 19th century, the term "terrorist" was rapidly extended to groups or individuals that carried out violent actions and assassinations against ruling elites. Such victims of assassinations included the French President Sadi Carnot (1894), Empress Elizabeth of Austria (1897), the Spanish Prime Minister Antonio Canova (1897), the Italian king Umberto I (1900), and the President of the United States William McKinley (1901). In

that period, terrorism was already the leading preoccupation of politicians, police chiefs, journalists, and writers (Laqueur, 1996).

Despite evidence of terrorist tactics within ancient Israel⁷⁰, there is a tendency to associate terrorist actions with Arabs and Muslims irrespective of evidence (Wilkins & Downing 2002: 419). Thus, according to the chronology of terror compiled by Dobson and Payne (1986), the first hijacking of a plane was conducted by Palestinians in July 1968. Yet, this allegation contradicts findings of the American Federal Aviation Administration stating that seventy-nine hijackings occurred worldwide between 1930 and 1967. A notorious hijacking happened in 1956, when the French authorities hijacked a plane carrying the leaders of the Algerian Liberation Front (FLN), including Ahmed Ben Bella, the first president of post-independent Algeria (Falligot 2001).

It is interesting to note that the term "terrorism" only started to occupy a prominent place in the media and academia after 1967 (Guelke 1995: 2). The 1967 Six-Day war in the Middle East, in which Israel militarily defeated three Arab countries, led Palestinian groups to undertake armed interventions for themselves. After 1967, Palestinians who had lost their entire homeland to Israel resorted to highly mediatised violent actions. It should be remembered that the "armed struggle" was carried in the name of socialist liberation, which also attracted numerous educated urban youth in Western Europe and elsewhere. Baader Meinhof, for example, was the most active left-wing armed group in West Germany. This group, founded in 1970, voiced the resentment of German leftist students against "capitalism" in Germany, and the alliance with Washington during the Vietnam War. The Italian Red Brigades (formed in 1970 and still operational today though considerably diminished) sought to create a revolutionary state through armed struggle and to separate Italy from the Western Alliance. Other European groups resorting to political violence expressed nationalist and ethnic grievances. Thus, the Irish paramilitary group PIRA (commonly referred to as IRA) fought to end Northern Ireland's status within the United Kingdom and create a united Ireland by violent means (until the 1998 Good Friday agreement). Likewise, the Basque paramilitary group ETA sought to create a socialist state for the Basque people in the Basque Country, independent from Spain and France. In Latin America: the Colombian group FARC, which is

⁷⁰ It is believed that during the Roman occupation of Palestine (around 67-73 C.E.), a Judean movement known as the *sicarii* began an indiscriminate war against its enemies. In this massive revolt against Rome, the *sicarii* would use terrorist tactics against their less zealous co-religionists. Violence included the burning of palaces, the torching of public archives and granaries, and the poisoning of wells. See: Weinberger, J. (2003). Defining Terror. *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, (Winter/Spring); pg.64

still operational today, was established in 1964 as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party. Similarly, during the 1960s and 1970s, the Tupamaros in Uruguay (known as the MLN) used urban guerrilla tactics against Uruguay's oppressive military dictatorship.

After 1967, the widespread use of political violence generated numerous of books and articles with the term 'terrorism' in their title. Norman Provizer, the author of two major bibliographies on terrorism, pointed out that over ninety-nine percent of the general works on terrorism had been published from 1968 (Guelke 1995: 2). Frequent use of the term "terrorism" did not reflect any scientific precision. Indeed, there is no universally agreed upon definition of terrorism. One approach defines terrorism as 'a particular use of violence for political ends, where the violence is intended to create a psychological reaction in a person or group of people –the psychological target- to make them act in a way which the attacker desires' (Drake 1998: 53). Another definition defines terrorism as 'the victimization of unarmed civilians in an attempt to affect the policies of the government that leads those civilians' (Carr 1997). One of the most serious academic attempts to find an appropriate definition of terrorism was undertaken by Schmid and Yongman in their monumental work, *Political Terrorism* (1984). These experts on terrorism listed some 109 definitions. Their attempt to narrow all of these definitions into one resulted in the following statement:

Terrorism is an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal, or political reasons, whereby - in contrast to assassination - the direct targets of violence are not the main targets. The immediate human victims of violence are generally chosen randomly (targets of opportunity) or selectively (representative or symbolic targets) from a target population, and serve as message generators. Threat- and violence-based communication processes between terrorist (organization), (imperilled) victims, and main targets are used to manipulate the main target (audience(s)), turning it into a target of terror, a target of demands, or a target of attention, depending on whether intimidation, coercion, or propaganda is primarily sought (Schmid and Yongman 1984: 5-6)

From an official perspective, this definition is problematic because it includes the violence inflicted by the armed forces of nation-states alongside that perpetrated by non-state or sub-state entities. In any case, no matter what the general definition is, "terrorism" is not simply an expression of violence; it is an act of politics by those who declare that no other channels of political engagement exist (Flint 2003: 161).

In theory, there is a difference between armed forces and non-state organisations: state forces in principle respect war conventions that limit violence against civilians, while sub-state organisations eschew these conventions. In practice, however the difference is not clear-cut. Deliberate "terrorising" of civilians by conventional military forces is often the norm. Accordingly, terrorism can be defined as 'the systematic use of coercive intimidation against civilians for political goals' (Norris et al 2003: 6). This definition does not leave out state actors. Examples in this regard abound; the Japanese invasion of Nanking, the London blitz, the Allied bombing of Germany and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all targeted civilians in the hope of shattering morale. This is synonymous with the exercise of terrorism. From the Second World War onwards, mass bombing of civilians has become an essential tool of military strategy. In this regard, it has been suggested that these same strategies encouraged the adoption of terrorism by non-state groups (Carruthers 2000: 164).

Hence, "terrorism" is a word, which is deployed rhetorically and selectively for given purposes. For example, the attacks upon civilians in Nicaragua by the U.S.-supported "contra" rebels of the 1980s claimed over 3000 civilian lives. They were never denounced by American mainstream media as "terrorism". Again, the massacre of over 2000 Palestinian civilians in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Beirut in 1982 is rarely referred to as "terrorist" activity, and the alleged perpetrators of that massacre, members of the Lebanese Forces and their supporters in the Israeli military, are rarely called "terrorists" (Kapitan & Schulte 2002: 172). Inconsistency of usage is further exacerbated when former "terrorists" become elected politicians, and/or sometimes central figures on the global political scene; Nelson Mandela, Menachem Begin, and Yasser Arafat all made the transition from being regarded as terrorists to being recognised as statesmen and peacemakers. In fact, they all have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and Mandela in particular is considered to be a paragon of moral leadership.

To avoid the inconsistencies and the polemics behind the term "terrorism", I prefer to adhere to Noam Chomsky's comprehensive yet short definition. For him, terrorism refers to 'the threat or use of violence to intimidate or coerce.' This definition is opportune because it incorporates all kinds of terror. Herman (1982) had previously made the distinction between state terror, which he termed "wholesale terror", and the terror of isolated individuals and small groups which he termed "retail terror". Herman argues that the latter had been

overemphasised notwithstanding the pain and suffering which resulted. This allows official manipulations of public fears and the "engineering of consent" (Herman 1982: 212).

As argued earlier, any understanding of terrorism depends on the definition, which in turn depends on the perspective. Some academics identify four ways of talking about terrorism: official, alternative, populist and oppositional. The official perspective tends to be the most prevalent. It 'represents the set of views, arguments, explanations and policy suggestions advanced by those who speak for the state' (Schlesinger et al 1983: 2-27). The key official definers of terrorism are government ministers, conservative politicians and top security personnel. For them, terrorism is an extreme form of criminality with no political significance (Schlesinger et al 1983: 2-7). Consequently, terrorism represents illegitimate political violence as opposed to the legitimate force used by the state. This stance allows official authorities to label all attempts to change the status quo by coercive means as terrorist manifestations. This delegitimises national liberation movements, as well as social economic revolutions (Weinberger 2003: 65-66). Labelling is part of the war of ideas that accompanies overt hostilities; "terrorism" is thus a term designed to vilify opponents. This label automatically discredits any individual or group to which it is affixed; it places them outside the norms of acceptable social and political behaviour. Terrorists by definition are people who cannot be reasoned with.⁷¹ The labelling process is an ideological exercise which turns state violence into a legitimate act of war, and "terrorist" operations into acts of gratuitous brutality (Meeuf, 2006).

In *Policing the Crisis*, Hall argues that the mass media lend legitimacy to the views of official sources, and thus serve to symbolically reproduce the institutional order of society. Official authorities are primary definers, able to set agendas; they 'command the field [and] set the terms of reference'. Moreover counter-definitions are usually denied access, or fitted into the dominant agenda, leading to "strategic areas of silence". The state may be rhetorically challenged as in investigatory journalism, but the 'prevailing tendency is to reproduce, amidst all their contradictions, the definitions of the powerful, of the dominant ideology' (Hall et al 1978: 59, 65-66). To this end, the media tends to consolidate the ruling ideology by criminalizing various forms of dissent. As a result, coverage of political violence becomes a ritual, which always features condemnation from politicians and community leaders, the stories and grief of the victims, and the reaction of the government.

⁷¹ See, for example, the description of terrorists in Netanyahu, B. (1986) *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux.

Media organisations thereby find themselves constrained to adopt a "counter-terrorist" stance, facing popular and possibly legal sanctions if they fail to comply. In the case of the I.R.A. and Northern Ireland, former British Prime Minister Thatcher criticised the B.B.C. and independent programs for allowing interviews with republican groups. She did not want their views disseminated to a wider public. Thus, in October 1988 the British Government imposed a broadcasting ban; several named Irish organisations, including the I.R.A., Sinn Fein, the U.D.A. and U.F.F. could not be heard speaking on television and radio (this ban lasted until September 1994). The ban turned out to be farcical; for example, when Gerry Adams was Member of Parliament for West Belfast, he could appear on television in that capacity, speaking about housing, roads or schools, but he could not address political matters on behalf of Sinn Fein. He could be seen and his views reported, but his voice could not be broadcast. (Schlesinger et al 1983: 23-27)

In the United States, every president from Carter to George W. Bush labelled and externalised various forms of political violence. After the suicide attacks of 9/11, the discourse on terrorism became far more prominent. It is undeniable that these attacks constituted an unprecedented attack on American soil, in which thousands of people died and landmark buildings crumbled. September 11, 2001 witnessed one of the most dramatic media spectacles in history. Hundreds of TV cameras and commentators throughout the world focused on downtown New York, as graphic images displayed panic scenes of wounded and dazed people fleeing. Almost immediately American television news drew upon the discourse of patriotism to describe the atrocity. American news media relied heavily on elite sources, and the frames that they conveyed, to mobilise public support. Initial U.S. news coverage did not even open a debate about whether or not to go to war or how best to respond. In this regard, Karim H. Karim observed that on September 11th, 'most experts interviewed responded to security matters and did not seem interested in the larger political, social and economic causes of the attacks.' Consequently, the focus was primarily on the immediate reaction rather than on the larger issues (Karim 2002: 105). Similarly, Robert McChesney has challenged the pre-eminence given to the official perspective over others in mainstream news stories after 9/11; 'in a case like the current war on terrorism, where the elites and official sources are unified on the core issues, the nature of our press coverage is uncomfortably close to that found in authoritarian societies with limited formal press freedom' (McChesney 2002: 95).

The aftermath of 9/11 attacks witnessed moves toward information control by the Bush administration, as well as a journalistic inclination towards “patriotism” rather than impartiality. This impacted greatly on the ability of reporters to do their job properly. The reporters and commentators dispatched to comment on the events of September 11 became propaganda conduits for the military rather than independent analysts. Personalities such as John McCain, Henry Kissinger, Lawrence Eagleburger, James Baker, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, immediately described the attacks as an “act of war” and called for military retaliation, a line that dominated media discourse for a considerable time. The frame proposed by the administration, namely the “War on Terror”, was not especially new despite the fact that September 11 is often referred to as “the day that changed the world” (Campbell 2002: 12). Indeed the “War on Terror” idiom was first declared in 1981 when the Reagan administration targeted “state-sponsored terrorism” with particular reference to Nicaragua⁷².

The political complicity of the U.S. media with ruling elites has also economic dimensions. Indeed, since the mid-1980s media ownership is increasingly concentrated. This state of affairs led media critics Herman and Chomsky to propose their Propaganda Model in *Manufacturing Consent*. In this perspective, the concentration of media ownership reinforces the mainstream media’s dependence on elite information sources. Large news media institutions may also participate in propaganda campaigns helpful to elite interests (Herman and Chomsky 1988: 303). Media content undeniably reflects the pressures and priorities of owners. McChesney argues that ‘their constant drumbeat for profit, their concern with minimizing costs and enhancing revenues, invariably influences the manner in which news is collected and reported’ (McChesney 2003: 306). Furthermore, McChesney notes that budget-cutting on journalism has had a negative impact, ‘it has meant a relaxation or alteration, sometimes severe, of professional news standards’ (McChesney 2003: 309). Other studies confirm that news media have economic motivations to align with government leaders in times of crisis (Hutcheson et al, 2004).

Immediately after 9/11, alternative perspectives to the official discourse were virtually absent in American mainstream media. In general, the alternative perspective is advanced by civil libertarians, liberal academics, journalists and some politicians. While alternative views do

⁷² The faces conducting the new phase of the “War on Terror” were also not new; John Negroponte, the overseer of the actual “war on terror” in Iraq, ran the operations against Nicaragua. Donald Rumsfeld, himself was Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East during Reagan’s “war on terror” there. Likewise Elliott Abrams, who was implicated in the Iran-contra affair, was appointed by Bush II ‘to lead the National Security Council's office for Near East and North African affairs’. (Chomsky, 2003: 96, 106-07)

not fundamentally challenge official assumptions about the legitimate use of violence, they do consider the impact of excessive repression on the rule of law and democratic rights (Schlesinger et al 1983: 2-27). The absence of alternative perspectives immediately post 9/11 is related to the fact that terrorism was represented as beyond law. Irene Porras gives an insightful analysis on this matter:

To say anything about terrorism or terrorists, it turns out, is to be caught in a normative bind: one must either be for or against terrorism. In terrorism discourse, if I am not explicitly against terrorism then I am necessarily for it. There is no middle ground, no ambivalent position available. Not to condemn terrorism is to condone it, and to condone terrorism is to be morally as bad as a terrorist. Indeed to publicly sympathize with terrorism may itself become a terrorist offence. Thus I find that there is really only one legitimate position that I may hold vis-à-vis terrorism and terrorists. I must think terrorism a great evil (Porras 1995: 298-299).

So generally speaking, there was little discussion in mainstream media about domestic legal mechanisms and virtually no focus upon international law. When they were mentioned, 'legal responses were condemned as a failed policy that provided terrorists with too many procedural safeguards' (McMillan 2004: 391). The official perspective's devaluation of legal procedure as a response to terrorism has been highlighted by many authors (Chomsky 2001; Porras 1995; Zulaika & Douglass 1996). By disregarding the dimension of law, official terrorism discourses rely upon political violence to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Western state and the boundaries of the Western community (Porras 1995). Just as Orientalism constructed an image of the self in contrast to that of the "other", so the official discourse on terrorism positioned the state as barrier against outside forces. Annamarie Oliverio has argued in *The State of Terror* that "terrorism" has become the ideal means to write 'the script for historical interpretations of national identity and political sovereignty'. The end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the rival communist "Evil Empire", means that the discourse of terrorism is an alternative means for constructing national identity (Oliverio 1998: 6, 37). This, in turn, unleashes even further violence against outside forces both at home and abroad.

Nonetheless, there were some attempts to provide an alternative discourse on terrorism. Aljazeera exemplifies this endeavour (this will be discussed in more detail in later chapters). The internet too has proved to be a mine of alternative discourses on terrorism. Indeed, this period witnessed an increase in blogs that discussed the prospects of war in the Middle East.

Those opposed to the war pointed to the perceived shortcomings of the mainstream mass media in regard to informing the public of the possible dangers, risks and threats associated with the American military actions (Allan 2004: 358). One of the bloggers exemplifying this trend was Christopher Allbritton, who travelled to Iraq thanks to contributions from his readers. From there, he filed daily stories and responded to e-mail queries from his readers (Allan 2004: 359). The purpose of Allbritton's blog was to provide an alternative perspective on the conflict.

The populist discourse on terrorism was noticeably present in the media post 9/11. Populism has been defined by Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell as 'an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous "others" who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice' (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008: 3)⁷³. The populist perspective insists that combating terrorism and restoring order requires a tough and uncompromising response. This perspective calls for a "full-blooded" war against terrorism aimed at restoring order by whatever means necessary. It has been suggested that war is the "supreme populist moment" (Steinert 2003: 266). Such populism enlists the greatest number of co-citizens to work for a shared goal, thereby leading to a militant form of national unity. Examples of such discourse proliferated after 9/11. In the New York Post, a day after the attacks, columnist Steve Dunleavy wrote: '...kill the bastards. A gunshot between the eyes, blow them to smithereens, poison them if you have to. As for cities or countries that host these worms, bomb them into basketball courts' (Mokhiber & Weissman 2001). Likewise on Fox News, Bill O'Reilly said on his show *The O'Reilly Factor* (17 September 2001) that 'the U.S. should bomb the Afghan infrastructure to rubble - the airport, the power plants, their water facilities, and the roads.' He added that the people of any country are ultimately responsible for the government they have. O'Reilly then went on to say: 'the Germans were responsible for Hitler; the Afghans are responsible for the Taliban. We should not target civilians. But if they do not rise up against this criminal government, they starve, period'.

Finally, the oppositional perspective is put forward by those who perform or support acts of politically motivated violence in support of given objectives. Adherents of political violence

⁷³ According to this definition, populism is not simply an offshoot of other ideologies (such as nationalism, neo-liberalism etc.). By claiming it reflects the pure and undiluted will of the people, populism can easily work with ideologies of both Right and Left.

try to gain respectability in the public sphere through statements, briefings, staged events, publications and murals. In place of terrorist discourse, they use alternative terms such as "guerrilla", "liberation army" or "freedom fighter". The Irish Republican Army (IRA), for example, used terminology which promoted the group as a legitimate army with military structures and ranks. The IRA had an "army council," "brigades," "battalions," "companies" and "active service units." Members held ranks such as "commander," "brigadier," "quartermaster" etc. The IRA commonly described members, who were serving time in prison for violent acts, as "POWs" or as "political prisoners" (Cooke 1998: 7). The oppositional perspective can also include people who explain the "terrorist" viewpoint without supporting their methods. Robert Fisk and John Pilger provide some of the best examples of this perspective. Other examples include Robert McChesney, Noam Chomsky, Edward Said, and Tariq Ali. However, this outlook receives only minor mass media exposure (Schlesinger et al 1983: 22-27). Yet again, these authors can be read on the internet, worldwide. In fact, the net has provided an opportunity for even more radical views to be accessed by a wide public. For example, the *Iraqi Resistance* website⁷⁴ has actively reported and explained the views and motives of the local Iraqi fighters. It also includes galleries of photos, showing overwhelmed American troops, and as is usual for this type of communication, images of triumphant opposition forces.

In sum, one can say that all these perspectives on terrorism actively seek the attention of media. Some of these perspectives overlap, and writers might use a combination of perspectives (i.e. populist/official, alternative/oppositional). It is evident that the official perspective gets most of the attention, while the populist perspective is prevalent and serves its purpose of domestic unity (especially when the American military goes to war). The institutional tendency of the news media to filter out anti-elite perspectives explains the marginalisation of alternative discourses on terrorism⁷⁵; oppositional perspectives received little if any coverage after 9/11. However, alternative and oppositional arguments were somewhat represented on the internet and via transnational satellite channels.

3.6- Terrorism and Orientalism

The hegemonic discourses of "terrorism" and Orientalism closely resemble each other. In both cases, the nexus of knowledge and power operates through discourse. For example,

⁷⁴ http://www.albasrah.net/moqawama/english/iraqi_resistance.htm

⁷⁵ Sometimes, the alternative discourse becomes prevalent when official counter-terrorist strategies have proved counter-productive.

“Corporate Orientalism” makes statements about [the Orient], produces dominating definitions of it and rules over it (Said 1979: 3). Similarly, the counter-terrorist intelligentsia produces knowledge about terrorism that is always amenable to elite agendas of control. Resemblances between the two began at the definitional level. Like Orientalism, much research on terrorism provides little more than generalizations, and reductionist historical chronologies (see for example Ascher 1986; Laqueur 1977). In addition, many works serve only to demonize the term “terrorism”, while constructing highly malleable definitions that could include all kinds of dissenters against the state (Clutterbuck 1975; Jenkins 1985; Nacos 1994; Wilkinson 1986). In this regard, Lon Troyer observes: ‘definitional ambiguity is not an unfortunate state of affairs for the discourse on terrorism -- it is its tactical strength’. In his view, ‘the malleability of the term allows for its opportunistic application, frequently for the purpose of differentiating state violence from other, insurgent forms, thus rendering the violence and the politics of opposition groups illegitimate simultaneously’ (Troyer 2001). Similarly, Pat Lauderdale has observed that political motives are behind the practices that maintain, create, and change the definition of terrorism (Oliverio and Lauderdale 2005: 154).

As with Orientalism, official discourse on terrorism has affinities with the Gramscian notion of hegemony. Indeed, Antonio Gramsci initially used the concept of “hegemony” to conceptualize the ability of the modern state to rule over its citizenry. According to him, hegemony refers to ‘an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society, in all its institutions and private manifestations’ (Quoted in Altheide 1987: 163). Gramsci expressed the view that intellectuals often gave credence to the ideas of the ruling class. This insight helps us to understand the role of think tanks dealing with the issue of terrorism. They adhere almost exclusively to governmental theses, omitting any attention to social relations of domination, which might underlie outbreaks of political violence. Yet, as with Orientalists, the counter-terrorist intelligentsia monopolizes knowledge about the subject under review, and makes public discussion of counter-hegemonic political views dangerous if not impossible.

The hegemonic discourse of counter-terrorism also resembles Orientalism in that both employ de-contextualization and de-historicization techniques. In a compelling 1988 article entitled ‘Identity, Negation and Violence’, Edward Said noted the way these techniques have been built into the counterterrorist discourse. In this regard, Said found out that those rhetorical tendencies waned little over time. For example, in the official discourse concerning Irish

resistance to British rule, little difference exists between the recommendations of Robert Louis Stevenson in 'Confessions of a Unionist' (1888) and the suggestions of his 1988 editor Jeremy Treglown. Both recommend a full use of force in facing the Irish opposition regardless of any context (Said 1988: 49). This avoidance of context and history in writings about terrorism precludes any questioning of the term "terrorist" itself. One cannot seek any "root causes" because this would render the commentator an apologist for violence. The hegemonic strategy that is recommended by the counter-terrorist intelligentsia is 'to act as if the term [terrorism] refers to a confirmed reality that, like obscenity, you know when you see it' (Troyer 2001). Another similarity between Orientalism and the official discourse on terrorism is their positioning of the "other." Just as Orientalism reproduces power relations vis-à-vis the external "other", so counter-terrorism reproduces power relations vis-à-vis the internal "other". Just as Orientalism represents the mirror image of the Western self, so terrorism represents the antithesis of liberal democracy. In both cases, "otherness" is the focal point.

As I will cover in chapter six, the rise of neo-conservatism as a major political force in Washington contributed to linking the terrorist discourse with the Middle East. Indeed, since the 1980s, neoconservative quarters made constant interventionism in the Middle East a cornerstone in the U.S. defence strategy. In subsequent strategic documents drafted by neo-conservatives, such as *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century* (2000),⁷⁶ terrorism is identified as the primary enemy for the United States. Yet surprisingly for such a strategic text, vagueness characterised the new enemy. Indeed, this document considers that the 'enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology. The enemy is terrorism' (p.5). This vagueness allowed every enemy of the U.S. administration to be associated with the term "terrorist". This substantiates the claim of critics who have long regarded "terrorism" as merely a label affixed to those opposing central authority at home and abroad. 'Without defined shape, or determinate roots', Derek Gregory writes, the mantle of "terrorism" can now 'be cast over *any* form of resistance to sovereign power' (Gregory 2003: 219, original emphasis). It was then no surprise that the first post-9/11 initiative of the Bush Administration was to silence the oppositional perspective at home, Attorney General John Ashcroft stated that critical voices 'only aid terrorists' (Carter & Barringer 2001). Subsequently, media flak (to borrow the term of Herman and Chomsky)

⁷⁶ This report was published by The Project for a New American Century (PNAC) in September 2000; one year prior to the suicide attacks of 11 September

vilified anti-war dissenters, critical researchers, and globalisation activists. Furthermore, pressure was exerted upon academic circles to close down serious discussion about the role of U.S. foreign policy in inciting political violence worldwide. A neoconservative association, namely the *American Council of Trustees and Alumni*, accused critical academics of 'giving comfort to America's enemies' (Lockman 2004: 256).

Externally, countering “terrorism” became the pretext for waging wars of domination. This was particularly striking in the case of the PNAC, which sent an open-letter on Sept. 20, 2001 to President Bush [stating,] ‘even if evidence does not link Iraq directly to the attack, any strategy aiming at the eradication of terrorism and its sponsors must include a determined effort to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq’ (Calabrese 2005: 159). Echoing the official frame, a mass-mediated demonization process within the United States targeted not only the group responsible for the attacks, but the Islamic civilization as a whole. Islam was depicted as being culpable for such attacks, and media audiences, especially in the western hemisphere, were constantly reminded of the backwardness, brutality and irrationality of everything Arab or Muslim. At this point, one can say that Orientalism and the official institutional discourse on terrorism reached a state of fusion. The result was a proliferation of an “alarmist” literature, which included such publications as: Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (2003); Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: the Terrorists Living among Us* (2003); Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America* (2003); Robert Spencer, *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World’s Fastest Growing Religion* (2002); Serge Trifkovic, *Sword of the Prophet* (2002); and Anonymous, *The Terrorist Hunter* (2003).

These writings adhered to medieval style Orientalism, and their recommendations were often aggressive. Authors such as Podhoretz called for the United States to remake the entire Middle East region by “forcibly re-educating the people” to follow the thinking of America's leaders (Podhoretz 2002). These views undeniably hold racist connotations; these gained credence from the sensationalist reporting of Islamic fundamentalist movements (Michael 2003: 715). While Western societies have long struggled to impede anti-Semitism, few made analogies between those attitudes and the spread of Islamophobia. An exception perhaps was Anne Norton, who observed that 'scholars familiar with the language of anti-Semitism will find [the writings about Islam] reminiscent of older, long-dishonoured texts'. She went on to say that ‘the careful fabrications, the language of blood libel, the calls for violence in the name of defence, all are present here’ (Norton 2004: 210-11). Numerous writers contributed

to the alarmist literature after 9/11, one of them, namely Daniel Pipes, clearly exemplifies the fusion between Orientalism and counter-terrorism discourses. Considered to be a Middle East scholar after writing *In the Path of God* (1983), Pipes lectured at several prestigious universities, and enjoyed frequent media access. He was a signatory of the Project for the New American Century, and served as a counter-terrorism analyst on the “Special Task Force on Terrorism and Technology” at the U.S. Department of Defence. Pipes stated that:

I approach the subject of Islam and politics from within the Orientalist tradition of European and American scholarship [...] [since] the fact remains that the Western academic study of Islam provides the *only* basis for an analysis of the religion in relation to political life. Certainly, the Orientalist tradition *cannot* be replaced by the recent profusion of writings by social scientists and journalists [emphasis added] (Pipes 1983: 24).

As argued earlier, the synthesis between Orientalism and counter-terrorism produced a discourse positioning both the “other” within the West (embodied by the Muslim minorities) and outside the West (embodied by the Muslim World). Echoing nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Orientalism with its explicit racist imagery, Daniel Pipes wrote back in 1990:

Fears of a Muslim influx have more substance than the worry about Jihad. Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and maintaining different standards of hygiene [...]. Put differently, Iranian zealots threaten more within the gates of Vienna than outside them (Pipes 1990)

After 9/11, these attitudes were reiterated. In *Militant Islam Reaches America* (2002), Pipes demonised Muslims within the United States by claiming that Muslims in America had adopted the ambitious agenda of converting all non-Muslims and replacing the American Constitution with the Koran.⁷⁷ Employing the counter-terrorist discourse, Pipes warns in the introduction to the 2002 edition of *In the Path of God* that ‘[t]he preservation of our existing order can no longer be taken for granted; it needs to be fought for,’ and calls for the need to “adopt a tough line” against “the ultimate enemy in the war on terrorism” (Pipes 2002: xi). For him, Muslims represent “a basically hostile population.” Therefore, there should be no mercy for Muslim civilians during military strikes. He argued that the ‘distinction between

⁷⁷ In a previous article, Pipes asserts that ‘[t]he Muslim population in this country [the US] is not like any other group, for it includes within it a substantial body of people—many times more numerous than the agents of Osama bin Laden—who share with the suicide hijackers a hatred of the United States and the desire, ultimately, to transform it into a nation living under the strictures of militant Islam’ (Pipes 2001)

terrorists operating in the name of Islam and ordinary Muslim "moms and dads"...is a true and valid distinction, but it goes much too far, and if adhered to as a guideline for policy, it will cripple the effort that must be undertaken to preserve our institutions' (Pipes 2002: 102, 124).

It is true that the intensity of this discourse has become marginalised over time, particularly after the public outcry against human rights abuses committed in the name of the United States in various detention camps worldwide (e.g. Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib). In this regard, American non-governmental organizations, such as *Human Rights Watch*, have protested against the lack of legal status and physical condition of detainees. In its 2003 world report, *Human Rights Watch* issued a strong criticism of the Bush administration:

On the anniversary of the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush asserted, as he had throughout the year, that the United States campaign against al-Qaeda was a fight for freedom, the rule of law and human dignity. Nevertheless, many of the steps taken by the U.S government to protect the country against terrorism belied the very principles the president pledged to defend. Over the past year, the country witnessed a persistent erosion of basic rights, including the right to liberty. The executive branch sought to circumvent legal restraints imposed by international human rights law and the Geneva Conventions, as well as the U.S. Constitution. It sought to shield its conduct from public scrutiny, disdaining democratic principles of public transparency and accountability, and to deny the courts any meaningful role in protecting citizens and non-citizens alike from arbitrary detention (Human Rights Watch 2003 [electronic version; no pagination])

The fact that military officers acted as interrogators, prosecutors and defence counsel, judges, and executioners, fuelled the scepticism about the fairness of the trials conducted in Guantanamo. These protests cooled the rhetoric stemming from the Orientalist/counter-terrorist nexus. For example, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman urged George W. Bush to 'just shut it down', calling Guantanamo "worse than an embarrassment" (Friedman 2005: A23). Eventually, the hard-line official discourse on terrorism loosened up, especially as civilian fatalities mounted in Iraq and Afghanistan. As subsequent chapters will show, Aljazeera fuelled international opposition against the Orientalist/counter-terrorist nexus.

3.7- Conclusion

To sum up, Orientalism is a discourse that originated during medieval times. It began as religious rhetoric but then evolved into an academically oriented discipline. Numerous scholars considered that the latter was deeply flawed and needed radical reform. Professor Edward Said was a primary contributor to this debate through his major work *Orientalism* (1979), which demonstrated that Orientalism functioned to serve political ends, and more especially imperialist endeavours. He also contended that Orientalists constructed narratives and images that assumed Western superiority over the other, thus producing a false description of Arabs and Islamic culture.

Gradually, Orientalism's range extended from Europe to the United States. American Orientalism developed its own constructions of the Orient, which were primarily based on biblical references that considered Americans as God's chosen people. This led to alignment of the will of God with the national objectives of the United States. In addition, captivity narratives of American sailors in North Africa had a deep impact on American popular consciousness. Consequently, America inherited the ancient ideological schisms between Christianity and Islam.

When the United States became a superpower after World War II, the American Orientalist apparatus influenced American policy makers' perceptions. The legitimate nationalist aspirations of newly independent countries in the Middle East as well as in Africa, Asia and Latin America were swiftly dismissed. American containment strategies were thus directed not just against the communist bloc, but also against nationalist movements. This state of affairs strained the relationship between the United States and Middle Eastern states. Events, such as the Arab oil embargo (1973-1974), the Iranian Revolution (1978-1979), and the Iranian student takeover of the American Embassy in Tehran, as well as violent actions perpetrated by Palestinian militants gave more momentum to Orientalist discourse within American literature and the mass media. As a result, Islam was often constructed as an external threat to Western identity and interests. In addition, leading Orientalist scholars also adopted the counter-terrorist rhetoric.

The term "terrorism" carries numerous inconsistencies of usage. It is a word, which is deployed rhetorically depending on who wants to apply it. From an official perspective, terrorism represents illegitimate political violence as opposed to the legitimate force used by

the state. It is employed by this perspective to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Western state and the boundaries of the Western community. In other words, just as Orientalism reproduces power relations vis-à-vis the external “other”, so counter-terrorist discourse effectively reproduces power relations vis-à-vis the internal “other”. A fusion of the Orientalist discourse and the counter-terrorism discourse occurred after 9/11 within American mainstream media organisations. Initially, alternative perspectives to the official discourse were publicly invisible because terrorism was represented as beyond law. As a result, the image of Islam and the Arabs became popularly associated with terrorist threats to the West and liberal democracy. However, this rhetoric started to cool after the exposure of widespread abuses by the American military in their prosecution of the “war on terror.”

Chapter 4

4 – CNNI framings of Middle East conflict 1991-2001

In the previous chapter, I discussed the Orientalist discourse and its evolution over time. After World War Two, the United States replaced Europe as the world's dominant power. Thus, Orientalism became an American enterprise, permeating the American political elites' consciousness and U.S. popular culture. In this chapter, I first review the historical development of CNN since its establishment. Then, I assess the impact of Orientalist discourse on CNN's framing of conflicts taking place in the Middle East. I examine in particular the network's framing of the 1991 Gulf War, and the U.S. intervention in Somalia (1993).

4.1 – *CNN history*

Cable News Network (CNN) was the unexpected idea of entrepreneur Ted Turner.⁷⁸ In 1976, he had said, 'I hate the news; news is evil'. Eventually, however, Turner saw the opportunity to combine idealism with commercial opportunity. He realised that a high profile new media network could cool world tensions and make money at the same time. As a sailboat racer, he had made trips to Cuba and the Soviet Union, and thought that giving a voice to "other" countries could make international relations much warmer. In his view, the 'the most angry people in the world are those who do not get listened to' (Flournoy & Stewart 1997: 17, 24, 27).

CNN was launched on 1 June 1980 as America's news channel; satellites were used to deliver its programs to cable operators around the country. Upon launching, Turner vowed that 'we won't be signing off until the world ends. We'll be on, and we will cover the end of the world, live' (Ainsworth 2000 [electronic article; no pagination]). With start-up costs of \$34.5 million, this venture was financially risky, as the markets did not appreciate the potential revenues. Indeed, only 1.7 million of American households received the services of this new 24-hour news channel; far fewer than were needed to make a profit. Initially, media competitors labelled CNN "the Chicken Noodle Network". However, Ted Turner had recognised the transformation brought by the proliferation of cable television channels. The

⁷⁸ Robert Edward Turner III was born on November 19, 1938 in Cincinnati, Ohio.

cable industry generally used the CNN phenomenon to ‘convince Americans that it was time to pay for the TV that had always been "free"’ (Schechter 2000).

The first big test for CNN came in the form of the 1980 presidential elections. This was a disaster, CNN crews were poorly prepared and its brand was still unknown to politicians. In addition, the broadcast networks refused to include CNN in the pools covering the White House. Only a justice order compelled them to do so. However, politicians soon realised the publicity value of a 24/7 news channel. Before then, Ted Turner lost even more money launching Headline News, a second 24-hour news network. After a few years, Turner had spent more than 70 million dollars keeping CNN and Headline News afloat. This situation changed as more channels became available on cable (ESPN, HBO, Nickelodeon etc.), and as more viewers subscribed. Eventually, CNN reached four out of five U.S. cable homes; a situation which exponentially increased CNN advertising revenues to \$56.5 million in 1985 (Flournoy & Stewart 1997). By the mid-1980s, as CNN and Headline News were growing, Ted Turner decided to create more cable news and entertainment networks. In 1985, CNN and Headline News domestic signals were combined to create CNN International (CNNI). Some studies indicate that CNN International has effectively contributed to the creation of a global public sphere that has had a deep impact on political communication (Volkmer 1999). In *CNN: News in the Global Sphere*, Ingrid Volkmer thoroughly examined the *World Report* programme. This broadcast is a contribution of TV stations from all over the world which sent their reports. These were compiled by CNN in a special programme. Before long, *World Report* gained overwhelming viewership worldwide, as it allowed a diversity of perspectives in relation to current affairs.

But it was the capacity to cover live events that allowed CNNI to become a world brand of global news programming. In fact, CNN changed the whole news industry (Ainsworth 2000). Ted Turner, himself came up with various ideas such as airing diverse thematic programmes modelled on a magazine style. For instance, *Time* magazine featured half an hour of politics and *Sports Illustrated* provided news and sports with images. These basic formats added entertainment value to the news channel. In addition, CNN revolutionised the use of graphics, camera angles, and the background monitor screen. It invented new formats for news presentations, such as the “newsflash”. Most importantly, CNN gave special prominence to breaking news stories and unlimited live coverage. This projected a sense of liveness and instantaneity, as well as a sense of watching first hand primary sources (Volkmer 1999: 130-

132; 138-141). These innovations attracted global audiences, while also impressing other media organisations. During its first 10 years, it covered important events such as the Solidarity strife in Poland, the Falkland Islands war, and the Salvadorian civil war (Hickey 2001: 88). CNN also reported upon top level meetings between world leaders, the explosion of space shuttle Challenger (1986), the Tiananmen Square riots (1989) and the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989). Some observers argue that CNN's contribution to the collapse of the Soviet Bloc was substantial (Campbell 2000: 11). But the most important manifestation of the CNN phenomenon happened during the Gulf War of 1990-91. During that major international crisis, CNN became the channel of communication between the warring parties, and the instant chronicler of the conflict (Moisy 1996: 7). CNN's high-tech tools, such as "flyaway dishes"⁷⁹, and the ingenuity of its reporters, such as Peter Arnett, deeply impressed audiences around the world. The general result was described by *Time* magazine as 'an exceptional and perhaps unprecedented, live account of the start of war from inside an enemy capital' (Zelizer 2002: 71). By early 1991, CNN had earned its reputation of "the war channel" (Campbell 2000: 11). Its audience probably exceeded a billion worldwide (Hall 1997: 33)

High profile war coverage throughout the 1990s led some commentators to talk of the *CNN effect*. In 1992, the U.S. intervention in Somalia was said to have been triggered by the impact of CNN on policy makers (Cohen 1994:10). In the aftermath of the ill-fated mission to capture Somali warlord Farah Aideed, dead American soldiers were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. A Black Hawk helicopter was gunned down, and the resulting action led to the killing of 18 Rangers (75 others were wounded), and the capture of one American pilot. CNN correspondents on the ground sent to their headquarters images of the captured pilot, combined with video images of a dead U.S. soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu amidst cheering Somali crowds. It has been asserted that the domestic impact of these images effectively ended the U.S. mission to Somalia (Baum 2004:218).

References to the "CNN effect" reflected the perceived impact of the 24 hour news coverage upon decision-makers. In this regard, some authors regarded television in general and CNN in particular as the driving force of the American foreign policy agenda. The interventions in Iraqi Kurdistan in early 1991 and Somalia in December 1992 were cited as evidence of this. Some politicians expressed their irritation about this situation. Former Defence Secretary James Schlesinger, for example, argued that the United States was formulating foreign policy

⁷⁹ These are portable satellite dishes which can be easily assembled by two people.

in response to “impulse and image” (Livingston 1997). Former U.S. diplomat George F. Kennan, one of the artisans of the Cold War, lamented in an article to the *New York Times* that American policy had become ‘controlled by popular emotional impulses, and particularly ones provoked by the commercial television industry.’ For him, this state of affairs had circumvented traditional policy making channels in both executive and legislative branches (Kennan 1993: A23). On the other hand, the “CNN effect” enabled NGOs and other non-state actors to advocate just causes through the media (Girardet 1995; Rotberg and Weiss 1996). During the mid-1990s, regional conflicts in Asia and Africa put approximately 42 million people at risk of disease and starvation (according to UN figures). Therefore, NGOs involved in humanitarian issues hoped that vivid television coverage of these crises would attract the attention of U.S. foreign policy makers and other media.

However, a series of content analysis studies demonstrated that stories about humanitarian crises, while framed by journalists, were circulated only when political elites had decided to intervene according to their own timing (Livingston and Eachus 1995; Mermin 1997: 403). In this regard, Philip Seib (2002) argues that the much-vaunted “CNN effect” is largely wishful thinking. He points out that various media and conflict studies indicate that American news coverage of conflicts tends to propagate the policy of the U.S. administration (especially in conflicts involving American troops). This tendency reflects journalistic dependence on official sources (see Hallin & Gitlin 1993; Herman & Chomsky 1988; Kellner 1993; Mowlana 1992).

In the new millennium, CNN was still a major news provider worldwide. However, because of a gigantic merger between AOL and Time Warner (January 2001) and the departure of its pioneer Ted Turner, CNN began to experience some media fatigue. The AOL and Time Warner merger led a 10 percent reduction of CNN staff. This evidently reduced the capabilities of CNN. After the earthquake that shook Seattle in 2001, CNN’s crew took ten hours to arrive, much too late compared to their competitors. But the merger was not the only reason for CNN’s ratings decline, there was increasing competition from rivals MSNBC and Fox News, in addition to local and regional cable channels, such as New York 1. Internationally, BBC World Service and Deutsche Welle were also major competitors. Nevertheless, CNN remained a major domestic and international news provider. As such, it was the first network to break news of the September 11 attacks.

According to a press release from TimeWarner, CNN reached more than 150 million television households in over 212 countries as of 2000. Furthermore, the CNN Group was available to more than 800 million people worldwide, thanks to its six cable and satellite television networks (CNN, CNN Headline News, CNN International, CNN-fn, CNN/SI and CNN en Español), its two radio networks (CNN Radio and a Spanish version CNN Radio Noticias), and its 11 websites on CNN Interactive and CNN Newsource (TimeWarner.com, 2000).

4.2 – CNN framing of the 1991 Gulf War

By 1989, the United States administration was faced with multiple internal challenges, a growing national debt, a shrinking job market, and loss of social services. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 provided the opportunity for a military intervention, which 'temporarily assuaged this malaise and loss of national self-esteem through a display of U.S. power abroad' (Husting 1999: 162). The prosecution of war was also an opportunity to unify the American people around the flag through values, such as pride, prestige, and patriotism.

In this context, the Kuwait invasion and its consequences represented the first major post Cold War international crisis. It therefore attracted global attention from global news agencies and news providers, particularly CNN (Mawlana et. al 1992). This was also the first war to be covered live on television, a distinction which caught the attention of media critics and social scientists. Much academic research centred upon the primacy of global television news, particularly CNN. Throughout the Gulf crisis, CNN performed the role of witness, diplomatic messenger and military tool. According to Claude Moisy, for the first time in history, 'a television network became an active participant in the development of a major international crisis' (Moisy, 1996: 4). In the lead up to conflict, CNN was watched and used by American politicians Iraqi officials, U.N. leaders, Soviet intermediaries, and other world leaders.⁸⁰ As the war unfolded, CNN became the favoured conduit of U.S. information warfare specialists. The network had a technological edge over its competitors; reporters were equipped with small lightweight cameras, portable up-links, digital editing facilities, and mobile satellite telephones.

⁸⁰ On CNN and other media outlets, this period was commonly termed 'Desert Shield'. This operation was announced by President George H. W. Bush as a "wholly defensive" mission to prevent Iraq from invading Saudi Arabia. Subsequently, U.S. troops moved into Saudi Arabia on August 7, 1990.

For propaganda purposes, military elites used CNN to make the war a sort of a “staged event”. Examples of this symbiosis abound. The start of the air campaign for example was scheduled for American prime-time television. Thus audiences knew through CNN that Desert Storm had begun even before the Pentagon announced this formally (Van Tuyl 2002: 234). Media planning was such that the military knew, months in advance, the types of stories the press would cover during the different phases of the campaign. Israeli academic Gabbi Wolfsfeld is adamant that media coverage was designed according to the military script: in the build-up phase, the focus was on the human everyday experiences of American soldiers. During the air campaign, emphasis was to be on the cleanliness and efficiency of the hi-tech weapons (Wolfsfeld 1997: 133).

This script did not only involve CNN. For every major news media outlet, the information warfare paradigm was irresistible, particularly so when the political discourse concerning Gulf War issues was monolithic (Pan and Kosicki 1994: 120). According to Professor of linguistics, George Lakoff, the deployment of classic fairy-tale narratives in framing the issues was tremendously powerful, especially the “self-defence story” and the “rescue story”. Thus, the administration claimed that Saddam Hussein was threatening America’s oil supply and way of life, such that self defence was deemed necessary. The Kuwaiti baby atrocity stories⁸¹ were designed to prompt the rescue story (Lakoff 2003). These story frames were reinforced by the fact that reporters conformed to the Pentagon's pooling system; a practice that skewed discussion toward the Pentagon’s agenda.

Military framing

Research into media coverage of conflicts demonstrates that American television overwhelmingly relays the perspectives of the Pentagon (O’Heffernan 1993; Paletz 1994). During the 1991 Gulf crisis, American television coverage avoided questioning military operations and policy, overwhelmingly relayed the Pentagon’s perspective and showed elements of jingoism. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam observed that ‘newscasters spoke of Iraq as the “enemy,” as if they had personally joined the armed forces’ (quoted in Fritsch-El-

⁸¹ The Kuwaiti government hired the public relations firm Hill & Knowlton to spread media stories that influenced the American opinion in favour of war against Iraq. For example, the firm arranged for an appearance before Congress members, in which a woman identified herself as a nurse working in the Kuwait City hospital, and told the members that Iraqi soldiers had pulled babies out of incubators and had let them die on the floor. This story was referred to by leading Congress and Senate members to support a military action against Iraq. Later, the Kuwaiti baby story was revealed to be a fabrication. The woman who had testified was in fact the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States (MacArthur 1992 58-60).

Alaoui 2005: 154). Such coverage overemphasized the precision of military bombings, but underemphasized the suffering of innocent Iraqi civilians and the destruction of non-military targets (Paletz 1994: 282). A study by Hallin and Gitlin concluded that CNN's coverage of the war was in tune with other mainstream news media organisations. The primary themes were American prowess, the power of American technology, and the courage of American soldiers (Hallin and Gitlin 1993: 414). Hallin and Gitlin's content analysis showed that images of tanks, planes, missiles, and American soldiers constituted a high percentage of television time (p. 420). In contrast, antiwar rallies hardly ever appeared in television network coverage.

Military framing fully appears in the CNN documentary *Desert Storm: the Victory* (1991). In a thorough analysis of this docudrama, Michelle Kendrick (1994) identified a clear beginning (the day after the January 15th deadline⁸²), a middle (the switch from the air war to the ground), and an end (a cease-fire after 100 hours of ground war). The docu-drama was subdivided under chapter headings; "The Air War," "The Ultimatum," and "The Hundred-Hour Ground War." The entire video presents the war through the "eyes" of military technology. As a result, certain technologies were positioned as the main protagonists of the narrative. Patriot missiles for example were described as "the first heroes" of the war (Kendrick 1994: 140). This fetishism of military weaponry presented the war as a videogame, with numerous "smart bombs" hitting targets with disconcerting ease (Kellner 1992: 374). The sanitised nature of the video game narrative was a primary goal for military propagandists. Television coverage of the Vietnam War had involved some gruesome images, particularly during the Tet offensive (1968). This time, the Pentagon decided that the imagery associated with Desert Storm would be totally different. This was to be a 'bloodless, humanitarian and hygienic' war (Der Derian 2001: xv).

On CNN's video a few dead bodies were shown, but these were Iraqis only and individually unrecognizable. Seasoned war correspondent John Pilger pointed out that the war as a whole was often reported as a technological wonder with remarkably few casualties. Yet, despite being one of the most covered wars in history, few journalists reported the truth, still widely unknown, that a quarter of a million Iraqis were wantonly slaughtered or died unnecessary deaths (Pilger 1998: 144). Pilger's argument was that Gulf War coverage was worse than sanitization, it was the masking of an atrocity, and journalists were part of the process.

⁸² UN Security Council Resolution 678 dealt with the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Voted on 29 November 1990, it gave Iraq a withdrawal deadline until 15 January 1991.

Sanitization and masking are dominant features of CNN's video. For example, in the section entitled "The Hundred Hour Ground War", CNN omitted to mention that the largest battle took place well after the cease-fire. In this "engagement," U.S. bombers destroyed 247 Iraqi tanks and more than 500 military transport vehicles, while they were retreating. CNN and other mainstream media organizations did not fully investigate how the military actions contravened the rules of war. Joyce Chediac argues that this episode is a war crime because it violates the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (Common Article III) which outlaws the killing of non-combatant soldiers (Chediac 1992: 91). According to the ex- U.S. Attorney General, Ramsey Clark, 'the United States intentionally bombed and destroyed civilian life, commercial and business districts, schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, shelters, residential areas, historical sites, private vehicles and civilian government offices' (Clark 1991 [Electronic article; no pagination]).

At an afternoon Pentagon briefing on March 1, General Thomas Kelly said that American troops had 'killed an entire army' even though President Bush had declared a cease-fire on 28 February. The next day, CNN described the future episode as the "highway of death". Independent journalists, such as Robert Fisk, who ventured into the highway leading from Kuwait City to Iraq, about thirty kilometres from the Kuwaiti capital, saw the scale of the massacre. They raised the point that the use of force was disproportionate because the Iraqi forces were retreating. They also pointed to the fact that there were also innocent civilians on the highway. The significance of this incident was diluted by CNN anchors. They reminded the viewers about stories of Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait. Shortly afterwards, CNN changed the story. This time, the Iraqi convoy in question was said to be composed of stolen vehicles full of contraband goods, as to insinuate that the looters got their due punishment (Kellner 1992: 407). European media took a more critical stance; BBC's Stephen Sackur, for example, raised questions about the legitimacy of this military action.

Occasionally, CNN did mention Iraqi civilian casualties, but only within the reports of New Zealand born CNN correspondent Peter Arnett. His live reports from Baghdad contradicted the standing military framing of the war. Most controversially, Arnett reported from the site of a baby milk factory bombed by the coalition. His testimony and the visual footage contrasted with the military claims that missile and bombing strikes were surgical. Arnett also reported on the destruction of the Amiriya shelter in Baghdad (13 February 1991). Gruesome images of civilian bodies being extracted from the rubble disturbed the Pentagon's

meticulously-constructed myth of a clean and sanitized war. However, some members of Congress described Arnett as a propaganda mouthpiece for Saddam Hussein (Evans 2004: 36). Arnett's broadcasts did not alter the general patterns of military framing. In the aftermath of the baby milk factory incident, mainstream media again adhered to the explanations provided by Military sources, especially General Powell. He stated at the daily Pentagon press conference that 'it is not an infant formula factory...it was a biological weapons factory, of that we are sure'.

Apart from the influence of sources, self-censorship prevented images of civilian casualties from being broadcast on television networks. Furthermore, "issues" of taste and decency became fashionable in newsrooms, and graphic images were heavily edited (Taylor 1992: 113-114). As a matter of fact, Western journalists tend to refrain from displaying pictures of their own; this restraint does not extend to the bodies of the "Others". In *Body Horror* (1998), John Taylor explains that news media representations of foreign bodies reinforce Western ideas and culture. Thus, viewed from an American perspective, the carnage of Al-Amiriya – as described by Arnett - never impacted upon American public perceptions of the war.

The Orientalist frame

Stereotypes of "otherness" based on religious and cultural difference tend to flourish in times of war. In earlier conflicts, this process took the form of atrocity stories designed to demonise the enemy. In World War One, for example, Britain and France propagated false stories about Germans bayoneting babies on their way through Belgium. During the military build-up prior to Desert Storm, Iraqis were demonised in the same way. The fabricated story of the Kuwaiti babies removed from their incubators and left to die circulated all around the world. This story was accepted at face value by major American media outlets, including CNN (Kellner 1992: 429).

Atrocity stories appeals to national self-identification processes and externalises other nations or cultures involved in the conflict. It makes the binary opposites of good vs. bad and civilized vs. barbarian easier for audiences to accept. In the case of conflicts involving Western and Middle Eastern nations, the Orientalist frame is readily available; there is 'a rich reservoir of Arab stereotypes...drawing on myths and beliefs of the past' (Rolstrup 1996). Mainstream media coverage also tends to pass through the prism of deep cultural difference between West and Islam.

Throughout the Gulf conflict, Saddam Hussein was portrayed as a dangerous tyrant and a villain. Yet, there was no differentiation between Saddam Hussein and the state of Iraq. American and Western audiences were constantly reminded about his ruthless rule and Iraq's aggression against its neighbours. This demonization campaign was so potent that in January 1991 public opinion polls revealed that many Americans considered Saddam Hussein an evil that had to be uprooted by all means (Hoynes 1992: 311). Of course, there was no reference to the fact that Saddam Hussein had been an ally of the West for a long period of time, and that his weapons were the provenance of Western arsenals (Rolstrup, 1996).

In "Desert Storm", the Oriental was fully positioned as the "other" in relation to American national identity. In this context, Abouali Farmanfarmaian has identified many racist expressions that were used by the media during the 1991 Gulf War. Labels such as "niggers" and "sand-niggers" were frequently employed by soldiers in media interviews. This suggested the prevalence of 'a racial link that implicitly emphasized western values and only thereby managed to generate unanimity in outrage against an outside evil, Iraq' (Farmanfarmaian 1992: 112). The entire Gulf conflict was pervaded by depictions of "good" and "evil." Thus American soldiers, shown in emotional farewell scenes before their missions, were personalised and humanised, whereas Iraqis were considered as a pestilence to be removed (Liebes 1992: 52).⁸³

Another Orientalist theme, which was prominently featured in CNN's coverage, was the binary contrast between American and Oriental women. Despite the fact that women constituted a scant six percent of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, the image conveyed was that of progressive, even post feminist, democratic American women, in contrast to their veiled and oppressed Oriental counterparts (Husting 1999: 164). While this construction held some truth in regards to Saudi Arabia (a major American ally in 1991), it was completely erroneous in the case of Iraq (the targeted enemy). According to *Human Rights Watch*, Iraqi women have enjoyed more rights under Saddam Hussein than many of their Middle Eastern counterparts (Human Rights Watch, 2003). The Iraqi Provisional Constitution (drafted in 1970) formally guaranteed equal rights to women and other laws specifically ensured their right to vote, attend school, run for political office, and own property. As a result, Iraqi women played an

⁸³ The Persian Gulf War has from this Orientalist perspective an antiseptic nature destined to clean the world from this sub-people. Edward J. Ingebreetsen claims that constructing demons is part of some sort of "pedagogy of fear", which is apparently a popular American narrative form. This narrative 'justifies otherwise unacceptable violence by de-humanising and demonising the other' (quoted in Gunn 2004).

active role in the political and economic development of Iraq. Iraqi Statistics revealed that in 1976 women constituted approximately 38.5 percent of those in the education profession, 31 percent of the medical profession, 25 percent of lab technicians, 15 percent of accountants and 15 percent of civil servants. Moreover, during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), women assumed greater roles in the civil service and the general workforce (this reflected the shortage of working age men). The Human Rights Watch briefing paper points out that the Gulf conflict and its aftermath worsened the position of women and girls. They were greatly affected by the economic consequences of the U.N. sanctions, and lacked access to food, health care, and education (Human Rights Watch 2003).

4.3- CNN framing of the U.S. intervention in Somalia (1993)

While I have mentioned earlier the American intervention in Somalia in the context of the *CNN Effect* (see section 4.1). It is also important to consider the perspective of humanitarian intervention.

The concept of humanitarian intervention

The principle of “humanitarian intervention” has a long history within Western political thought. In *A Few Words on Non-Intervention* (1859), John Stuart Mill argued that the whole doctrine of non-interference with foreign nations should be reconsidered, especially when those nations were under “barbarian” rule. In Mill’s view, barbarians would surely benefit from the intervention of “civilized” powers. One derivative of this discourse is the French *mission civilisatrice* (the civilizing mission), which was the guiding rationale of French colonial rule in Algeria, West Africa, and Indochina. However, “humanitarian interventions” had also been conducted by Western powers to support Christian minorities in the Mediterranean against their Muslim rulers (e.g. Greece in the 1820s, the Lebanese Maronites in 1862). By contrast, the plight of non-Christians attracted no such attention from Western decision makers or publics in that period (Shaw 2007: 354).

Nevertheless, the concept of humanitarian intervention disappeared for a while, until the aftermath of World War II, when European liberals aspired to establish a system of corrective security mediated through international law and organisation. However, as the Cold War intensified, the force of these ideals weakened. They only regained momentum when extensive fighting led to famine and great suffering in Southern Nigeria (1967 – 1970). As the

Western media covered these developments, the atrocities that were depicted triggered heated debates, as well as calls for activism from European intellectuals. The NGO *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) was created in this context; they argued that humanitarian catastrophes might call into question the sovereignty of states. However, following the 1991 Gulf War, in which the United Nations under heavy American pressures authorized a “humanitarian intervention.” MSF termed these events “armed charity.” They warned associated NGOs that they must ‘eschew all collaboration - let alone integration’ into these new state-run ventures (MSF 1993: 111-24).

On 9 December 1992, “Operation Restore Hope” in Somalia represented the first large-scale “peace operation” since the 1991 Gulf War. The official purpose was to avert a humanitarian disaster in the famine stricken and increasingly lawless Republic of Somalia (following the demise of the Somali President Siad Barre). However, the real designs behind this military operation are still unclear. Major decision-makers such as President Bush Sr., Secretary of State James Baker, and General Colin Powell (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) have long refrained from offering any hints about their intentions (Fox 2000).

When the Clinton Administration took over (20 January 1993), there were immediate attempts to frame the operation in humanitarian terms. Anthony Lake, the then national security adviser, gave a speech in fall 1993 titled *From Containment to Enlargement*, in which setting “a humanitarian agenda” was featured as a major foreign policy priority (Lake 1993).

The Orientalist frame

The tragedy unfolding in Somalia was soon interpreted through Orientalist lenses. The explanations offered by the media establishment, including CNN, were framed by assumptions designed to boost the American self-image. Thus, the Somali civil conflict was portrayed in terms of “tribalism.” This generic explanation ignored the complexities of status, class and race. On 8 December 1992, CNN reported that ‘the crisis in Somalia has been caused by intense clan rivalries, a problem common in Africa, but here carried out with such violence, there is nothing left of civil society, only anarchy and the rule of the gun’. On the same night, CNN’s star anchor Christiane Amanpour outlined how the CNN staff were paying local clans for protection. A few days later (12 December 1992), a CNN story referred to a

“clan leader” ousted in a “clan uprising.” This had triggered “clan warfare” characterised by “anarchy” and “a confusing patchwork of clan fiefdoms” (Besteman 1996: 121).

Yet in the midst of this rhetoric, nothing was said about the American support for the former Somali dictator Siad Barre. During the Cold War, he confronted Ethiopia, the Soviet ally. The United States provided military assistance, which was also used by Siad Barre to quell dissent inside Somalia. And American-provided development money was used by Barre’s regime to buy the support of local elites, including tribal chiefs (Besteman 1996: 127). These events fuelled the regime-cultivated tribalism. However, historical evidence reveals the simplicity of this argument. From 1978, the former Somali dictator, began humiliating and massacring his own clan in a systematic way.

After the military intervention, tribalist themes were reinforced by American political elites. President Bush Sr. pointed to the responsibility of the ‘warlords controlling the ports’ and emphasised that there was also a ‘difficulty separating these warlords one from the other’. Similarly, U.S. Press Secretary, Marlin Fitzwater described Somalia’s tragedy as involving ‘vast numbers of people...suffering and dying from famine caused by a senseless civil war.’ He went on to depict the situation as a ‘manmade famine’ caused by ‘armed bands...stealing and hoarding food as well as attacking international relief workers.’ These comments invoked the early 20th century image of the “primitive savage”, in which the enemy “other” is not just a leader or leaders, but the people and their culture (Butler 2002: 2-3).

The Orientalist assumption underlined tribalism discourse was that Somalis were savages for most of their history; they had been brought into the civilised world by Italian and British colonization, but with the civil war, Somalis were in danger of relapsing into the darkness of history (predating colonisation) (Besteman 1996: 122). This suggests that colonial interventions enormously benefited Africa, whereas historical evidence points to the complete opposite (Jones 2004). In short, it appears that without the legacy of the white man, Africa reverts into savagery and backwardness. CNN’s visual framing consolidated this Orientalist narrative. This occurred in the aftermath of a battle in Mogadishu, in which 18 men were killed, over 70 wounded, and one captured (3 October 1993). The latter, Chief Warrant Officer Michael Durant was videotaped by his Somali captors and was shown in obvious physical discomfort. Worse, CNN broadcast footage of dead American soldiers being dragged through Mogadishu streets by Somali mobs. Cori Dauber explains the connotative meaning of such images:

The bodies are surrounded by Somalis of all ages and both genders, none in clothing that can be identified as specifically military uniforms. Thus the argument is made that it is the general population of that country that has turned against us. Once again we are in a chaotic environment where combatants cannot be easily distinguished from non-combatants, and where the very people we came to help are the ones killing our troops (Dauber 2001: 656).

Both the narrative and the visual framing, while hinting at the irrationality, backwardness and barbarism of the Somalis, omitted an important fact. The U.S. military decision to hunt Aided and his fellow clan leaders contributed to the conflict in Mogadishu (Butler 2002: 11).

4.4- CNN and the "War on Terror"(2001)

While earlier attacks against American interests (World Trade Center (1993); Pan Am 103 (1988); embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998); the Alfred P. Murrah building (1995)) were framed as ‘criminal investigations’, the attacks of 11 September 2001 were framed as a "war on terror" (Ryan 2004: 364). In *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2003), Robert Entman explains how the U.S. administration imposes its framing of events upon media organisations. This occurs through a “cascading activation” model, whereby interpretive frame of news content are established by senior political elites and flow downward. According to Entman, it is difficult for the media to resist these particular frames, particularly if there are no meaningful intra-elite divisions also flowing downwards; The “war on terror” frame was available and believable to a country in search for a secure frame of reference. Frames simplify the situation at hand: they offer a simple definition of the problem, establish its boundaries, and promote a course of action (Kinder 1998: 167-197). With the “war on terror” frame, the attacks of 9/11 were simply interpreted as the terrorists' hatred of the United States because of its freedoms and affluent way of life (McChesney 2002: 92). This enabled President George W. Bush and surrounding elites to translate the expected retribution into the waging of wars in the Middle East. Here, the “war on terror” frame was readily accepted by CNN. In fact, they offered no meaningful analysis, context or historical background in relation to the 9/11 attacks (McDonald and Lawrence 2004). For instance, CNN did not mention Washington's own covert and overt actions that had contributed to anti-Americanism internationally and in the Middle East. Nor did it discuss the array of national and international responses to Al-Qaeda terrorism. Violent retaliation was accepted as the sole course of action without question.

This lack of analysis can be explained through the paradigm proposed by Shanto Iyengar. He points out that television news reporters usually frame terrorism in episodic rather than thematic frames. During the 1980s for example, the huge coverage given to terrorist acts focused episodically on specific acts without providing any connection whatsoever with their broader context (Iyengar 1991: 2, 14). Thus, CNN's breaking news of 11 September 2001 used episodic titles in its coverage i.e. "Attack on America", then "War on Terror", and finally "Strike against Terror". They also used certain keywords repetitively. Reynolds and Barnett (2003) conducted research on the first 12 hours of CNN's coverage after the attacks. They found out that the word *war* was used to describe the attacks 234 times. In addition, CNN anchors commonly referred to "America" instead of the United States; words like "freedom," "justice," and "liberty" were used as simple descriptors of America and its ideals. Within these patriotic terms of reference, CNN journalists also made atypical references to "God" and the need to "pray" or for "prayer." Symbolic comparisons to Pearl Harbour were also made. CNN reporters described the attackers as cowards and madmen. Overall, stories of bravery, patriotism, camaraderie, sacrifice, and the love for New York formed the basis of CNN coverage. It was also the first network to display patriotic images of American flags flapping in the breeze, while its celebrity anchor Lou Dobbs was the first journalist to wear an American flag lapel pin (Aday et al 2005: 8-9). This kind of coverage gave little space to the huge antiwar protests in the U.S. and Europe (Chattarji 2004: 3).

CNN's total adherence to the official rhetoric was described by Douglas Kellner as 'a stunning collapse of a respectable news organisation into a vehicle of conservative ideology' (Kellner 2002: 150). The network echoed the dominant militaristic discourse, which considered the attacks to be an "act of war". Accordingly, military retaliation was proposed as the inevitable policy response. CNN relied less upon journalists than upon experts, analysts, and consultants to interpret news events. The prevailing "war on terror" frame carried by CNN served to construct the national identity of the United States as the hyper-masculine, heavily militarized, world hegemon, which employed war to solve its problems while ensuring continuous American public support (Saso 2005: 1).

After the 9/11 attacks, the Orientalist frame was employed by official sources and establishment media to differentiate foes from friends, and to reinforce the constructed linkage between Islam and terrorism. So when President Bush openly declared "You're either

with us or against us”,⁸⁴ this message was translated in context by the media by expanding the notion of the “enemy” to all Muslims, whether living in the Middle East, or living in the West (Ruigrok & van Atteveldt 2007: 68-69). One striking aspect of the Orientalist discourse post 9/11 was the unfavourable comparison of women’s status. Women of American Caucasian origins were positioned as the standard for judging the lives of Afghan women (who had survived three decades of foreign invasions and civil wars). CNN used this sub-frame when it broadcast *Inside Afghanistan: Beneath the Veil* (2001); a documentary which attempted to trace the history of Taliban restrictions on women in Afghanistan.⁸⁵ This documentary represents a textbook example of the binary construction of the “uncivilized East” vs. the “civilized West”. Miriam Cooke argued that this documentary’s powerful emotional framing was used to gather additional support for the war and reinforce images of otherness associated with Afghanistan (Cooke 2002: 228).

The notion of women as victims has a long history within Western culture's symbolic repertoire.⁸⁶ This discourse resurfaced during the war on Afghanistan. Mainstream media adopted the “saving brown women” sub-frame to reinforce the idea that Oriental women ‘would not have a future unless the forces of the good and civilized West defeated the forces of the evil, barbaric, male-dominated East’ (Rowe and Malhotra 2003: 19). There were many criticisms of the Burqa; the women’s veil that has long been used by the ethnic Pashtun (the main ethnic group in Afghanistan). At no point did CNN mention that the Burqa was not a Taliban invention. Nor was there any reference to various anthropological studies suggesting that the Burqa in the Afghan context conveys meanings associated with women’s modesty or respectability (Abu-Lughod 2004: 785).

The routine employment of Orientalist imagery and discourse allowed the government media strategists to frame the war as a benevolent intervention on behalf of Afghanistan women. This was a clear attempt to invoke support for military intervention by pitching Western feminism against Oriental fundamentalism. This opposition informed Presidential

⁸⁴ <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/11/06/gen.attack.on.terror/>

⁸⁵ The documentary depicted Sairah Shah's (a British television journalist of Afghan origin) returning to her father's birthplace in rural Afghanistan. Initially produced for Channel 4 in Britain in the spring of 2001, this documentary was first broadcast by CNN in the summer 2001. It was subsequently re-broadcast at the start of the Afghan campaign. It included gruesome images and sensationalist editing. For example, three Afghan girls related the story of their parents' murder and their subsequent rape. In another segment, images of three women bundled into the back of a truck, then thrown to the ground and shot point blank.

⁸⁶ During the British colonial era in South Asia, there were many instances where women’s issues, such as sati (the practice of widows immolating themselves on their husbands' funeral pyres), and child marriage were used as justifications for British expansionism (Abu-Lughod, 2004: 784).

communications; for instance, the First American lady Laura Bush stated after the fall of Kabul: ‘Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan women are no longer imprisoned in their homes; they can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment; the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women’ (Radio Address by Mrs. Bush 2002). Another presidential communiqué titled “Progress on the War on Terror” (22 January 2004), reiterated the same “saving brown women” sub-frame by stating that ‘Afghan women are experiencing freedom for the first time’ (White House 2004: 3).

4.5- CNN and information dominance

CNN duly participated to the strategy of information dominance initiated by the Pentagon. In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, CNN offered training to Army Psyops crews. Reports suggest that personnel belonging to the Fourth Psychological Operations Group (Fort Bragg) received training as interns at CNN’s Atlanta headquarters. Some sources hinted that these military personnel were involved in news production, although CNN rebuffed the accusation (Macdonald 2007: 156). As I mentioned earlier (Chapter 2 subheading 2.4), during the military intervention in Afghanistan, when reports emerged about civilian casualties, the Pentagon immediately bought exclusive rights for extremely high resolution satellites, denying the circulation of any photos depicting Afghan civilian casualties (Campbell 2001). This trend was followed by CNN, which decided to avoid reporting Afghan civilian casualties altogether. Instead, its reporters were instructed to constantly repeat that the ‘war is in response to a terrorist attack that killed close to 5,000 innocent people in the U.S.’ (Bleifuss 2001 [electronic article; no pagination]).

CNN was also a vehicle for the Pentagon’s perception management efforts. Indeed, most of the analysts invited to comment on the network had close connections to the Pentagon.⁸⁷ In his book *How CNN fought the War*, Major General Perry M. Smith (Ret.) related his experience as a full-time military analyst during the 1991 Gulf War. This account reveals how the Pentagon translated their perception of events into television reportage. Smith mentioned that he would routinely contact former colleagues at the Pentagon to get their views on the conflict. He also admitted being lobbied by Pentagon officials along the following lines:

⁸⁷ Examples include personalities such as Senator John McCain, Henry Kissinger, Lawrence Eagleburger, James Baker and Jeanne Kirkpatrick.

We're trying to get something done here, but we are stuck. It would be great if you could raise the issue on CNN. That might help us get some important things done more quickly.

Smith confessed he became part of the Pentagon's propaganda effort when he suggested on CNN that 'Saddam Hussein was losing the military war, but winning the propaganda war on the issue of civilian casualties' (Smith 1991: 24). These instances clearly show that by relying on sources with close ties to the Pentagon, CNN served as their propaganda channel. Through their pseudo independent analysis, these sources not only generated news coverage favourable to the military perspective, but they also contributed to a news environment which made it easier for policy makers to advocate an aggressive and interventionist foreign policy agenda (Domke 2004).

4.6- Conclusion

CNN is a major international television news provider, and a pioneer of 24-hour news networks. The Atlanta based news organisation has developed large viewership by diversifying delivery methods (satellite, cable and internet). It also provided audiences worldwide with quality coverage and analysis. CNN had also achieved numerous scoops in its long list of achievements. As such, it was the primary news television that covered live from Baghdad the 1991 Gulf War. Since the latter was a defining episode in the American-Middle Eastern relationship, the leading role played by CNN in this war justifies its choice as object of this study. Furthermore, CNN's influential Somalia coverage led numerous authors to speculate about the existence of a *CNN effect*.

In both of these conflicts, CNN employed Orientalist and military frames. CNN's coverage of Desert Storm set the template for this kind of coverage. It covered American troops from a human perspective, whereas Iraqis were demonized and dehumanised. Similarly, military framing provided a sanitised account of the war, which wrongly conveyed the impression that bombings and missile strikes were clean and surgical. In Somalia, the stakes were different and so was the framing, which focused on so-called "humanitarian intervention". Yet, even in this case, the Orientalist clichés predominated; the world was divided into the good guys (the Americans) and the bad guys (the others). This binary division moulds the different ethnicities and political forces in the Middle East into one undifferentiated form. By doing so, CNN provided a fixed and immutable picture of the Middle East and absolved the United States from any responsibility for its hegemonic role in the region.

Chapter 5

5- Pan Arabism, Arab media and Aljazeera

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the historical development of CNN from its establishment. I also analysed CNN's framing of various conflicts taking place in the Middle East, such as the 1991 Gulf War, and the U.S. intervention in Somalia (1993). In both cases, CNN employed Orientalist frames. In this chapter, I outline the historical developments of modern Arab nationalism, the evolution of the pan-Arab discourse, and its consequences on Arab transnational media. I also appraise the conditions leading to the inception of Aljazeera and its impact on the Arab public sphere. Next, I evaluate the network's portrayal of conflicts taking place in the Middle East.

5.1- *Origins of modern Arab nationalism*

The Arab world consists of 358 million people in twenty-five countries and territories straddling North Africa and Western Asia. Most of the Arab population lives in cities and towns, while five percent are pastoral nomads living in the deserts (Crystal 1987). The rise of Arab civilization from the 7th century was linked to the emergence of Islam. A few decades after the death of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam (632 A.D.), the Umayyad Dynasty came into power in Arabia (661 A.D.). The new regime eventually stretched across North Africa, Spain, Central and South Asia. But unlike the previous reign of the Four Rightly Guided Caliphates⁸⁸, the Umayyad rulers favoured the Arabs over other ethnicities. This led to numerous uprisings, most particularly in Persia. By 750 A.D. subsequent insurgencies had shifted the balance of power inside the realm of Islam from the Arabs to the Persians (the Turks gained the ascendancy from 1075 onwards). Up until the 20th century, Arabs were usually relegated to a secondary role even though Arabic remained the *lingua franca* of the Islamic Caliphate.

Over the centuries, Arab consciousness transcended regional and religious identifications. For Albert Hourani, the renowned 14th century Arab Philosopher Ibn Khaldun exemplified this consciousness. According to Hourani, Arabs lived in 'a world where a family from southern

⁸⁸ The Rightly Guided Caliphs or The Righteous Caliphs is a term used in Sunni Islam to refer to the first four caliphs that ruled after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. They are called so because they have been seen as model Muslim leaders by Sunni. They were all close companions of Muhammad, and their succession was not hereditary.

Arabia could move to Spain, and after six centuries return nearer to its place of origin and still find itself in familiar surroundings, [they] had a unity which transcended divisions of time and space; the Arabic language could open the door to office and influence throughout that world; a body of knowledge, transmitted over the centuries by a known chain of teachers, preserved a moral community even when rules changed' (Hourani 1991: 4). Sati' al-Husri, one of the main Arab nationalist philosophers, regards the Arabic language and the common history of Arab peoples as the defining pillars of Arab nationalism (Barakat 1993: 34). Citizens within Arab countries carry a sense of historic accomplishment achieved through a millennium of achievements in fields as varied as politics, military knowledge, economics, arts and sciences.⁸⁹ The diverse dynasties that ruled the Arab World as a single entity for extended periods instilled a sense of common history.⁹⁰ The free circulation of peoples, especially traders and scholars, from one end of the Arab world to the other for more than a millennium (until the advent of European colonialism) fostered a collective memory. However, some theoreticians of Arab nationalism, such as Abd al-Aziz Duri, consider that it was Islam, which had 'unified the Arabs and provided them with a message, an ideological framework, and a state,' (Barakat 1993: 35). As a consequence, the identities of Arabism and Islam, traditionally inseparable and used interchangeably, illustrate the Arab concept of *umma* (nation).

As the 19th century approached, the Ottoman Empire confronted continuous European expansion. Ottoman defeats in the Caucasus and Central Asia⁹¹ paved the way for Western imperialism in that area and destabilised the Arab region. This became obvious after Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the French occupation of Algeria (formerly an Ottoman territory) in 1830. In its final days, the Ottoman State was itself dominated by Turk nationalists, who sometimes forcibly imposed the use of the Turkish language in predominantly Arab regions. This state of affairs led to the creation of Arab nationalist movements; they first appeared in Syria and Lebanon, and were primarily led by Arab Christians. In *The Arab Awakening* (1938), George Antonius chronicled the crucial role played by Arab Christians in stirring up Arab nationalist feelings against Ottoman rule.

⁸⁹ For extensive studies on the important scientific contributions by Arab/Muslim scholars see: (Pormann & Savage-Smith, 2007) and (Zaimeche, 2002).

⁹⁰ The Omayyad Caliphate (based in Damascus; 661-750), the Abbasid Caliphate (based in Baghdad; 750-1258), and the Ottoman Empire (1299-1922) ruled an area that included most of the Arab countries as they are known today.

⁹¹ The Ottoman Empire was particularly weakened by the Russian annexation of Crimea (1783), Georgia (1800) and Baku (1806). Later Russian annexation of Central Asian territories such as Khokand, Bukhara and Khiva hit hard the status of the Ottoman Empire as a major player in the world stage.

Originally therefore, Arab nationalism was primarily directed against the Turks, not against the West (Kramer 1993:180).

Turkey supported the Axis powers during World War One, and this enabled greater cooperation between the Allies and Arab nationalists. It has often been asserted that modern Arab nationalism began when the Allies promised support to Cherif Hussein's campaign for a united Arab state. This pledge was offered on the condition that the Arab tribes mobilised against the Turks⁹² (Antonius 1938: 153-7). However, the pledge proved to be a mirage. Following the defeat of the Turks in 1918, the Arabs found themselves separated in newly created colonies, mandates and protectorates arranged by French and British officials. The Sykes-Picot Agreement secretly negotiated in 1916, divided the Arab lands in Arabia and the Levant into zones of French and British colonial influence. The Arabs' situation was further complicated when British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour issued a letter to Lord Rothschild in 1917, promising Britain's support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. This letter became known as the Balfour Declaration, the precursor of Israeli nationhood in 1948 (Stork 1972: 9-13).

Meanwhile, other Arab regions aligned with the Ottoman Empire were transferred to Colonial rule (Libya to Italy, the rest of North Africa, Syria and Lebanon to France; Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Iraq, Arabia and Aden to the British). The imposition of Western designed borders on the Arab world inevitably provoked deep resentment. In 1931, Sir Walter Smart, Oriental counsellor at the British Embassy in Cairo, denounced the division of lands that were ethnically, linguistically and economically homogenous into unpractical states (Kedourie 1976: 260). Boundaries between the newly designed nation states were indeed often arbitrary. They were mostly the work of junior colonial administrators such as T.E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell (Henry et. al. 2003: 297). With such measures, the Western colonial powers turned the tide of Arab nationalism against them (previously this nationalism was directed against the Turks).

As Western-established borders obstructed the political and economic development of the newly created Arab entities, Arab intellectuals developed a pan-Arab consciousness. Politically, the shared objective was to unify the Arab peoples of the Middle East under the banner of a single state (modelled on the pledge of Sir Henry McMahon to Cherif Hussein in

⁹² In 1915, the British Government represented by Sir Henry McMahon promised Sherif Hussein (the leader of Mecca and King of the Arabs) Arab control over the whole of areas to be liberated from Turkey.

1915). Later, pan-Arabism became a sort of ‘macro nationalism, or the projection of micro nationalism onto the larger geographical area, based on common interests (religion, culture and race) as the basis of aspiration for political entity’ (Tibi 1981: 44). Under the impulse of the Christian Syrian ideologue Michel Aflaq, the 1943-created Baath Party (Renaissance Party) was the first to promote a version of Pan-Arabism that would unify Arab peoples into one single state. Accordingly, the Baath movement advocated three main principles: ‘Arab unity based around Arab ethnos (rather than around religious identity through Islam); socialism; and a willingness to use, if necessary, revolutionary rather than democratic action through, for example, military coups to promote Arab unity and socialist goals’ (Henry et al 2003: 297). In the heated political atmosphere of World War Two, many parties promoting Arab nationalism, such as the Baath party, were inspired by German nationalism.⁹³ For instance Sati’ Al Husri considered the unification of the Arabs under one state to be the supreme goal. This necessitated the subordination of the individual will to the national will (Dawisha 2003). Just as German and Italian nationalism sought to unite Germany and Italy in the 19th century,⁹⁴ pan-Arab nationalism aimed to unite the Arab nation. By the end of the Second World War, pan-Arabism had gained wide popularity in the Middle East. Consequently, the Western Colonial powers and especially Britain, decided to co-opt pan-Arab proponents instead of confronting them. British foreign affairs officials thus supported the formal creation of the Arab League in March 1945.⁹⁵ The league was established in Egypt under British occupation. Several studies highlight Britain's discrete role in shaping the structure of the inter-state Arab organisation (Doran 1999; Kedourie 1976; Kramer 2000). Pro-British Egyptian leadership of the Arab League would ensure the continuation of British military presence in the Middle East.

⁹³ For instance the Mufti of Jerusalem and Palestinian Arab nationalist Mohammad Amin al-Husayni (1895-1974) fought against the establishment of Israel and closely collaborated with Nazi Germany during World War II. Similarly, in Iraq General Rashid Ali, who had the support of the Nazis, led a short-lived attempt in April 1941 to overthrow the pro-British Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Said Pasha.

⁹⁴ It should be noted that prior to the formal unification of Germany into a politically and administratively integrated nation state on 18 January 1871, there were numerous independent German states. The transition of the German-speaking states into one federated organisation of states occurred after numerous attempts throughout history. Similarly, Italy was a patchwork of independent governments, either directly ruled or strongly influenced by the prevailing European powers such as Austria and France. Eventually, under the influence of unification leaders, such as Giuseppe Mazzini and Giuseppe Garibaldi, and after series of wars, Victor Emmanuel II became the first king of a united Italy in 1870.

⁹⁵ The Arab League was initially founded by seven states (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, North Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Transjordan). Some of these were still under formal occupation.

5.2- Nasser and the apogee of pan-Arabism

British plans to co-opt the ideals of pan-Arabism through the Arab League were soon obstructed by a major political development; the 1953 coup of Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser against Faruk the pro-British monarch of Egypt. Nasser had served as a high ranked Egyptian officer during the 1948 War, following the creation of Israel. The subsequent defeat of several Arab armies by superior Israeli forces proved to him that the newly independent Arab states suffered from disunity and under-development. To overcome these weaknesses, Nasser and other advocates of Arab nationalism sought the realisation of two ideals: Arab renaissance and pan-Arab unity (Kramer 1993:190). Later secular and socialist understandings of these ideals were also adopted.

Nasser's detractors saw in pan-Arabism a means of political opportunism. They point to the fact that Nasser was primarily an Egyptian nationalist, who was affiliated with jingoistic organisations such as Young Egypt. The wars he waged in the name of pan-Arabism were described as a 'duty imposed by self defence' (Jankowski 2002: 30-31). From this perspective, Nasser's pan-Arab call to political unity could be construed as a cynical way to barricade behind the Arab world for security purposes (Jankowski and Gershoni 1995: 134-35). But regardless of these criticisms, it is indisputable that Nasser strongly opposed Western interference in the region. Thus, he exploited the Cold War political atmosphere by playing the Eastern bloc against the Western powers.

In September 1955, Nasser concluded an arms deal with Czechoslovakia, a close ally of the Soviet Union; a move that irritated Washington. Western powers reacted by withdrawing their pledge of monetary assistance for the building of the Aswan Dam. His purpose was to irrigate potential farm land and to introduce electricity to rural Egypt. Nasser was initially approved a World Bank loan, but after the Czechoslovakian arms deal, the United States and Britain obstructed the loan, pushing Nasser toward the Soviet Union. Aligned with the communist bloc, relations between Nasser and the West soon deteriorated. Nasser stood up against neo-colonial schemes in the region, such as the Baghdad Pact (1955)⁹⁶, and initiated a major international crisis by nationalising the Suez Canal (26 July 1956), which was owned by British and French investors. Nasser's status in the Arab World was enhanced; he gained worldwide recognition as a champion of decolonization in Africa. At the 1955 Asian-African

⁹⁶ The Baghdad Pact (also referred to as CENTO for Central Treaty Organisation) was an alliance established in 1955 between the United States and the United Kingdom on one hand, and Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran on the other.

Conference (also known as the Bandung Conference)⁹⁷ held in Indonesia, Nasser reached the height of international recognition, becoming the friend of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India and President Tito of Yugoslavia.

With Suez nationalisation, the armies of Britain, France and Israel sought to occupy Egypt. This military operation ended in fiasco after strong criticisms from both the United States and the Soviet Union. This episode strengthened Nasser's pan-Arab claims. His support for socialist independence movements throughout the Middle East and Africa brought Third World acclaim. However, his decision to engage further on behalf of the Soviet Union against the clients of Washington in the region (especially the Gulf monarchies) led to the disastrous Egyptian intervention in Yemen (1962-1967)⁹⁸; a costly adventure for the Egyptian military (McNamara 2000). Hence, when Israel launched the Six-Day War in 1967, the overstretched Egyptian forces were crushed. This humiliating defeat combined with the death of Nasser (1970) set back the cause of Pan-Arabism. Nonetheless, these ideals remained alive at the popular level. Nasser had skilfully used radio and television broadcasting to spread pan-Arab sentiments (Danielson 1998: 113-114). The Egyptian revolutionaries, while seizing power from King Faruk, announced their first communiqué from Cairo Radio on July 4, 1953. This communiqué was inserted within a half-hour radio programme called *The Voice of the Arabs*. Nasser gave orders to upgrade this programme into a major radio feature. *The Voice of the Arabs* started broadcasting for 18 hours each day across the Arab world (James 2006b). Cairo Radio soon succeeded in mobilising the Arab populace. Its contribution toward the anti-colonial struggles in North-Africa and Yemen has been well documented (James 2006a). *Voice of the Arabs* reached its zenith during the mid-1950s, as new low-cost transistor radios became available in cities and villages. Combining highly emotive anti-colonial rhetoric with music from renowned Arab female singers such as Umm Kalthoum⁹⁹, Cairo Radio became a pan-regional phenomenon.

⁹⁷ The conference met on April 18-24, 1955, in Bandung, Indonesia, and was organised by Indonesia, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Burma. This conference gathered 29 newly independent Asian and African states for the purpose of promoting Afro-Asian cooperation and opposing colonialism.

⁹⁸ In 1962 a military coup overthrew the royalist government in Yemen. Nasser intervened to support the new republican government against the Saudi-backed royalists, who were attempting to regain control. This undertaking proved to be a great drain on Egypt's financial and military resources. At the height of its involvement, Egypt had 75,000 troops in Yemen. Egypt's intervention also increased inter-Arab tensions, especially between Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

⁹⁹ Umm Kalthoum is still recognized as the Arab world's most famous and distinguished singer of the 20th Century (Danielson 1998: 199).

Nasser's communication strategy bypassed the illiteracy that plagued the Arab world.¹⁰⁰ Illiteracy meant that classical Arabic was in steady decline, whereas local dialects flourished. There has always been a gulf between formal Arabic and the different local dialects, which vary even within particular countries. A Moroccan would never be able to understand an Iraqi if both use their respective dialects to communicate. But because of Nasser's communication prowess, Egyptian movies, radio broadcasts, and television serials gave Egyptian cinema Arab pre-eminence for more than half a century, turning the Egyptian dialect into the Arabs' new *lingua franca* (Shafik 1998: 85-86). This provided the Arabs once again with a commonly understood language; an important prerequisite in developing national consciousness (Anderson 1991: 44-46).

5.3- Arab transnational media and pan-Arabism

In the decades after decolonization, some Arab governments, especially those of North Africa could not easily revert to the Arabic language. In 1968, Algerian President Boumedienne announced that 'without recovering that essential and important element which is the national language, our efforts will be vain, our personality incomplete and our entire body without a soul' (Mostari 2005: 43). Yet despite political commitment, the "Arabization programs" often faced hostile reactions from people previously educated within colonial educational institutions. There was also a shortage of the qualified personnel needed to achieve linguistic re-conversion. After the Algerian government decided to dismantle the colonial language as the first language of education and administration in the late 1960s, Arabic was only slowly introduced in schools, starting with the primary schools, and then in social science and humanities subjects in high schools. Two decades later, Arabic finally became the primary medium of communication in the secondary schools and several university programs. Other Arab countries, such as Morocco and Tunisia, knew similar developments. Therefore, one can say that classical Arabic language regained its vitality in the entire Arab World only from the mid-1980s onwards. In these circumstances, there were opportunities for pan-Arabist discourse. These opportunities were underpinned by common historical, linguistic and cultural experiences reinforced by migration flows. Furthermore, the Arab anti-colonial struggle was often a transnational activity (e.g. Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian nationalist

¹⁰⁰ The Arab world inherited high illiteracy rates from the colonial era. For instance in Algeria, the proportion of literate to the general population plunged from 40percent in 1832 (prior to French colonization) to 5percent in 1962. Indeed, during the French colonial period in Algeria (1830-1962), French was considered as the language of instruction, and classical Arab was considered to be the reflection of ignorance and was therefore abandoned (Mostari, 2005:40-41).

leaders were based in Egypt); a trend further reinforced by Nasser's foreign policy orientations. Hence, shared history and modern collective concerns meant that Arabs had an established transnational basis for political debate (Lynch 2003: 59).

In this light, one can appreciate the proliferation of transnational Arabic newspapers and magazines, and the steady increase in their readership throughout the Arab World. Arabic newspapers based in London, such as *Asharq al-Awsat* (launched in 1978) and *Al-Hayat* (Launched in 1988), were able (with technological developments in design, transmission and text) to simultaneously print their papers from many hubs in the Middle East and worldwide. During the early 1990s, *Al Hayat* for example printed in London, Frankfurt, Cairo, Bahrain, Beirut, New York and, occasionally Marseille. As such, they could access readers throughout the Arab Diaspora. In 2005, *Al Hayat*'s combined print run was between 160,000 and 170,000, and *Asharq al-Awsat* around 200,000.¹⁰¹ Both these newspapers were the preferred tribune for liberal intellectuals (before satellite television and the internet). The off-shore Arab press adhered to a broad pan-Arab discourse in order to cater for its readership in the Arab world (Schleifer 2004).

Yet despite these tangible developments, Arab print media still operated in precarious economic circumstances against the constant interference of governments, political players and ideologically lauded partisans (El Affendi 1999). Former American ambassador to Yemen and specialist in Arab media, William Rugh, classified Arab journalists prior to the 1990s into three categories: The "mobilisation press" controlled by revolutionary governments (Libya, Syria, Iraq and Sudan), the "loyalist press" which mostly belonged to the private sector but answered to governments (e.g. in the Gulf States), and the "diverse press" which reflected diverse partisan politics but was subjected to subtler pressures (Lebanon, Morocco, Kuwait etc.) (Rugh 2004: 30-91). The overall situation was succinctly summarized by Ibrahim Nawar, head of the Arab Press Freedom Watch (APFW), who observed that 'freedom of expression is not something on offer in the Arab world' (Nawar 2000).

Arab journalists have always had to carefully contemplate the "red lines" established by authoritarian governments. Issues associated with the ruling institutions and their interests, national traditions, and predominant ideologies, were all classified under the sacrosanct title of "national security". On this basis, governments implemented a wide range of restrictions

¹⁰¹ http://www.allied-media.com/Arab-American/al_hayat_arabic_daily_newspaper.htm

supervised by censorship departments and intelligence agencies. These restrictions have included the refusal to issue visas, the blocking of news sources, and the seizure of publications. Furthermore, Arab journalists have frequently been singled out through monitoring, deportation and personal threats. This led many publications to conduct self-censorship (Amin 2002: 128). Even offshore printed media, such as *Al-Hayat* and *Acharq al-Awsat*, were subject to political pressure from Arab regimes. Jihad B. Khazen, former senior editor of both publications, wrote about the pressure from Arab officials not to publish certain information. He observed that the Arab media was controlled by an official “system of denial”. In cases of non-compliance, ban and seizure were the usual sanctions.¹⁰² For instance, *Al Hayat* was banned in certain Arab countries 60 times in 1994, 35 times in 1995, and 20 times respectively in 1996 and 1997 (Khazen 1999: 87-92).

But this state of affairs was about to change. Indeed, in the early 1990s, private Arab transnational satellite broadcasters (primarily Saudi-owned), such as the *Middle East Broadcast Corporation* (MBC)¹⁰³ (1991) and *The Arab Radio and Television* (ART)¹⁰⁴ (1994), began their operations in the Arab world, and successfully won audiences over. MBC catered to more than 130 million Arabic speaking people around the world (1996 estimations), while ART (later to become a pay per view television network) had claimed by 2007 about 10 million subscribers (Allied Media Corp. 2007). Transnational satellite broadcasting significantly reinforced the pan-Arab identity. Under new technologies of transmission, local regimes could no longer imprint their so-called “national values” upon their subjects. By transcending borders, satellite broadcasts were able to circumvent national controls. Thus, Arab rulers (who are mostly non-elected and authoritarian) could no longer preserve their monopoly on information. During earlier decades, government-controlled television was the defining feature of local and regional broadcasting in the Arab region. Accordingly, television news was no more than a ‘mouthpiece for government policies vis-à-vis national, regional, and international issues and events’ (Ayish 2002: 138, 140).

¹⁰² For example, 14 publications were banned in Egypt in 2000. The order to close them down came in an administrative decree issued by the Governor of Cairo province.

¹⁰³ MBC received direct financial support from Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd. It was founded in London in 1991 by two private entrepreneurs, Sheikh Walid al-Ibrahim (a relative of King Fahd) and Sheikh Saleh Kamel (who will later set up ART). See: (Sakr, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ ART was founded by Sheikh Saleh Kamel and Saudi Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal. When it started in 1994, ART’s offering consisted of four free-to-air channels: one general, one for sports, one for children and another showing only films.

Table 1: Timeline of Satellite Channels 1990-1998

Date	Name	Country Affiliation	Ownership
1990	ESC	Egypt	State
1991	MBC	Saudi Arabia	Private
1992	EDTV	Dubai	UAE State. JSC Jordan State
1994	ART	Saudi Arabia	Private
	Orbit	Saudi Arabia	Private
	RTM	Morocco	State
1995	STV	Syria	State
1996	LBC-Sat	Lebanon	Private
	Future International	Lebanon	Private
	Aljazeera	Qatar	Independent
1997	ANN	Syria	Private
1998	Nile Thematic Channels	Egypt	State

Source: Press reports, company promotional materials (cited in Tabar 2002: 69)

Arab satellite channels thus provided Arab intellectuals with the necessary platform to discuss Middle Eastern issues on a pan-regional level; a trend reinforced by the introduction of the internet. As a result, Arab opinion leaders started talking to each other as never before. Due to the declining cost of dishes and sophisticated programming, which rivalled government-owned channels, satellite television had become the preferred choice to millions of Arab viewers

Table 2: Satellite and Cable Access Survey 1997-1999

Measured as percentage of homes with TV

Country	1997	1998	1999
Algeria	37.5	37.5	80
Egypt	8.7	5.6	7.5
Jordan	14.4	14.9	14.7
Lebanon	8.3	41.3	42.5
Morocco	24.8	25.8	24.7
Saudi Arabia	50.4	69.7	65.4
Syria	26.4	19.9	29.7
Tunisia	3.4	7.1	10

Source: Eutelsat (PARC, Stat-IPSOS, etc.), (cited in Tabar 2002: 64).

Satellite television networks, such as Aljazeera, free-view newspapers on the Internet, and instant mobile texts, have enabled citizens throughout the Middle-East to share opinion outside of state censorship. This has facilitated communal consciousness and the reconstruction of Arab identity in the Arab World, despite the opposition of official apparatchiks, who have long relied upon regional illiteracy to minimize scrutiny of their policies. In one instance, a senior Yemeni official spoke of his surprise when he went to the

countryside to hear local villagers speaking of issues such as privatization and globalization. When he asked about their source of information, he was told it was from watching Arab satellite television, including Aljazeera and MBC (Ghareeb 2000: 399).

5.4- Evolution of the pan-Arab discourse

Nasser, the Baath party (in Syria and Iraq) and other Arab nationalist movements sought pan-Arab political unity, by force if necessary. Nasserist and Baathist perspectives were very critical of Arab state entities. They were regarded as “deviant and transient” because they obstructed the construction of a larger Arab nation. This objective grew out of the commitment to Arab consensus (i.e. that Arab leaders are expected to act collectively on important Arab issues). Egypt was regarded as central to the Arab system (it was the most populous Arab country, and host of the Arab League), and the Palestine cause was strongly emphasised (Sirriyeh 2000: 54-56). Pan-Arab discourse was imbued with socialism and secularism and left no particular room for Islam. Islamists often received harsh treatment from Nasserist¹⁰⁵ and Baathist¹⁰⁶ regimes.

From the early 1970s, pan-Arabism became an authoritarian doctrine. The Baath party, for example, relied on security forces to govern Syria and Iraq at the expense of human rights. In the meantime, Nasserism declined as social force with the death of its leader, while pan-Arab Palestinian movements lost their appeal after continual in-fighting and disastrous political choices.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) were harshly repressed in Egypt during the reign of Nasser. Tens of thousands of alleged MB members were put in prison and tortured in two occasions (1954 and 1966). A few of their leaders such as Sayyid Qutb were hanged.

¹⁰⁶ As a result of a small-scale insurgency led by Islamists in Syria in 1982, the regime reacted by bombing with tanks and artillery the city of Hama, where some 25,000 people were killed according to Amnesty International estimates.

¹⁰⁷ Three major disastrous mistakes were made by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO):

Firstly, after the defeat of 1967, when the Palestinians felt they could no longer rely on Arab governments to retrieve back their territories. As a result, the Palestinians became very independent within Jordan. They virtually created a "state within a state" in that country, eventually controlling several strategic positions. Open fighting with Jordanian state forces erupted in June 1970, and the Palestinians were expelled in great numbers from Jordan.

Secondly, after having moved to Lebanon in the early 1970s, the PLO, encouraged by the weakness of Lebanon's central government, again operated as an independent state. This state of affairs destabilised Lebanese internal politics, leading to a civil war in 1975. This escalation led to a full-scale Israeli invasion which ended with their siege of Beirut (1982). As a result, Palestinian leaders and their armed contingent were expelled to Tunis (1983). Thirdly, during the Gulf War of 1991, the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat decided to side with Iraq, alienating pro-US Arab states, which were the PLO's main financial backers. At the end of the War and the defeat of Iraq, the PLO was considerably weakened.

When the American military campaign against Iraq took place in 1991, pan-Arabism's appeal was at its lowest point. Islamist movements benefited from this decline in what constituted a major shift in Middle-Eastern politics (Kepel 2002). Previously, Islamist movements had barely survived within Arab societies, but opposition to the 1991 Gulf War rallied Islamist opposition throughout the Arab World. Mass protests were organised by Islamist parties from Casablanca to Jakarta. Such parties became more visible in the politics of societies as diverse as Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey, Indonesia, and Malaysia.¹⁰⁸ As pan-Arabists and Islamists felt the danger of the American hegemony, they decided to cooperate.

5.5 – Pan Arab discourse and Aljazeera (1996-2001)

The First Gulf War (1991) was a crucial episode in the development of Arab media. This was the first time that Arabs had seen a war against fellow Arabs through the “enemy’s lenses”, as CNN was the sole instant chronicler of that conflict. This exposed the shortcomings of Arab state-owned television networks. Saudi television, for example, failed to mention Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait for more than 48 hours. Such media were also ineffective in “selling” their patrons’ alliance with Washington. This situation compelled the wealthy Gulf States to consider an upgrade in their broadcasting networks (Schleifer 2004). Consequently, Saudi-sponsored Satellite broadcasters grew rapidly, as stations such as MBC (1991), ART (1994) started transmitting. These were entertainment-focused in 1994. The Saudi government proposed the establishment of a 24/7 news channel and founded the satellite network ORBIT.¹⁰⁹ For this purpose, ORBIT commissioned the BBC to produce Arab-World Television. For the BBC board, this was a way to penetrate the wealthy Gulf States market. This initiative foundered after the BBC aired some critical programs about the Saudi Royal family. Eventually, ORBIT-BBC was terminated in April, 1996 (Richardson 2003). One hundred and fifty former staff members of BBC Arabic, who had been trained for the ORBIT project, were made redundant. One fired journalist offered a business proposal for a professional 24-hour Arabic news channel to the Qatari government. Coincidentally, Qatar, under a new Emir, was undertaking a modernization campaign, and had just liberalised

¹⁰⁸ In Kuwait, Islamists become more involved in elections from 1992. In Turkey, two Islamist parties competed in elections and one of them (the Saadet or Contentment Party) won 48 seats in the 550-member Grand National Assembly. In Indonesia, several Islamist parties have shared power in a succession of fractious cabinets since the June 1999 elections; in Morocco and Bahrain, Islamists made notable gains in the parliamentary elections in the late 1990s and early 2000.

¹⁰⁹ Orbit is a Pan-Arab satellite broadcasting network offering over 40 programming services including movies, live sporting events and news. It was founded by Saudi Prince Khaled bin Abdullah bin Abdel-Rahman, a cousin of King Fahd. This channel is currently owned by the Mawarid Group of Saudi Arabia.

censorship practices. This opened the way for professional television journalism and public affairs programming (Schleifer 2003).

Understanding Qatar's history and geo-politics places the Aljazeera phenomenon in context. Since the 19th century, Qatar had been threatened by the expansionist clans governing neighbouring Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. Military excursions from the Al Khalifa clan (Bahrain) and the Al Saud (Saudi Arabia) were frequent. Ultimately, Qatar's survival depended on the intervention of British colonial forces (led by Colonel Lewis Pelly). In 1916, Qatar was designated as a British protectorate.

The foreign policy course of modern Qatar was shaped by tensions with neighbours, and the patronage of foreign powers. Tensions were especially sharp with Bahrain¹¹⁰ and with Saudi Arabia. Occasionally, military skirmishes took place (this occurred in 1986 between Qatar and Bahrain coastguards). Similarly, serious border incidents between Qatar and Saudi Arabia almost led to military confrontation in September 1992.¹¹¹ In 1995, their relationship deteriorated when Qatar objected to the Saudi candidate, who was about to take over the position of secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)¹¹². In the meantime, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani ousted his father as Emir of Qatar. Hoping to exploit this situation, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates welcomed the deposed Emir of Qatar Sheikh Khalifa (Cordesman 2003). In response, his son established economic ties with Israel. In October 1995, he signed a letter of intent to supply Qatari gas to Israel. Ties between Qatar and Saudi Arabia further worsened in February 1996, when a Saudi-backed coup was foiled in Qatar (MEES 1996).

Qatar is a very rich country, holding the third-largest natural gas reserves in the world estimated at 15 billion barrels (2.4 km³). Its per capita income is the highest in the Middle East (\$39,607 as of 2005) and among the highest in the world. However, Qatar is also a tiny country with a population of 589,000 (2001 census) of which less than 200,000 are native nationals. Qatar is in fact the smallest Arab state (Sakr 2001: 56). Being extremely rich, yet vulnerable, compelled the Qatari rulers to think about efficient insurance strategies. One of

¹¹⁰ Tensions originate from the borderline dispute concerning the Hawar Islands; a dispute that has persisted for over 60 years. The dispute was finally settled in March 2001 by the International Court of Justice, which ruled in favour of Bahrain.

¹¹¹ This incident prompted Qatar to suspend a 1965 border agreement, which in fact had never been ratified. Other incidents in 1993 and 1994 led to a diplomatic row between both countries, and caused Qatar to boycott the November 1994 Gulf summit conference.

¹¹² The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a trade bloc involving the six Arab Gulf states with many economic and social objectives.

these is obviously Western patronage. However, this possibility extends to its neighbours as well. Qatar's new Emir, Sheikh Hamad, sought to create a comparative advantage over its neighbours through media development. This would give Qatar a distinctive voice, and change its image from that of a little-known Gulf oil producer to a major player in the international community. Thus, within four months of his takeover, Sheikh Hamad ended press censorship, and soon afterwards abolished the Ministry of Information. Also, he agreed to the local 24-hour relay of BBC programmes in Arabic and English on FM radio (a first in the Arab World). It was against this backdrop that the Qatari government invested \$150 million for the establishment of Aljazeera in November 1996. However, the Qatari government was careful to avoid any national recognition with the Aljazeera logo. The Emir also insisted that the \$150 million investment was to be a five-year loan rather than a gift (Sakr 2001: 56-57). Therefore, despite being launched as a state-financed satellite channel, the Qatari government's subtle distancing made Aljazeera look like a BBC type model rather than a state-controlled Arab network (Schleifer 2001).

5.6- Aljazeera and the establishment of a new Arab journalistic culture

Before Aljazeera, 'Arab news media resembled the desert: barren, boring, oppressive and repetitive' (Lynch 2005a: 40). Arab viewers were bombarded by footage detailing their rulers' trips inside and outside their countries, without any coverage regarding plans and policies. Communication was always top-bottom, rather than the opposite. As the mouthpiece of local regimes, Arab media never approached political, social, economic, or religious subjects which were deemed sensitive. Aljazeera immediately challenged this environment by launching talk shows that were fast paced, innovative, and daring. At the forefront of the change was Faisal al-Kasim, a Syrian Druze with a Ph.D. in English literature. He had worked for the BBC Arabic Radio and Television as producer and anchor of news programs. Al-Kasim became famous as the presenter for *Al Ittijah Al Mo'akis* (The Opposite Direction), a weekly talk show that helped to forge Aljazeera's reputation. In this program, Al-Kasim would spend the first two minutes posing questions that reflected opposite positions on a chosen topic. He would then open the debate on some of the most sensitive issues in Arab society. The format of this show, namely two guests representing two opposite sides of an argument, was novel in the Arab media.

From the very beginning in November 1996, the show stirred up controversies over political, cultural, and religious controversy. On politics, "The Opposite Direction" regularly featured

opponents of Arab regimes, most particularly Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, and the Gulf states. At the end of 1998, the talk show featured a debate between a Jordanian official and a Syrian intellectual on the 1994 Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty. The Syrian directly questioned the legitimacy of the Jordanian state by claiming its formation had been designed to absorb Palestinians displaced by the creation of Israel in 1948. In response, the Jordanian Ministry of Information cancelled the accreditation of the Aljazeera news staff in Amman (Sakr 2001: 120). "The Opposite Direction" also irritated the Kuwaiti government when it hosted a debate between a Kuwaiti newspaper editor and a renowned pro-Iraqi Palestinian journalist on the issue of UN sanctions against Iraq. Both guests criticized the Kuwaiti regime for its endorsement of the sanctions. Immediately afterwards, the Kuwaiti information minister flew to Qatar to complain. He was told that the government was not involved with Aljazeera's news content. On 27 January 1999, the programme hosted a debate about the ongoing Algerian civil war. The oppositional representative clearly gained the upper hand at which point the Algerian government cut the electricity supply to the capital Algiers (and some other cities), to prevent the program from screening. Abdullah Al Nafisi, a Kuwaiti intellectual, was the guest of the same talk-show on 13 July 1999. He launched a salvo of criticisms against the Gulf monarchs, and attacked the Saudi clergy for ignoring major issues such as royal corruption. The Saudi authorities responded by pressuring on Aljazeera. Saudi officials even intimidated the only Saudi member of Aljazeera to leave the network (El-Nawawy & Iskandar 2002: 117, 119). Yet, Al-Kasim's talk show knew no boundaries. Even Qatari government policies constituted no red line for the daring Syrian anchor. He hosted a debate on Qatar's rapprochement with Israel; a policy that was openly criticised on the programme by a professor of political science at the University of Qatar (Al-Kasim 1999).

Beyond politics, Al-Kasim's program regularly featured controversial anti-religious personalities. On 31 December 1996, For example, "The Opposite Direction" hosted an episode with the Egyptian scholar Nasr Hamed Abu Zeid (the local equivalent of Salman Rushdie). That was the first time that Abu Zeid had appeared on television; he was so vilified by religious authorities that no Arab television network dared to interview him. Abu Zeid took full advantage of the opportunity and vehemently attacked his detractors. In a similar incident in 26 October 1997, Al-Kasim invited Sadeeq Jalal Al-Azm, professor of philosophy at the University of Damascus, to challenge renowned Muslim scholar, Youssef al-Karadawi. The latter was put on the defensive as Al-Azm, ridiculed the fundamentals of religious thought; a previously unthinkable occurrence on Arab television. Other prominent Arab anti-religious

thinkers, such as Lafif Lakhdar, Aziz Lazma, and Rifaat Saeed appeared on the program, amidst opposition from religious institutions.

While the aforementioned exchanges reveal the degree of freedom enjoyed by Aljazeera's anchors¹¹³, they also drew criticism from foreign and Arab observers. The Qatar based channel was said to encourage sensationalism in order to increase audience share. The response of Aljazeera's journalists was to highlight that critics had confused the network with the views of talk-show guests (Zednik 2002:4). Aljazeera's talk-shows simply allowed scholars and political opposition figures the opportunity to articulate their views publicly. Al Jazeera's philosophy totally contrasted with that of elite controlled, Saudi-funded competitors (Bahry 2001; Sakr 2001: 55). By serving as a forum for opposition groups, and by airing controversial debates, Aljazeera exposed the misdeeds of the local regimes. Institutionalized corruption in the monarchical regimes and widespread human rights abuses in the militaristic regimes were equally criticized. Scholars such as Kai Hafez hailed Aljazeera as the only satellite television service in the Arab world to deal with sensitive political, social and religious issues (Hafez 1999: 75). Other academics, such as John Alterman, noted that Aljazeera had obliged Arab politicians to become attentive to public opinion more than in the past (Alterman 1998).

Aljazeera's news gathering and news presentation techniques were also innovative. The Qatar based channel introduced new methods of editing and graphic design. It also pioneered new delivery formats in the region by coordinating different in-studio and satellite-relayed real time interviews (Ayish 2002: 149). Consequently, Aljazeera set the standards of news reporting in the region. State operated media organisations were obliged to open up, upgrade the training of their staff, and even advocate the lifting of censorship. Arab private networks were pushed to include serious current affairs debates in their programming. The result was undeniably beneficial to the viewers; they received diversified programs and tasted freedom of expression for the first time (Al-Hail 2000). Yet, with these innovations came heavy consequences. Aljazeera's anchors became persona *non grata* in many Arab countries, and Aljazeera offices were forcibly closed throughout the Arab World.¹¹⁴ At various times

¹¹³ Faisal Al-Kasim acknowledges this fact. He wrote: 'Al-Jazeera's editorial policy is so lax that I am hardly ever given orders regarding program content. The station has an even wider scope of freedom than the BBC Arabic radio, where I worked for ten years. I tackle issues that I never even dreamed of covering during my service at the BBC' (Al-Kasim 1999)

¹¹⁴ Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Tunisia bar Aljazeera from their territory. The Jordanian authorities did the same after a guest on a debate program criticized the regime in Amman, yet they revoked the decision later.

Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya have recalled their ambassadors from Doha in protest against Aljazeera coverage. Strained relationships with Arab governments also affected advertising. The Saudi government discouraged regional companies and multinationals alike from doing business with Aljazeera. Accordingly, PepsiCo, General Electric and many other multinational corporations cancelled advertising campaigns. As a result, Aljazeera received only a meagre part of its revenues from advertising. Other Arab transnational satellite networks earned 90 percent of their revenue from this source (Zednik 2002). Thus, Saudi-owned MBC earned 91.5 million dollars from advertising in 1999, while Aljazeera, with its 35 million watchers, earned only 8 million dollars during the same year (Sakr 2001: 114).

Despite these difficulties, Al Jazeera's contributions to Middle Eastern journalistic culture were unprecedented. It was the first network to have an investigative agenda in a political environment characterised by official secrecy. With its show, *Sirri lil-Ghaya* (Top Secret), Aljazeera's journalist Yosri Fouda tackled many issues for the first time. Modelled on BBC's *Panorama*, "Top Secret" scored many scoops, such as the investigation of the 1999 crash of Egypt-Air flight 990.¹¹⁵ This episode attracted much popular interest primarily because the numerous Egyptian television channels kept silent about it, while the U.S. media spread many premature speculations. Yosri Fouda's program managed to prove the technical impossibility of the pilot suicide theory. On 9 November 2000, Fouda ran an investigative piece which linked the use of depleted uranium during the 1991 Gulf War to the spread of cancer and birth defects in southern Iraq. Helped by Christopher Busby, a renowned British scientist, Fouda's investigation broke new ground. It preceded similar findings by European journalists, who were enquiring about the mysterious illnesses that had affected NATO soldiers (Fouda 2001).

Similarly, on October 2000 Al Jazeera launched a 15-hour documentary dedicated to the Lebanese Civil War. Viewer ratings rose throughout the Middle East, as the war was explained systematically with passion and intrigue. Despite criticisms from the major protagonists, people throughout Beirut and elsewhere gathered to watch each episode. Yet again, such openness was resented by some Arab journalists. In an interview with Aljazeera's director Mohamed Jassem Al-Ali, the Arabic newspaper Al Wasat, was asked whether the documentary had aggravated past wounds. Al-Ali responded that it wasn't the first time they

¹¹⁵ On 31 October 1999, EgyptAir Flight 990, a Boeing 767 flying between JFK Airport in New York City and Cairo, crashed into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Nantucket. The pilot, Gameel Al-Batouti, was suspected by U.S. authorities of committing suicide and intentionally crashing the plane. Egyptian officials have strongly disputed that claim.

had ‘tackled issues that others considered to be a taboo, subjects for which people think that the time is not yet appropriate’. He then declared ‘to those people, I answer that the timing will not be suitable any day, and thus this excuse should not remain like a sword aimed at us’ (Gabriel 2002).

Arguably, Aljazeera’s most significant innovation was in the area of war reporting. In December 1998, the Qatar based satellite channel gained an impressive scoop by reporting on the American/British joint bombing campaign “Desert Fox”.¹¹⁶ It was the only international media organisation to have reporters inside Iraq who could provide live broadcasts of this military operation (Bahry 2001). It has been asserted that Aljazeera’s coverage pushed the U.S. military to shorten the timeframe of their “Desert Fox” operations (Sheikh 2003). During this crisis, CNN relied partially on footage from Aljazeera for their coverage. Thus, only a few years after the 1991-Gulf War, Arab and international viewers depended on Aljazeera rather than CNN to see exclusive images of important military events.

It was the second Palestinian uprising (also called *al-Aqsa Intifada*) that really gave Aljazeera a major international profile. On 28 September 2000, the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon surrounded by hundreds of Israeli riot police visited Al Haram Mosque in Jerusalem (the third holiest place in Islam). This visit was perceived as a provocation by the worshippers. Their angry reaction led to a major police intervention. The day after Sharon's visit, following Friday prayers, riots broke out in the West Bank and Gaza. In a short period dozens of Palestinians were killed by the Israeli army and thousands were injured. Aljazeera, along with other Arab transnational networks, seized this opportunity to obtain maximum coverage for the Arab World. To this end, Aljazeera did not hesitate to air graphic footage of death and demolition in the West Bank and Gaza. These images were not screened by Western television networks and this enhanced the reputation of Aljazeera as a credible and reliable source of information in the Middle East. The Qatar based channel subsequently devoted much airtime to cover the plight of the Palestinians. This included debates and documentaries about the Intifada. Academic Mohamed Zayani observed: ‘More than any other channel, Aljazeera has capitalized on the importance of the Palestinian question. It has [...] provided instant coverage of the events and aired detailed reports on the latest developments, [and] shed an unpleasant light on the practices of Israel in the Middle East’ (Zayani 2005: 171).

¹¹⁶ Operation “Desert Fox” concerns the December 1998 bombing of Iraq. This was a major four-day air strike on Iraqi targets from 16 December to 19 December 1998.

With this coverage Aljazeera viewership in the occupied territories increased considerably. An October 1999 survey found that 32.8 percent of Palestinians “watched and trusted” the network compared to only 1.4 percent who said the same about CNN (Lynch 2003: 64). Aljazeera’s audience support was higher than that of any other network. As part of their reportage, the Qatari-based channel frequently investigated the inefficiency, abuse and corruption of the Palestinian Authority. This infuriated Arafat’s officials, who twice shut Aljazeera’s Ramallah bureau in protest (Shaulia 2005). Aljazeera also invited Israeli decision makers to participate in panel programmes. Previously, no Israeli (official or otherwise) had ever been interviewed¹¹⁷ in any Arab media outlet. Aljazeera was the first to break this taboo, a move that drew considerable criticism from Palestinian radical movements. Many Israeli officials welcomed Aljazeera’s approach. For example, Gideon Ezra, former deputy head of the General Security Service (GSS) commented favourably on the fair hearing he was given by Aljazeera. Nonetheless, other Israeli decision-makers complained about the tone of Aljazeera’s coverage and its likely impact on Arab populations. In a Washington speech, Shimon Peres, the Israeli foreign minister, criticized Aljazeera. This was covered by the network (Miles 2005: 95-96). Peres criticized Aljazeera’s use of the word “martyr” to describe Palestinians killed in the Intifada (uprising) against Israel. He also criticized the avoidance of the expression “suicide bombing” in the Palestinian context. Against this, it should be noted that most (if not all) of the other Arab satellite networks could be criticized on the same grounds. Some scholars attribute these semantic patterns of coverage to cultural factors (Barkho 2006).

5.7- Aljazeera and the pan-Arab discourse

Many academics considered Aljazeera’s coverage of the 2000 Intifada as a major contribution to the pan-Arabist revival (Schneider 2000; Kraidy 2002; Amin 2004, Zayani 2005). In fact, this coverage attracted the largest audience in the history of Arab broadcasting, and gave the Intifada its pan-Arab dimension. Viewers from Morocco to Oman came to share the experiences of Palestinians confronting the Israeli military machine. The image of the young Mohammed al-Durra being shot by Israeli troops on 30 September 2000 gained international prominence. The video footage was provided by freelance cameraman Talal Abu Rahma, who worked for French Television *France 2*. Aljazeera’s repeated broadcasting of Al-Durrah’s

¹¹⁷ Al-Jazeera was not only the first Arab media to break the boycott of Israeli Officials; it is among the few in the Arab world that continue to conduct such interviews. See: Gentzkow, M. A., & Shapiro, J. M. (2004). Media, Education, and Anti-Americanism in the Muslim World. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 18(3), 117.

death became a rallying symbol for anti-Israel opposition throughout the Arab world. This recreated a pan-Arab sense of "imagined community" (Anderson 1991).

In the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War and the subsequent growth of American hegemony over the Middle East, pan-Arabist and Islamist leaders decided to open a dialogue. The first gesture was made by the ruling Sudanese Islamist leader Hassan Al-Turabi. He organised in April and August 1991 rounds of conferences named *Popular Arab Islamic Conference* (PAIC) in Khartoum (Sudan). Attended by delegates from 45 States, the conference sought to reconcile the various pan-Arab and pan-Islamist groups. The New joint purpose was to oppose America's 're-colonization of the Islamic world' (Lesch 2002: 203).¹¹⁸

Aljazeera's journalists provided a platform for both pan-Arabs and pan-Islamists to exchange ideas and principles. This editorial stance was enabled by the fact that many Islamist opinion leaders, such as Tarek El-Bishri¹¹⁹ and Fahmy Howeidy,¹²⁰ were themselves former pan-Arabists. Earlier, hard-line Islamist rhetoric, viewed pan-Arabism as a Western import, encouraged by Orientalists and colonialists to divide and weaken the Muslims by separating Arabs from different ethnic groups. The new approach favoured reconciliation and mutual cooperation. For example, Tarek El-Bishri wrote: 'it is a duty of every Muslim to work for the revival and support for Arab unity' (Bishri 1998: 52). Pan-Arabist leaders also softened their positions by voicing respect for the role of Islam in Arab society. Their former ideals of political unity were abandoned in favour of an abridged version of pan-Arabism, which merely articulated cultural, social and economic bonds. It is this version of pan Arabism that became evident in Aljazeera's coverage.

The 'Desert Fox' campaign (1998) and the second Palestinian *Intifada* (2000) were presented on Aljazeera as Arab crises, rather than Iraqi and Palestinian issues, respectively. Media research confirmed this trend. Mohammed Ayish showed in an exploratory study, that 73.3 percent of Aljazeera's coverage was pan-Arab in orientation (Ayish 2001). This orientation allowed the Qatar-based network to expand its geographical reach, in the sense that its

¹¹⁸ In December 1993, a third round of the *Popular Arab-Islamic Conference* was organised. It was attended by 500 delegates, with Turabi as its Secretary-General. All delegates resolutely opposed American hegemony in the Middle East.

¹¹⁹ Tarek El-Bishri is the author of 20 books on Islam and Arabism, nationalism, democracy and Nasserism, Egyptian politics under the British mandate, secularism and Egypt's judiciary.

¹²⁰ Fahmy Howeidy is an Egyptian writer who specialises in Arab, Islamic and related political affairs. He joined the pan-Arab newspaper *Al-Ahram* in 1958. He was appointed as the Managing Editor of the Kuwaiti cultural monthly magazine, *Al-Arabi*, he then joined the London-based *Arabia* magazine. He has also published 16 books on issues related to Islamic thought and the state of the Muslim world.

coverage of issues of interest to most Arab peoples increased its presence all over the Middle Eastern market. They provide what the public wants and reflect public opinion across the Middle East (Kifner 2001). Thus, one can say that editorial orientation of Al-Jazeera conveniently met its market-driven strategy.

Aljazeera's recruitment also followed the aforementioned direction. While the Qatar-based satellite channel recruited anchors, correspondents and staff from every Arab country, most of journalists originated from countries surrounding Israel (Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria). Historically, pan-Arabism was strongest in these regions, especially among the Palestinian people. Palestinian nationalism was itself strongly tinged with pan-Arabism.¹²¹ Journalists were often influenced by pan-Arabism, as this world view pervaded in the education system and organisations. A good example is the Tunisian journalist Mohammed Krichane, who joined Aljazeera in 1996 after working for the BBC and Radio Monte-Carlo. Apart from his daily appearances on the new network, he wrote articles for renowned pan-Arab newspapers such as *al-Quds al-Arabi*. Abd El-Bari Atwan, the influential editor of this newspaper, has often been invited to discuss events on Aljazeera's various talk-shows.

Yet unlike Nasser's revolutionary *Voice of the Arabs*, Aljazeera's pan-Arabism adapted to modern realities. It did not advocate any unity guided by political authoritarianism; rather it promoted civil solidarities across Arab societies by making public argument accessible. Aljazeera promoted a new culture of communication, which embraced dialogue and tolerated dissent. This contemporary version of pan-Arabism circumvented the repressive measures which had been implemented by national dictatorships to disrupt local traditions of the Arab public sphere.¹²² Therefore, Aljazeera helped to build a pan-Arab public sphere (Chapelier & Demleitner 2004; Lynch 2003). Aljazeera's official motto, namely *Al-rai wa rai al-akhar* (the opinion and the opposite opinion), spread the idea that viewpoints of others should be respected and discussed peacefully (Bahry 2001).

Another key contribution of Aljazeera concerns its empowerment of women. The recruitment of many women anchors, gave them visibility within Arab public space. The courage,

¹²¹ The third article of the *Palestinian National Charter* states the following: The Palestinian Arab people has the legitimate right to its homeland and is an inseparable part of the Arab Nation. It shares the sufferings and aspirations of the Arab Nation and its struggle for freedom, sovereignty, progress and unity. For more on the charter, see: <http://www.un.int/palestine/PLO/PNA2.html>

¹²² Arab public sphere traditionally existed in places such as coffeehouses in popular quarters, tribal *diwaniyat* (salons) and mosques (Lynch, 2003: 69)

professionalism and dedication of Aljazeera's women correspondents became openly recognized throughout the Arab World, and this soon affected local politics. For example, two years after the launch of Aljazeera in 1998, women in Qatar were allowed to stand as candidates and to vote in municipal elections for the first time. Forty seven per cent of Qatari women voted in these elections (Al-Hail 2000). Overall, after its inception in 1996 Aljazeera became an island of open debate and information amidst a sea of oppression and censorship. Previously suppressed political debates, about all sorts of issues and among different political persuasions, became commonplace in the Arab world.

5.8- Aljazeera in the aftermath of 11 September 2001

After 9/11 Aljazeera assumed an unprecedented global profile. The Al-Qaeda attacks increased the demand for sensational imagery and militant rhetoric. Subsequent statements by Osama bin Laden on Aljazeera were highly sought after by other networks. Al-Qaeda itself well understood the dynamics of media coverage (Lynch 2006). Previously, Al Qaeda's propaganda was hardly visible, but it was nonetheless active. Its main centre was located in London, under the pseudonym "Committee of the Council and the Reform," and was coordinated by Khalid al-Fawwaz (arrested in 1998). Al Qaeda viewpoints were also spread through periodicals and Internet websites (such as azzam.com). Occasionally, Osama Bin Laden granted interviews to international journalists, such as Peter Arnett, Robert Fisk, Peter Bergen and Abdel Bari Atwan.¹²³ By having his videos broadcast on Aljazeera, Bin Laden and his network maintained their profile. Aljazeera's graphic coverage of American air-strikes in Afghanistan and the circulation of bin Laden's videotapes—quickly became a public relations crisis for the Bush administration.

The use of Aljazeera's platform enabled Al-Qaeda to reach the transnational Arab audiences, and gain the attention of Western news media (Lynch 2006). The Qatar based satellite station also benefited from the worldwide attention. It should be noted that Aljazeera was not the first network to be approached by militant groups. For example during the hijacking of the TWA 847 flight to Beirut in June 1985, the leader of the Lebanese Shiite militant group (AMAL)

¹²³ In these instances, Al-Qaeda reiterated its Manichean vision of a world divided between believers and infidels. Al-Qaeda combines a heavy religious rhetoric with a political agenda that is in collision with U.S. foreign policy. Topping Al-Qaeda's grievances is the U.S. military presence near Muslim holy sites. The stationing of U.S. forces in the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula near Muslim holy sites, was perceived as a trespass upon Islam's holy land. Also high among Al-Qaeda's grievances was the longstanding American bias toward Israel, as well as the destruction of Iraq preceded by the devastating sanctions that killed one million Iraqi civilians (Bergen, 2002: 21-22, 98-101). To change the status quo in relation to these affairs, Al-Qaeda opted for the use of armed means, including subversion and terrorism.

was in constant contact with the American network ABC. He appeared regularly on its news shows, and even participated in negotiating the story of the day. This infuriated some of the hostages, who referred to ABC as the “Amal Broadcasting Corporation” (a reference to the name of the militia) (Cohen-Almagor 2005: 392). Similar arrangements were entered into by the *New York Times*, which published letters from the Unabomber, and CNN which ran interviews with Bin Laden in 1997 and again in 2002.¹²⁴

Prior to 9/11, Aljazeera was neither for nor against the United States (Jaspersen and El-Kikhia 2002: 9). In fact, Washington initially praised Aljazeera for its democratic influence upon the Arab World (Schleifer 2005). Paradoxically, Aljazeera’s vulnerability derived from its commitment to the provision of extremely opposed viewpoints, however controversial. The Qatar based channel lined up Iraqi Baathists against Kuwaiti nationalists, pro-Iranian Shiites against pro-Saudi Sunnites, religious fundamentalists against ultra secularists, Kurds and Berbers against pan-Arabists. Therefore, juxtaposing Al Qaeda’s rhetoric with the U.S. official communication was never intended to be an anti-American exercise. Bin Laden was simply another extreme voice open to criticism by detractors. This nonchalance was reflected in many Aljazeera interviews. Omar Al Issawi, one of the channel’s founders stated in this regard: ‘we do not believe in a blackout on Bin Laden. We know that if we do not broadcast that somebody else will’ (Al-Issawi & Patiz 2003).

Aljazeera was used to broadcasting controversial views and was not necessarily sympathetic toward Al Qaeda. The network would always scrutinise Al Qaeda discourse by bringing cohorts of analysts and commentators after every controversial broadcast. Whenever Al Qaeda released a tape, Aljazeera allowed critical analysts from across the Arab political spectrum to provide a lengthy discussion. The militant group was denied any monopoly over political discourse and the shortcomings of its arguments were highlighted. Furthermore, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the widely popular Islamist figure that regularly appeared on Aljazeera’s *Religion and Life*, fiercely criticised Bin Laden’s brand of Islam (Lynch 2006). And, while airing interviews with Taliban representatives in Afghanistan, Aljazeera allowed the expressions of anti-Taliban views. Warlord Abdurrah Rasul Sayyaf, whose support was pivotal for the pro-American post-war Afghan government was given airtime (Waxman 2001).

¹²⁴ The 2002-CNN interview was conducted by Al-Jazeera journalist, Tayseer Allouni. However, the Qatari-based channel found it was conducted in coercive conditions, and involved predetermined questions. This contravened Al-Jazeera’s code of ethics.

Aljazeera also regularly invited American spokespeople. The best performed guests were, predictably, American diplomats who spoke Arabic, such as Christopher Ross and Alberto Fernandez. They appeared to be convincing in response to Al Qaeda's claims. Aljazeera maintained a permanent reporter at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) in Qatar to relay the military perspective concerning the "war on terror". Official accusations that Aljazeera was a "mouthpiece for terrorists" were not supported by evidence. As a matter of comparison, Aljazeera aired five hours of Bin Laden videotapes over a four-year period; live broadcasts of President Bush exceeded 500 hours (Miles 2005: 360). Other research shows that over 90 percent of all official statements screened on Aljazeera over a one year period after 9/11 were made by American officials or their allies (Wildermuth 2005).

American frustration with Aljazeera was driven by three related factors. From a military perspective, providing access to anti-American militants undermined media strategies associated with psychological operations. From a political perspective, the Bush administration sought to restrict debate regarding American foreign policy choices. Thus, alternative voices were seen as a threat to this course of action. The diplomatic battle for hearts and minds across the Muslim World was also threatened. By providing airtime to anti-American voices, Aljazeera hampered America's public diplomacy throughout the Middle East.

Military and Political considerations

After the 1991 Gulf War, military operations were no longer considered as a series of ground/air/sea manoeuvres. As the military entered the information age, warfare became a fast-paced confrontation of words and images. Subsequently, major news media organisations (and television in particular) were perceived as a 24-hour wartime player. Control of media content was deemed to be a paramount requirement to prevent the spread of information which might undermine the public will for wars. Reporters and news organisations were no longer considered to be dispassionate observers but potential friends or foes. This shift made the media environment itself a battlefield. Accordingly, the U.S. military regarded the management of public information, the control of media sources, and the outright manipulation of public opinion as routine wartime objectives.

The grand strategy of information warfare aims to deny, exploit, influence, corrupt, or destroy the adversary information. In terms of tactics, one can differentiate between proactive and

reactive tactics. The proactive side is encapsulated by the “spectator sport warfare” paradigm, whereby Western citizens have become spectators rather than participants. From this perspective, war becomes a spectacle, which involves entertaining videogame-like sanitized images, which blur the distinction between truth and reality, factual information and propaganda.

On the reactive side, the Pentagon spin doctors identified a set of un-crossable red lines. These included coverage which questioned the justice of the American cause and commentary which might undermine the relationships within American brokered coalitions. Also redlined was news content which might undermine support or morale at home; and compromise the secrecy of military plans (Bessaiso 2005: 156). Clearly, therefore, American concerns about Aljazeera were, *a priori*, military in origin. As subsequent analysis will show, the Qatar based channel regularly contravened the redline boundaries established by the Pentagon’s information warriors.

As noted in the previous chapter, the Pentagon sought to buy exclusive rights for extremely high-resolution satellites covering Afghanistan in order to censor any photos of Afghan civilian casualties. This sanitization was successful on American television networks, which rarely showed footage of “collateral damage.” When they did so, they would reiterate that the war on Afghanistan was in response to the atrocity of the 9-11 attacks (Pintak 2006: 41-42). However, Aljazeera contradicted this frame with vivid footage of personal suffering and human tragedies occurring within Afghanistan. Images of death and desolation associated with the bombing campaign were received by millions of viewers worldwide (Jasperson & El-Kikhia 2002: 7).

At the same time, Aljazeera’s critical scrutiny of the Bin Laden tapes and philosophy strengthened their legitimacy as a reliable television network vis-à-vis the “war on terror”. For the most part, they were not caught in the mutual clash of fundamentalisms. However, by broadcasting the Bin Laden videotapes, Aljazeera presented multiple challenges to American officials. The Pentagon spin doctors had chosen names such as “enduring freedom” and “Infinite Justice”¹²⁵ to label their campaign, (suggesting that liberty and justice awaited the Afghan people). Yet, Bin Laden framed the war on Afghanistan as a “religious war”, taking advantage of a gaffe from President Bush, who used the word “crusade” in one of his

¹²⁵ The appellation “Infinite Justice” was culturally insensitive toward millions of Muslims as they consider infinite justice to be the exclusive act of god.

speeches.¹²⁶ The Bin Laden videotapes also included threats that the war will continue as “terrorist war”, and that the “storm of airplanes will not be calmed”. These threats, which were relayed by U.S. media, directly hit the morale of the American people, provoking uproar within military and security circles. Aljazeera’s journalists also exposed occasional American military setbacks in Afghanistan. For example, Tayseer Alouni reported that two aircraft had been destroyed by Taliban forces. His report was accompanied by pictures of the debris, forcing the Pentagon to retract earlier denials (Bessaiso 2005: 157, 165). There is no doubt that Aljazeera constituted a major difficulty for the Pentagon’s “war on terror” media strategy. This state of affairs compelled the military elites to try and reduce the Arab Satellite Channel’s influence internationally and in the Middle East.

The U.S. president George W. Bush announced a zero-sum ultimatum for all the nations of the world, when he declared before a joint session of the U.S. congress on 20 September 2001: ‘every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.’ This binary discourse left no room for alternative voices or analyses, and this was made very clear by Ari Fleisher the White House spokesman, who told journalists to be “very careful about what they say.” Withholding information, censorship, and intimidation of media dissenters were intended to win the propaganda war within the United States and overseas. Yet, the reports of Aljazeera from Afghanistan meant that U.S. news media relied on a foreign source for its news feeds. This was in itself a major development. Indeed, 10 years earlier, global audiences had relied on CNN and its New Zealand-born reporter Peter Arnett to obtain on-the ground footage from Baghdad. In 2001, the world relied on Aljazeera to get footage of the war on Afghanistan. For the first time in modern history, the Arab channel offered a worldwide, non western perspective, on major international events. Aljazeera’s growing influence prompted American liberal news media to quote the Arab channel whenever they wanted to challenge the official perspective. El-Kikhia observed this development: ‘in the climate after 9-11, no one wanted to be critical of what the Bush administration was doing. Being able to say “according to Aljazeera,” the media could say something without actually being the ones to say it’ (Browne 2003: 25).

¹²⁶ President Bush said on September 16th 2001: ‘this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take awhile.’ But “crusade” carries an extremely negative connotation within the Muslim world, because of the bitterness left after centuries of war against the medieval crusaders. For more on the controversy surrounding this, see: <http://www.csmonitor.com/2001/0919/p12s2-woeu.html>

5.9- Conclusion

In the years preceding World War One, many in the Arab World resented the unjust Ottoman administration. This state of affairs planted the seeds of a new discourse promoting transnational Arab nationalism based on common interests. The end of the war and the victory of the allies saw the transfer of Arab lands into Western hands. The subsequent colonization and partition of Arab territories increased pan-Arabism's popularity in the Middle East as it called for the unity of the Arab people. After World War Two, pan-Arabism became the ideology of choice for several post-colonial regimes in the region (Egypt, Syria, and Iraq).

In Egypt, the Nasser regime was adept at using communication methods to reach out to the wider Arab community in support of anti-Western policies (such as backing the Algerian independence movement against France). The use of simple Arabic words in Egyptian television, radio and print media, combined with entertainment programs, amidst pan-Arab news framing, gave a wide appeal to the ideological framework promoted by the Nasser regime. This format moulded the Arab transnational media that appeared later in Beirut, and then in London (after the start of the Lebanese civil war). Accordingly, Arab transnational radio stations and newspapers targeted the wider Arab populations from Morocco to Oman as well as the Arab Diaspora in Europe. Saudi Arabia supported numerous Arab transnational media initiatives to enhance its international status. However, a Saudi row with the BBC foiled their joint project for a news satellite network (Orbit). Qatar's Emir was approached to save the project, and Aljazeera was born under Qatari patronage.

The BBC-trained journalists, who constituted the backbone of Aljazeera, introduced a new journalistic culture to the Arab World. They adopted a daring editorial line which left no political taboos, and gave priority to debates and talk-shows featuring guests from across the political spectrum. After decades of state pressures and censorship, the freedom brought by Aljazeera reinvigorated the Arab public sphere in many ways. Firstly, Arab audiences could view genuine discussions related to matters of collective concern, in which every subject was expected to be tackled. Guests were free to express their opinions on air as they had never done before. This has transformed an Arab political culture which had previously featured speakers bowing to official spheres and avoiding sensitive issues. Secondly, Aljazeera reaffirmed the centrality of politics in the Arab public sphere, whereas other satellite competitors were solely concentrated on entertainment. As such, the Qatar based channel renewed emphasis on issues that were central to pan-Arab politics such as the Israel-

Palestinian problem. As a result, Aljazeera obliged Arab politicians to become more attentive to public opinion. Finally, Aljazeera incorporated the increasingly influential Arab Diaspora into the Arab public sphere by discussing their own problems and by getting their feedback on the predicaments faced by the Arab World generally.

Aljazeera's brand of pan-Arabism is a soft one. Unlike the authoritarian Nasserite and Baathist pan-Arab ideologies, the Qatar based network did not aim to create violent revolutions in the Arab World, or to push for forcible unifications in the region. Instead, they believed that the best way to reinforce pan-Arab solidarities was by making public argument accessible on a transnational level. Thus, freedom of speech and freedom of thought and empowerment of minorities would guarantee a culture of dialogue that would strengthen the transnational Arab public sphere.

Aljazeera's journalistic culture created numerous problems for Arab regimes. The Qatari government was subsequently entangled in a web of diplomatic rows. The start of the "war on terror" in late 2001 brought a new set of problems for the Doha-based network. The American neo-conservative elites had embarked on a geo-strategic remoulding of Middle East foreign policy objectives, starting with Afghanistan and Iraq. As it provided a propaganda critique of American official communication efforts, Aljazeera was identified by U.S. political and military decision-makers as an enemy mouthpiece.

Chapter 6

6- The prospect of war in Iraq: frames, propaganda and debate

The first two chapters outlined the theoretical basis of media framing and surveyed the workings of propaganda. I then examined the origins and development of Orientalism and Pan-Arabism. This examination informed my discussion of CNN, Aljazeera, and their respective framings of Middle East conflicts. In this chapter, I explain how the Bush administration employed framing strategies to convince the American and international public that war against Iraq was necessary. In this respect, I consider the growing political influence of neo-conservatives; their commitment to war in Iraq came to inform Washington's foreign policy and communication strategies during and after the invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001. Against this background, I review the different frames and themes devised by American political and military elites to justify the invasion of Iraq. Their relentless push for war used simple messages, repetitive claims and silencing techniques to shape media coverage. I also review counter-perspectives from the Middle East, which saw the Bush administration's foreign policy objectives as a new manifestation of American imperialism. Finally, on the brink of war I assess the readiness of both CNN and Aljazeera in terms of organisational preparedness, access to information, and competition with other networks.

6.1- *Why Iraq?*

At the end of World War Two, President Roosevelt met the King of Saudi Arabia, Abdulaziz Al Saud and signed agreements that established a long-lasting American presence in the Middle East.¹²⁷ This presence grew to the point where the CIA played a key role in overthrowing the Mossadegh government of Iran. Their nationalisation of the British owned oil industry in 1953 had upset Anglo-American oil interests. Consequently, the CIA (with the active participation of the British MI6) removed Mossadegh from power on 19 August 1953 (Campbell & Keylin 1976: 205). From 1973, when the OPEC cartel of oil-producing countries dramatically increased oil prices, a small group of Washington insiders known as neo-conservatives advocated direct control over the Middle East region. They became influential within the Pentagon under the Presidential administrations of Ford, Reagan and

¹²⁷ The meeting between U.S. President Roosevelt and the Saudi King Abdulaziz took place aboard the USS *Quincy* in Egypt's Great Bitter Lake on February 14, 1945. President Roosevelt was interested in cultivating the friendship of Arab countries because of the need to protect US petroleum interests, but he also tried to persuade the Saudi King to acquiesce to a plan for Jewish emigration to Palestine.

Bush Senior. During the presidency of George W. Bush, neo-conservative figures filled the most influential advisory positions. Examples include Dick Cheney (U.S. Vice-President), Donald Rumsfeld (Defence Secretary), Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Defence Secretary), Richard Perle (Chairman of the Pentagon Defence Policy Board), and William Kristol (founder of the neo-conservative think-tank, the *Project of a New American Century* (PNAC) (George 2005: 185-187).

Under George W. Bush, official attitudes to Iraq reflected the PNAC ideology. Their stated goal was 'to promote American global leadership' through 'military strength and moral clarity.' With these words, the PNAC envisioned America as a global hegemon which ought to become an empire (Altheide & Grimes 2005: 624). One should recall that on the eve of the 1991 Iraq War, PNAC issued a document, drafted by the likes of Elliot Abrams, Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle, entitled *Defense Planning Guidance* which argued that the United States should be the sole 21st century superpower. As I have pointed in chapter three, this would happen by conducting pre-emptive wars to prevent the emergence of potential challengers. Interestingly, this document also called upon the United States to safeguard 'access to vital raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil' (Public Broadcasting Service 1992). Therefore, it was clear that the neoconservatives, even before the formal inception of the PNAC in 1997, considered the invasion of Iraq indispensable and unavoidable. So, it was not surprising to see eighteen PNAC affiliates sending an open letter to President Clinton in January 1998, urging him to:

...enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the U.S. and our friends and allies around the world. That strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein's regime from power (PNAC 1998).

Senior PNAC figures positioned themselves as primary opinion makers on matters concerning Iraq. They served as government officials, inner cabinet members, presidential advisers, journalists, and publishers. Consequently, PNAC members were key news sources whose claims were not openly challenged. Because reliance on official sources was part of journalistic routine, mainstream news institutions played a pivotal role in the "war programming"¹²⁸ that occurred during the American invasion of Iraq.

¹²⁸ As coined by Altheide and Grimes (2005).

The events of 11 September 2001 gave full momentum to PNAC projects. According to John Pilger, some high-ranked PNAC members had been longing for a catastrophic event on the scale of “Pearl Harbor” that could be used as a catalyst to reshape foreign policy. The attacks of September 11, 2001 were thereby described as ‘the opportunity of ages’ (Pilger 2002: 19). The climate of fear which eventually prevailed enveloped political leaders and journalists, who were ready to do anything for the sake of protecting the United States. This was the ideal environment for PNAC to set in motion its agenda regarding Iraq. Richard Clarke, President Bush’s advisor on terrorism until March 2003, confirms that the plan to attack Iraq was prepared before the attacks of 11 September 2001. In his book *Against All Enemies: inside America’s War on Terror*, Clarke stated that following 9/11, the main topic discussed by the U.S. Department of Defence was Iraq:

I expected to go back into a round of meetings examining what the next attack could be, what our vulnerabilities were, what we could do about them in the short term. Instead, I walked into a series of discussions about Iraq. At first, I was incredulous that we were talking about something other than getting Al Qaeda. Then, I realized with almost a sharp physical pain that Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz were going to try to take advantage of this national tragedy to promote their agenda about Iraq. Since the beginning of the administration, indeed well before, they had been pressing for a war with Iraq (Clarke 2004: 30).

Similar observations were made by seasoned reporter Bob Woodward, who said that Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld immediately linked Iraq to the 11 September 2001 attacks regardless of evidence:

Before the attacks, the Pentagon had been working for months on developing a military option for Iraq...Any serious, full-scale war against terrorism would have to make Iraq a target – eventually. Rumsfeld was raising the possibility that they could take advantage of the opportunity offered by the terrorist attacks to go after Saddam immediately (Woodward 2002: 49).

Richard Clarke’s observations from this period are important because they reveal the motivations of key people within the U.S. administration. According to Clarke, meetings involving senior neo-conservative figures produced five justifications for war: the first was about completing the unfinished business of the 1991 Gulf War by overthrowing Saddam Hussein. Second, attacking Iraq would eliminate its threat to Israel – the most important American ally in the region. Third, building a democratic state in Iraq would serve as an example to the region. Fourth, a pro-American Iraq would accommodate troops formerly

stationed in Saudi Arabia. The presence of large American bases there had encouraged opposition to the Al-Saud regime. Finally, overthrowing the Iraqi president would enable the establishment of another compliant oil-producing state (Clarke 2004: 265).

6.2- From the “War on Terror” to the 2003 Iraq War

Linking Iraq to the 11 September 2001 suicide attacks was the purpose of a sustained communications exercise. Initially, government and military elites were preoccupied with the “War on Terror” in Afghanistan. Immediately after the September 11 attacks, the United States implemented a vast communication program aimed at diminishing international criticism of its Middle East policies. The Bush administration turned initially to public relations advisors, the Rendon Group, who fashioned immediate replies to Al Qaeda and Taliban statements over the 24-hour news cycle. As indicated in the pervious chapter, the Rendon Group helped to establish the *Coalition Information Centres* (CIC) in Washington, London and Islamabad, as a way to cover all time zones, in opposition to the presence of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban (DeYoung 2001). The CIC prepared daily press releases and responses, and undertook opinion poll research across the Middle East. They also arranged interviews for key American officials with major Arab Networks.

On 2 October 2001, the Bush administration also appointed Charlotte Beers as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to undertake the “branding of U.S. foreign policy” (Rich 2006: 31-32). Beers’ strategy was formulated in marketing jargon: to build a brand (America), and sell this brand to a target audience (the Arab 11-year old), by using an emotionally appealing message (freedom) (Figenshou 2006: 85). But while Charlotte Beers was successful in commercial marketing terms, selling “Uncle Sam” to the Middle East was a different matter altogether. Beers’ attempts to address anti-Americanism through promotional videos about Muslim life in America and simplistic brochures on terrorism were unsuccessful.¹²⁹ Opinion polls conducted after 9/11 in predominantly Arab and Muslim nations showed that anti-American sentiments were still prevalent. The General Accounting Office, the auditing arm of the Congress, confirmed this state of affairs when it declared in a report that the \$1 billion budget spent annually by the Bush administration to polish America’s image in the Middle East had largely gone to waste (Weiser 2003). Subsequently, Charlotte Beers resigned on 3 March 2003.

¹²⁹ These videos were not allowed to be broadcast in some countries, even within those close to the United States such as Egypt.

After the Afghanistan campaign, the Rendon Group was asked to develop a marketing plan for the upcoming war in Iraq. The group is thought to have told Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to fix in the public mind a link between terror and nation-states (rather than focusing exclusively on fluid, ad hoc groups such as Al-Qaeda) (St-Clair 2007). The *New York Times* reported in 19 February 2002 that the Pentagon was using the Rendon Group to develop a new propaganda agency, the Office of Strategic Influence (OSI). The latter was used by the Pentagon to coordinate factual news releases, foreign advertising campaigns and covert disinformation programmes designed to plant pro-American stories in international media. Private firms were sometimes used to achieve these objectives (Campbell 2003). However, after OSI's classified proposals were leaked to the media amidst controversy¹³⁰, White House officials announced, on 26 February 2002, that the office had been shut down (Allen 2002). Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld remained adamant that the same programs and practices intended for OSI would proceed under other names (Rumsfeld 2002). What the American administration and its different communication branches did not understand was that the source of anger within the Middle East was American foreign policy itself. American support, for Israel against the Palestinians, oppressive dictatorships in the Arab World, and the invasion and occupation of Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, had generated widespread popular hostility. At this time, Naomi Klein declared that, 'America's problem is not with its brand - which could scarcely be stronger - but with its product' (Klein 2002 [electronic version; no pagination]). Accordingly, Marc Lynch noted the feeling among Arabs and Muslims was that their views were not being taken seriously. Any dialogue between the United States and the Arab World was always one-directional and top-bottom. Almost every Middle East peace plan was drafted in Washington without any serious consultation with Arab leaders, much less with the Arab public (Lynch 2003). This can be seen as a counter-productive attitude in regard to a region steeped in anti-colonial resentment.

Such political grievances could not be resolved with officially sanctioned, simplistic advertising campaigns. In any case, American communication blunders during the "War on Terror" had already generated negative attitudes among Arab and Muslim audiences. These

¹³⁰ The New York Times reported on 19 February 2002: 'The new office has begun circulating classified proposals calling for aggressive campaigns that use not only the foreign media and the Internet, but also covert operations.... One of the office's proposals calls for planting news items with foreign media organisations through outside concerns that might not have obvious ties to the Pentagon...General Worden envisions a broad mission ranging from 'black' campaigns that use disinformation and other covert activities to 'white' public affairs that rely on truthful news releases.... 'It goes from the blackest of black programs to the whitest of white,' a senior Pentagon official said.... Another proposal involves sending journalists, civic leaders and foreign leaders e-mail messages that promote American views or attack unfriendly governments' (Dao & Schmitt 2002).

discomfitures prompted the United States to intensify its public diplomacy effort within Arab World. However, as I have mentioned the Voice of America in Arabic was ineffective (it had only an audience of some 2 percent in the Middle-East). It was replaced in March 2002 by Radio Sawa ("together"), an Arabic entertainment and news station covering the entire Middle East. Its aim was to encourage favourable Arab perceptions toward the "American way of life" (Van Ham 2003). Another addition was Al Hurra ("The Free One"), an American backed television network, which was intended to compete against Aljazeera. As indicated in the previous chapter, Aljazeera had assumed a global profile after the attacks of 11 September 2001, when Osama Bin Laden's videotaped interviews were broadcast. The Arab network frequently invited less extreme guests with viewpoints critical of the American foreign policy. Although U.S. officials were invited to appear on Aljazeera, as was the case with Christopher Ross (former U.S. ambassador to Syria and U.S. State Department counterterrorism coordinator), favourable treatment could not be assumed. When Ross appeared on *Al Ittijah Al Mo'akis* (The Opposite Direction), he received a salvo of destabilizing questions from Aljazeera's talk-show host Faisal Al-Kasim (El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002).

Aljazeera's focus on human tragedies in Afghanistan contrasted with the American media's occasional acknowledgement of "regret" over the "rare" and "accidental" "collateral damage" (Scruton 2002). At the same time, Aljazeera continued to broadcast Al Qaeda's videotapes, and eschewed the "War on Terror" slogan in favour of "the so-called War on Terror."¹³¹ The terminology used by Aljazeera, which included terms such as "resistance" and "occupation", irritated the Presidency and the Pentagon. Accordingly, they increased pressure upon Aljazeera as well as the Qatar authorities. Subsequently, Aljazeera's office in Kabul was destroyed by an American air attack on November 13, 2001. At first, U.S. officials said it was an accident, but General Tommy Franks later admitted Aljazeera's building in Kabul was deliberately targeted as "a known Al-Qaeda facility" (Pintak 2006: 159). Other intimidation tactics against Aljazeera included the U.S. capture of Sami al-Haj, a Sudanese cameraman who worked with Aljazeera during the Afghan campaign.¹³² However, such punitive measures only increased Aljazeera's popularity and reputation for independence in the Arab world and beyond.

¹³¹ In this it joined Reuters which proscribed the use of the word "terrorist".

¹³² Cameraman Sami al-Haj was captured by pro-American Afghan warlords. Then he was sold for 5000 US Dollars to U.S. forces in Afghanistan in late 2001. He was held in extrajudicial detention in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba for over six years. He was released without charge on May 1, 2008 with two other detainees from Sudan.

6.3- Framing the Iraq War

After the Afghan War, the Bush administration used the media, both domestically and internationally, to market its Iraq policy. Three important claims were endlessly repeated: Firstly, the Iraqi regime had continued to store, produce, and develop biological, chemical, and nuclear “weapons of mass destruction” (WMDs); Secondly, there were covert links between the Iraqi government and members of the Al Qaeda network (Iraq was thus implicated in the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001); and thirdly Iraq constituted an imminent threat both to its neighbours and to the United States (Kellner 2003; Altheide 2005: 626-627).

According to Sheldon Rampton and James Stauber (2003), these claims did not have to be accurate. All that mattered was that high-ranked officials in the Bush administration persistently declared them to be true. Relentless repetition through the media would eventually persuade the public. A report issued by the *Committee on Government Reform* in March 2004 stated that President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Colin Powell, and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice made 81 statements about Iraq’s nuclear activities and 84 statements about Iraq’s chemical and biological weapons capabilities in over 125 separate appearances between March 2002 and January 2004. The same report observed that key government figures had made 61 misleading statements concerning the strength of the Iraq-Al Qaeda connection in 52 separate public appearances. John MacArthur observed that “Bush’s PR War” required a compliant press to repeat almost every fraudulent administration claim about the threat posed to America by Saddam Hussein (MacArthur 2003: 62). The American public soon believed that Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda had joined their forces against the United States; a conviction which was strengthened by presidential speeches. For instance, on October 2002, President Bush declared that Saddam Hussein was ‘a man who, in my judgment, would like to use al Qaeda as a forward army’ (Rampton and Stauber 2003: 95).

Meanwhile, counterclaims were dismissed by the White House and received little media coverage even if they were made by senators or congressmen. Views which expressed caution, restraint, and the need for further inquiries by weapons inspectors were simply rejected. Worse, analyses originating from credible intelligence sources showing that Iraq had no WMDs were discarded. For example, Charles Duelfer, a renowned WMD expert with more than ten years field experience in Iraq, declared in July 2002 that there were no

fissionable materials. He acknowledged that the Iraqi regime had a nuclear weapon programme prior to the 1991 Gulf War, but noted that this was terminated as part of a cease-fire agreement with the United States. In October 2004, Duelfer's official report to the Congress re-confirmed that Iraq had no stockpiles of WMDs, no weapons to give to Al Qaeda, and no viable programs to resume making weapons.

Yet, the dominant official frame until 19 March 2003 was the inevitability of war and America's preparation for it (Altheide & Grimes 2005: 617). Within this frame, simple themes were repeated by military and political elites, especially the demonization of Saddam Hussein. Demonization served to channel negative feelings against the Iraqi nation. As I have indicated previously, academic Georges Lakoff has observed that the "nation as person" metaphor is a key device in positioning other nations against the United States. In this context, Lakoff identified two central narratives: the "self-defence story" and the "rescue story." According to him, the story always has a hero, a crime, and a villain. The villain is inherently evil and irrational. If the hero cannot reason with the irrational villain, he has to defeat him and save the world (Lakoff 2003b). The self-defence story prior to the start of the 2003 Iraq War focused on Saddam's connection to Al Qaeda and terrorism. Apparently, weapons of mass destruction, allegedly developed by Iraq, would fall into the hands of Al Qaeda. The rescue story focused on saving the Iraqi people and bringing democracy to the region (Hiebert 2003: 245). These narratives emphasised Iraq's repression of its people, Iraq's harbouring of international terrorist organisations and Iraq's defiance of U.N. resolutions. These claims were central components of the Bush administration's communication strategy (Altheide 2004).

The base simplicity of the Bush administration rhetoric has been succinctly summarised by James Moore and Wayne Slater:

We are good. Iraq is bad. We love freedom. They do not. A clear, accessible message for an electorate too busy to read deeper into the story. The language must not be bloody. It's regime change. Not war. Clean and antiseptic. More of a procedure than a battle (Moore & Slater 2003: 287)

All officials associated with the Bush presidency deployed the language of "good" and "evil". This language derives from a religious neoconservative lexicon, which justifies the construction of an American empire on exceptionalist grounds (Halper and Clarke 2004). The

term “evil” enables smear campaigns because it insulates the surrounding rhetoric from counterargument and rational challenge (Windt 1992). President Bush described the 11 September 2001 attacks as ‘evil, despicable acts of terror’, and then said that ‘today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature’. Bush’s speech writer David Frum commented that the term ‘evil’ was useful in securing popular support from conservative audiences in the ‘Bible Belt’ (Frum 2003: 140).

Crucial in the making of the Iraq War was Secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech at the UN Security Council on 5 February 2003. His presentation was prominently covered in international media. Many journalists drew comparisons with the American stance against Soviet missiles in Cuba during the 1960s.¹³³ In his presentation, Powell used 45 visual “pieces of evidence” to reiterate the aforementioned neo-conservative case for intervention. However, Powell’s rationale for war was not convincing at all for important members of the United Nations Security Council such as France, Russia and China. They vetoed American and British diplomatic attempts to issue a U.N. mandate for war against Iraq. Investigative reporter Seymour Hersh was also unconvinced by Powell’s case for war. In particular, he pointed out that documents alleging transfers of uranium from Niger to Iraq were faked. According to Hersh, ‘one member of the U.N. inspection team who supported the American and British position arranged for dozens of unverified and unverifiable intelligence reports and tips — data known as inactionable intelligence — to be funnelled to MI6 operatives and quietly passed along to newspapers in London and elsewhere’ (Hersh 2003: 42-43). In Hersh’s view, the CIA always knew that the documents were falsified. Hersh affirmed that Powell never saw the actual documents even though his speech was partly based on this data (Hersh 2003: 43). Overall, Hersh argues that American and British fabrications about Iraq’s nuclear power programme were designed to counteract international criticism of the prospective invasion. Nonetheless, American mainstream media promoted the viewpoint of their administration. For instance, CNN portrayed war as the simplest and most favoured outcome to the crisis. They opposed the extension and deepening of WMD inspections (as sought by France, Russia, Germany, China and others) (Lundsten & Stocchetti 2005: 10). On the other hand, the potential consequences of invasion were left unexplained. CNN journalists

¹³³ For example, both the BBC (5 Feb. 2003 at 11:01 GMT) and CNN (5 Feb. 2003 at 15:15 GMT) compared the presentation of Secretary of State Powell with the one delivered by Ambassador Aldai Stevenson at an emergency session of the Security Council on October 25, 1962. During this session, Stevenson confronted the Russian Ambassador with photographic evidence of Russian missiles in Cuba.

seemed to regard the political discussions and diplomatic negotiations taking place in the United Nations as preparations for war.

Lundsten and Stocchetti argue that CNN did not simply cover the Powell presentation at the UN; it actually promoted the case for war. Journalists, such as Jim Clancy and Zain Verjee, never questioned the allegations that Saddam Hussein supported Al Qaeda and possessed weapons of mass destruction. And, they quickly split the different parties into “friends” and “foes” depending on whether they adopted or rejected the Bush administration’s stance. Lundsten and Stocchetti provide an example of this from Zain Verjee’s interview on 5 February 2003 with the editor of *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, Abdel Bari Atwan. As soon as the latter expressed scepticism toward Powell’s arguments, the interview went sour:

Zain Verjee (CNN anchor): ‘The issue of al-Qaeda link to Iraq: what did you make of that?’

Abdel Bari Atwan (Al-Quds Al-Arabi): ‘I believe this is the Secretary of State weakest point’

Zain Verjee (CNN anchor): ‘We have seen a lot of visual evidence that most people, some at least would say was compelling ... Are you convinced by those intercepts that Iraq is hiding weapons that Iraq is deliberately not cooperating?’

At this point, Atwan stated that more time should be given to UN inspectors to actually verify the information provided by Powell. The information he presented was not deemed convincing enough to justify a war. Visibly annoyed by Atwan’s response, CNN journalist Zain Verjee cut short the interview:

Zain Verjee (CNN anchor): “Unconvincing to you Abdel Bari Atwan [*turning away visibly annoyed*]. We’ll continue to check in with you as we dissect the body of what Colin Powell had to say this day at the UN Security Council” (Lundsten & Stocchetti 2005: 10-11).

Two months before the start of the conflict, CNN introduced its Iraq coverage with the words, “Showdown: Iraq” (similarly Fox used “Target Iraq: Disarming Saddam”, MSNBC used “Showdown with Saddam”, and NBC Nightly News used “Countdown: Iraq” and “Target: Iraq”). Jack Lule has observed that the slogan “Showdown: Iraq” frames the situation as a final confrontation, a reckoning between Iraq and the United States. This metaphoric framing is deeply rooted in the American psyche; in frontier times, gunmen faced each other off to settle their differences. Here, the metaphor complements portrayals of President George Bush as a cowboy figure from Texas. Lule also observes that “Showdown” dates back to the

placing of poker hands face-up on a table to determine the winner. In any case, the “Showdown” metaphor suggested that the situation in Iraq was inevitably headed toward a confrontational conclusion (Lule 2004: 183).

Fifteenth of February 2003 was a day of protest mobilisation called "The World Says No to War." This involved millions of people in 800 cities around the world. In Rome, the protest involved around three million people, and is listed in the 2004 Guinness Book of World Records as the largest anti-war rally in history. Also noticeable was the strength of anti-war sentiment in the London March, when approximately one million people marched in London, making this the largest ever demonstration in Britain. Another 100,000 to 200,000 protested on 22 March 2003, setting a record for a wartime demonstration in Britain. In the United States, according to the television network CBS, protests were held across 150 U.S. cities (Chan 2003a). In New York, demonstrations drew between 300,000 people and one million (according to organisers' estimates) (Hauben 2003). Police on horseback charged protesters, preventing many of them from joining the officially-approved rally on First Avenue. These events were mostly downplayed by American mainstream media. However, Aljazeera focused on them, discussing their significance in numerous newscasts and talk shows; a response which confirmed the anti-war stance of the Qatar based channel.

In the meantime, media pundits and Pentagon Officials were talking openly about their upcoming "Shock and Awe" strategy. This rhetoric came into the public realm when the co-inventor of this military strategy, Harlan Ullman was interviewed on *CBS Evening News* two months before the war (24 January 2003). Developed at the National Defence University, “shock and awe” focused upon the psychological destruction of the enemies' will to fight (rather than the physical destruction of their military forces). Ullman stated: ‘We want them to quit. We want them not to fight.’ To this end, “Shock and Awe” would rely upon an initial barrage of precision guided weapons. As Ullman further explained, this would have a simultaneous effect:

You're sitting in Baghdad and all of a sudden you're the general and 30 of your division headquarters have been wiped out. You also take the city down. By that I mean you get rid of their power, water. In 2,3,4,5 days they are physically, emotionally and psychologically exhausted (Chan 2003).

Finally, on 18 March 2003 – on the eve of hostilities - the U.S. administration announced that the war would be waged by a “coalition of the willing.” Instead of emphasising the fact that 98 percent of the military forces involved come from America and Britain, the Bush administration named 30 countries which were prepared to be publicly associated with the war (BBC 2003a). The “coalition of the willing” was fragile propaganda because most of the named countries¹³⁴ offered no concrete support,¹³⁵ and several of them had no army at all.¹³⁶ This state of affairs later prompted American filmmaker Michael Moore to re-describe the campaign as the “coalition of the coerced, bribed and intimidated” (Moore 2003: 73).

6.4- Counter-perspectives from the Middle East

Many Arabs and Muslims were unprepared for the attacks of 11 September 2001 and could scarcely believe how they were orchestrated. Even when Osama Bin Laden publicly claimed responsibility, many people in the Muslim World refused to believe he was the mastermind. Many believed that American intelligence agencies could have used high-tech devices to fabricate the Bin Laden videotapes (CNN.com 2001). The rushed decision by the Bush Administration to invade Afghanistan was met with disapproval in the Middle East and Asia. In a Gallup poll conducted in nine predominantly Muslim nations (Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey), 77 percent of those interviewed, said that American intervention in Afghanistan was morally unjustifiable (Gallup.com 2002). Echoing these concerns, Egyptian intellectual Fahmy Howeidly wrote in Cairo-based *Al Ahram* that:

‘It’s been more than 40 days and they’ve kept bombing the Afghan people. This will violate the image of the United States in the Arab world’ (*Al Ahram* 1 December 2001)

Meanwhile, prominent Christian fundamentalist leaders such as Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart, Pat Robertson, and Franklin Graham, exploited the fallout from the attacks to label Islam a religion of hate and terrorism (Gillespie 2003). These offending remarks which reflected already existing prejudices within television, cinema and White House rhetoric, further alienated large segments of public opinion throughout the Middle East. Subsequently,

¹³⁴ The list of the “the coalition of the willing” as identified in the U.S. Senate's March 27, 2003 resolution included: Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Philippines, Palau, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Solomon Islands, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom and Uzbekistan.

¹³⁵ Only Australia, Denmark, Poland and Spain provided military forces.

¹³⁶ Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau and Solomon Islands do not have standing armies.

opinion polls showed that only 6 percent of Iranians, 6 percent of Indonesians and 13 percent of Saudis believed that western nations respected Arab Islamic values (Gallup.com 2002).

The justifying themes for the American invasion of Afghanistan, followed by Iraq, were mostly rejected by senior Arab intellectuals, journalists, and politicians. For instance, the claim that America ought to spread democracy by force, if necessary, was disbelieved. Riyadh Al-Hajj, columnist for the Palestinian daily *Al-Quds*, argued that democratic reform must come from within, not from outside. He wrote:

There is a need for essential and genuine change [in the Middle East], deep change that is not cosmetic. Change is possible, and has great potential, but only if it emerges from our own will – not out of striving to please the U.S. (*Al-Quds* 18 December 2002).

The attempt to link the democratization agenda with the “war on terror” and the upcoming war in Iraq, met vast opposition among Arab publics. Opinion polls conducted in 2002 in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon showed that fewer than ten percent believed that democratic ideals drove American foreign policy. Instead, a majority of Arab respondents believed that oil appropriation, the Israeli alliance, and weakening the Muslim world were the real objectives of the Bush administration (Telhami 2007).

Numerous Arab commentators also highlighted what they perceived as double standards in the American rationale. For example, Salameh Ahmad Salameh wrote in the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*:

America cannot act for reform in the Arab world as long as it tramples the rights of the Palestinian people underfoot and deploys its forces in the region to wage war on an Arab state [Iraq], regardless of the world consensus that the allegations regarding weapons of mass destruction are not the reason, while it remains silent about the existence of nuclear weapons in Israel (*Al-Ahram* 19 December 2002).

Other commentators, such as Dr. Maya Al-Rahbi, writing for the Syrian website *Akhbar Al-Sharq*, rejected the liberation theme promoted by the Bush Administration. In an article titled "A Letter from an Arab Woman to Colin Powell," she wrote:

The Arab women, Mr. Powell, are not stupid enough to believe your promises that you want to liberate them. Even if they truly need it, let it not be your way... The Arab women say to you: "Take your hands off our homeland and our existence; we want nothing to do with you, for better or for worse... Leave us alone" [...] The group of women for whom you sketched out a rosy future during meetings between them and Ms. Cheney in the bosom of your civilization do not represent Arab women at all. No Arab woman with any common sense would be tempted [to adopt] the democracy to which you claim to adhere and want to export to us, when your history is terrifyingly rife with racism and discrimination... The system of overseeing your citizens, which you invented today, claiming defence [against terrorism], is no different than the security apparatuses in the countries to which you say you will bring democracy and civilization (Al-Rahbi 23 December 2002)

Even intellectuals supportive of America (such as Dr. Fahd Al-Fanik), found it difficult to accept the Bush administration's arguments for war. Al Fanik wrote in the Jordanian daily *Al-Rai*:

It will be difficult for the U.S. to convince the Arabs that America's policy is balanced and just, and that it is not Israel's strategic ally... and even more difficult to persuade the Arabs that the U.S. is not applying sanctions on the Iraqi people but only on Saddam Hussein, and that it will wage war against Saddam Hussein alone and not on Iraq. Similarly, it will be difficult for the U.S. to deny that it is planning to conquer Baghdad, the capital of the Abbasid state and the symbol of Arab honour, which is a new humiliation of the Arabs and Muslims in the world...¹³⁷ (Al-Rai 17 December 2002)

These opinions reflected large segments of Middle Eastern public opinion. Unsurprisingly, Arab anti-war activists joined the world movement against the imminent invasion of Iraq. On 18 December 2002, the International Campaign against U.S. Aggression on Iraq (ICAA) organised a two-day meeting at Cairo. Attendees included high profile Arab activists and political figures, such as former Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella. The latter demanded that Arabs organise huge demonstrations against the Iraq invasion. One of the organisers, Amin Eskander said that this meeting was a step towards coordinating with international anti-war and anti-globalization activists (Bishr 2002).

¹³⁷ This quote was somewhat amended for translation purposes.

As part of world protests against the war, demonstrations took place across the Middle East. Within repressive pro-U.S. regimes, they were difficult to organise.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, in Cairo fairly large demonstrations, which included both secular politicians and Islamists, took place on 1 February 2003. Meanwhile, tens of thousands gathered in Sana'a, Yemen, while other protests bubbled up in other regional states, such as Bahrain, Lebanon and Sudan. A few weeks later, further protests took place in the Middle East. On 10 March, hundreds of thousands marched in Rawalpindi, Pakistan to denounce the upcoming war. The same day, 200,000 Syrians protested in Damascus, and half a million Indonesians rallied in Jakarta.

6.5- CNN and Aljazeera: organisational issues preceding the war

Observing that war was imminent, CNN and Aljazeera stepped up their preparations for coverage. More advanced technology was available in 2003 than during the 1991 war, when news reports relied upon large satellite systems. Devices, such as small DV cameras, Apple G4 laptops, portable videophones, and Inmarsat high-speed data Global Area Network (GAN) satellite phones¹³⁹, had since become necessary tools for journalists. In addition, Iridium phones, networked into a system of low-earth orbital satellites, allowed journalists to be connected from any outdoor location. Small flyaway satellite dishes, palm-sized digital cameras, speedy laptops, and portable store-and-forward systems and nonlinear editors also enhanced broadcasting capabilities. As a result, small teams of war correspondents could send out their live reports from within moving troop formations or from stationary locations. Audiences around the globe followed the latest war developments in real time from their living rooms as well as on personal computers and laptops.

As an established brand in the global news market, CNN stands ready to swiftly mobilise and deploy crews and equipment anywhere in the world. These operations are supervised from CNN's headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. However, after the AOL-TimeWarner merger of 2001, CNN cut costs and reduced budgets for international newsgathering (Turner 2004). Many foreign bureaus and news production facilities were closed, leading to an over-reliance on dispatched reporters to cover foreign affairs (Graber 2002: 342–80). Consequently, editors put extra pressures on correspondents. The constraints upon quality real-time coverage forced them to prepare their live reports as soon as they reached their destination. It was thus difficult for reporters to grasp the full context of the events to be covered. In the case of the

¹³⁸ In many cases, the police outnumbered protesters such as in Egypt. See: Hassan, A. F. (2003). Police Outnumber Antiwar Protesters in Cairo [Electronic Version] from: <http://worldpress.org/Mideast/922.cfm>.

¹³⁹ The Inmarsat GAN phone has the size of a small briefcase, including the antenna.

2003 Iraq War, CNN dispatched crews all around the Middle-East (Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Kurdish-controlled territories, embedded journalists with different fighting corps). To counteract any shortage of information from the Iraqi side, CNN ensured instant access to wire services, such as Reuters, Associated Press and Agence France Presse. These wire services had numerous correspondents on the ground and were able to match the capabilities of CNN reportage. Furthermore, the Atlanta based channel struck news exchange deals with local stations in order to be able to out-source footage from Middle Eastern networks such as Aljazeera.

Aljazeera developed a different organisational framework of newsgathering. The network had financial support from the State of Qatar in the form of a loan that Aljazeera needed to pay back after ten years of operation (on the assumption that it would have reached commercial self-sustainability). However, despite an increasing number of viewers, Aljazeera did not reap the financial benefits of its popularity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, powerful Arab governments had persistently discouraged major businesses from placing advertisements on Aljazeera. These pressures required Aljazeera to sell news footage for revenue. Subsequently, they sent crews to major Iraqi cities with the aim of obtaining dramatic and vivid footage, even when this was dangerous to acquire. Thus, Aljazeera sent 30 staffers to Baghdad and placed others in Mosul, Basra. They had more reporters in Iraq than just about any other TV channel (BusinessWeek 2003). The expense of this exercise was reduced by technological advances allowing crews to broadcast from any location. Furthermore, because most of Aljazeera's correspondents were new to the field, they earned moderate wages and offered very good value for money.

The highest echelons of political and military decision-making in America were available to CNN. As a result, they were privy to military planning strategies. The development of "embedded journalism" practices built a symbiotic inter-relationship, whereby CNN and other American news organisations would be allowed a better access to military operations in exchange for military control over information retrieved from combat zones. However, in the zero-sum environment of war, the Iraqi regime was to become wary of this arrangement; they restricted media access within the areas controlled by them. In contrast, Aljazeera had built generally cordial relations with the Iraqis over the years, in spite of occasional misunderstandings. Therefore, Aljazeera could expect a favourable access to the Iraqi-controlled areas.

Immediately preceding the war, CNN was wary of competition from other networks and most particularly from Fox News Corporation. In 2003, CNN was cited as the number one source for television news in America, over and above other major networks and cable rivals (analysis suggests that the peak growth of cable television core audience was reached at the time of the September 11 attacks and stalled thereafter). However, in 2002 Fox News had surpassed CNN in the ratings (1,014,000 viewers for Fox News vs. 721,000 for CNN) (Cable World 2003; Massing 2005). Commercially, this represented a worrisome trend for the Atlanta based network, although it was still able to market its multiple channels to advertisers (CNN International; CNNfn; CNN's airport news service etc.). The growing competition from Fox News – added to the costs incurred from the AOL – Time Warner merger, led CNN to abandon its traditional way of doing business. Instead of going for hard news, CNN began relying on studio discussions with analysts who interpreted the news (Loory 2005: 340). Another impact of the “Fox effect” was CNN’s drift towards a commentary/infotainment format, and the quest to hire “recognizable journalists” in order to consolidate the brand. For example, CNN executives hired Connie Chung, a veteran journalist who covered Watergate, as well as anchorwoman Paula Zahn, and financial anchor Lou Dobbs (Campbell 2002: 1). Additionally, CNN also tried to emulate the tone and language of Fox News. After the attacks of 11 September 2001, CNN journalists started to wear pins with American flags. Their Standards and Practices Department sent out a memo to the different departments subsequent to the bombing and invasion of Afghanistan. This memo, in line with military objectives, suggested overlooking evidence of civilian casualties and encouraged an emphasis upon the Taliban leadership responsibility for the 9/11 attacks (Bleifuss 2001).

In the Middle East, Aljazeera faced stiff competition from Al-Arabiya. The latter was established barely two weeks before the start of the Iraq War (3 March 2003) with Saudi funds (partly from the Saudi owned Middle East Broadcasting Center - MBC). Al-Arabiya was a Saudi vehicle to counter the increasing influence of the Qatar based Aljazeera. Al-Arabiya director Abdul Rahman al-Rashed confirmed this fact during an interview with the New York Times in 2008 (Worth 2008). Al-Arabiya set out to outmanoeuvre Aljazeera at its own game. The Saudi backed channel thus was very critical of the American led war, and provided access to insurgents and ex-members of the defunct regime. The establishment of Al-Arabiya was Saudi Arabia’s response to Qatar’s growing “soft power”¹⁴⁰ in the region

¹⁴⁰ The term “Soft Power” was first coined by Joseph Nye of Harvard University in his book, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (1991). Soft Power resides in the set of values, culture, policies and

(Ruckower 2008: 6). Aljazeera had given Qatar a counter to Egyptian and Saudi media outlets (the latter having quasi-monopoly over pan-Arab news coverage until then). Qatar thus became an important player in Middle Eastern politics; a role which a tiny state, with barely 200,000 nationals, could not previously have dreamt of. After decades of being ignored by other Arab countries, Qatar made itself indispensable in the Middle East. With this backing, Aljazeera gained an enormous reputation in the Arab World and beyond as the most independent Arab media (Williams 2007: 7). Competition from Al-Arabiya made it impossible for Aljazeera to revoke its anti-war editorial line. In a way, this was the Middle East equivalent of the relationship between CNN and Fox. The latter, with its patriotic fervour obliged CNN to respond accordingly. For Aljazeera, having Al-Arabiya nearby projecting an independent Arab voice presented an incentive. Aljazeera would need to perform at its best to remain the leading channel in the Middle East.

6.6- Conclusion

This chapter serves as a prologue to the subsequent textual and visual analysis of the Iraq War by CNN and Aljazeera. I have sought to outline the transition from the “War on Terror” to “Shock and Awe.” Therefore, this chapter has reviewed the different events that characterised American information warfare strategies in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks. While the American communication efforts were very efficient at home, they were fundamentally counteracted in the Middle East by Aljazeera’s news coverage and current affairs programmes. American officials tried to implement a series of measures to obstruct Aljazeera, including the use of military force. This situation increased the international popularity of the Qatar based channel, and strengthened the resolve of its journalists.

Prior to the war, the U.S. administration mobilised numerous claims which served to justify the invasion. These included the Iraqi government’s alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, and its alleged connection with terrorist networks. The constant repetition of these claims through different official sources generated a coordinated and constant barrage of information that ultimately won the approval of the American people for the war. From the “war on terror” to “shock and awe”, these claims mobilised the deep frames of Orientalism and counter-terrorism for the purposes of information dominance. Aljazeera was obviously critical of this framing and its mobilisation. The network was therefore a major impediment to

institutions which let other nations follow your leadership. This power is expressed through means such as diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action and economic reconstruction and development.

American war objectives. Viewed from the Middle East, American rhetoric leading to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq proved to be unconvincing. Shapers of public opinion in the Middle East were quasi-unanimous that the American justifications for eliminating terrorism and promoting democracy constituted a façade that paved the way for military operations.

Finally, this chapter provided a general background on the news environments and preparations of CNN and Aljazeera prior to the start of the war. Both channels committed resources to war coverage in the face of threatening competition from Fox News and Al-Arabiya respectively. The way these former channels set up their crews and their access to information from American and Iraqi sources, underpinned their patterns of reportage as the Iraqi conflict unfolded. In the following chapters, I will employ framing analysis to examine the coverage of certain key events during the 2003 Iraq invasion. These events will incorporate the start of the war (in the episodes of “Decapitation Strike” and “Shock and Awe”) and the end of the war (the bombing of the Palestine hotel and the fall of the Saddam statue).

Chapter 7

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7. Hostilities begin: “Decapitation Strike”, “Shock and Awe” and contesting realities:

In this chapter, I simultaneously analyse the real-time footage of CNN and Aljazeera during two important sequences of the 2003 Iraq War. These are “Decapitation Strike” (19 March 2003) [22:29 – 23:29 EST¹⁴¹] and “Shock and Awe” (21 March 2003) [12:30 – 13:30 EST]. The footage studied consists of four hours of coverage (two hours of CNN footage and two hours of Aljazeera footage). In this regard, I describe how the opening scenes were established, and then review the underlying and contesting frames of the CNN and Aljazeera coverage. Next, I provide a framing critique of the footages in question with reference to visual, keyword and ideological cues.

7.1- Context and chronology

The United States and the United Kingdom claimed that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which were threatening national and international security in the Middle East. The mainstream media in both countries repeated these claims in the absence of supporting evidence. In fact, Hans Blix, the lead U.N. weapons inspector, advised the U.N. Security Council on 7 March 2003 that Iraq was cooperating with inspections, and that a general conclusion could be expected within a few months (Blix, 2003). Nevertheless, the U.S. Administration ignored Blix’ report, announcing on 17 March 2003 that "diplomacy has failed." The weapons inspectors were thus advised to immediately leave Iraq (Voice of America, 2003). President George W Bush then gave Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave Iraq or face war.

Just before the expiration of President Bush's ultimatum, the CIA provided intelligence on the whereabouts of five key Iraqi leaders, including Saddam Hussein. President Bush authorised strikes against these targets, and declared war on Iraq soon afterwards. So, the war against

¹⁴¹ The Eastern Time Zone of the Western Hemisphere falls mostly along the east coast of North America. Its time offset is –5 hrs GMT during standard time. The clock time in this zone is based on the mean solar time of the 75th meridian west of the Greenwich Observatory.

Iraq began on 20 March 2003 at 02:34 GMT and was officially named “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” Its first phase was called “decapitation strike”, and was carried out by forty Tomahawk cruise missiles and F-117A stealth fighters (CNN.com, 20 March 2003). Saddam Hussein appeared on Iraqi National Television three hours after the attacks in a taped interview. A second round of air strikes was then launched against Baghdad, and ground troops crossed into southern Iraq from Kuwait.

Iraqi army units retaliated by firing two “Al Samoud” missiles and about five SCUD missiles into northern Kuwait, where Coalition troops were assembled, but inflicted no casualties. Kuwait City was also subject to these attacks, but anti-missile batteries brought down two SCUDs, while others fell without causing any damage. Subsequently, American and British aircraft took off to hunt for Iraqi missile launchers. In the meantime, American and British artillery began shelling Iraqi troops on the Iraqi border. At 15:30 GMT U.S. troops were told to prepare for combat, as Iraqis were reportedly burning oilfields south and west of Basra. About the same time, news broke that Turkey had given its airspace to coalition forces. At about 17:00 GMT, the coalition batteries intensified their shelling of Iraqi units across the border.

During the second day of hostilities (20 March 2003), Baghdad was again the target of coalition air strikes; several explosions rocked the city, missiles landed on the vicinity of presidential palaces, the Iraqi intelligence headquarters and several other buildings. Iraqi air defence crews fired against attacking aircraft without success. Coalition units launched an amphibious and helicopter assault on the Al Faw peninsula, which fell rather easily. Iraqi forces suffered numerous casualties and many prisoners were taken. This attack ensured coalition control over the oil infrastructure in that area. Other coalition regiments moved toward other southern Iraqi oilfields. Meanwhile, American submarines launched Tomahawk cruise missiles at various targets in Iraq.

American Marines entered Umm Qasr and declared the city under their control, although this was disputed by Aljazeera. It then transpired that the Marines only controlled a small part of Umm Qasr (the city garrison surrendered one week later). British troops were now reported on the outskirts of Basra, and there were reports that the whole Iraqi 51st Division had surrendered. These reports were denied by Aljazeera, whose reporter in Basra interviewed the division commander. In the air, coalition aircraft continued to attack key facilities in Iraq, while two airfields in western Iraq were captured by coalition commandos. At this juncture,

CNN was asked to leave Iraq for carrying out “propaganda activities”. On 21 March 2003, the Pentagon announced that the first phase of the war, namely “Shock and Awe”, had begun with heavy aerial attacks on key Iraqi targets. Baghdad experienced a major barrage and Saddam's presidential palaces were all hit by cruise missiles. Kirkuk, Mosul and Tikrit were also attacked. The Pentagon named this event “A-Day” or “Air Day”.¹⁴²

For this research, tracing the start of hostilities is important because it introduced the war to American and global audiences. This period included enormous amounts of information warfare. Since “Desert Storm” (1991), the U.S. military had routinely incorporated media - communication into their battlefield strategies. Military info-warriors devised their war plans to fit news media requirements. In particular, military strategies meshed with the strict production regimes, organisational routines and advertising orientation of the 24-hour news channels. The news media had been cued to expect an intensive bombing of Baghdad. Indeed, the plan for “Shock and Awe” was deliberately filtered into the public realm as the co-inventor of this info-war strategy, Harlan Ullman, gave many pre-war interviews on the theory of “rapid dominance”.¹⁴³ This entailed the use of dense aerial bombing to traumatise the enemy into believing that resistance was futile. The information warfare paradigm requires that hostilities be broadcast to millions around the world. Thus, “Decapitation Strike” and the resultant “Shock and Awe” bombing campaign was the subject of intense coverage. For that reason, anchors and political pundits spent an enormous amount of time from 20 to 21 March 2003 discussing whether or not President Bush had postponed the “Shock and Awe” campaign, and if so why. This speculation advanced the narrative, and heightened anticipation, to the extent of creating a “need” for the bombing campaign. This pattern was observable throughout mainstream American media, including CNN.

“Shock and Awe” was undeniably the defining event of the whole war. It enabled the U.S. military to display their full might and latest hardware. The multiple “firework” effects resulting from the intense bombings provided a major videogame-like spectacle, which thrilled and entertained American audiences. With the attention of television commentators

¹⁴² CNN's Wolf Blitzer first referred to A-Day on 21 March 2003 when interviewing CNN's military analyst General David Grange. He asked: ‘We have been told that this is the start of what the Pentagon is now calling A-Day, the letter A, the start of the aerial bombardment, a massive air campaign expected over the next 24 to 48 hours, perhaps as many as 3,000 so-called smart bombs, precision-guided weapons, laser-guided weapons as well as satellite-guided weapons.’ For the complete transcript, see: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/030321/bn.02.html>

¹⁴³ See for example his interview on CBS Evening News (January. 24, 2003) which can be accessed online: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/01/24/eveningnews/main537928.shtml>

from all around the world, American military and political elites could set the immediate agenda, command the field, and disseminate their frames for the conflict. However, as I will demonstrate, these frames were to be fundamentally contested by Aljazeera.

7.2 – Decapitation Strike vs. Assassination Attempt

Scene establishments

For American television audiences, it was President George W. Bush who set the scene for the "Decapitation Strike" during a four minute national address delivered on 20 March 2003 at 03:15 GMT (10:15 p.m. EST). He announced that coalition forces had been ordered to strike 'selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war'. These strikes would be the opening salvo of 'a broad and concerted campaign.' The different CNN anchors and correspondents, who spoke in the five minutes following Bush's address, such as CNN anchor Aaron Brown, CNN senior correspondent at the Pentagon Jamie McIntyre, and CNN senior White House correspondent John King, served to reiterate the major themes of the president's speech. For example, Aaron Brown stated that 'these are the early stages to disarm Iraq', that 'selected targets are being hit', and that the strike is meant to 'undermine the ability of Iraqi forces.'

Meanwhile, the following CNN trailers repeatedly stressed some of President Bush's key phrases.

"EARLY STAGES OF MILITARY OPERATIONS" BEGIN;
"MORE THAN 35 COUNTRIES" GIVING SUPPORT;
"PEACE OF TROUBLED WORLD" AT STAKE;
"WE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SPARE CIVILIANS";
"SUSTAINED COMMITMENT" TO IRAQ EVEN AFTER WAR.

The size and font of these trailers made them unmistakably clear. They were constantly repeated during the course of Bush's speech. There were very few live images in the five minutes that followed Bush's announcement of the "Decapitation Strike." This may be explained by the fact that this operation was based on secrecy and swiftness. In any case, CNN established the first scenes of the "Decapitation Strike" by relying more on talk than on imagery.

Aljazeera went on alert after President Bush sent an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein demanding that he leaves power and goes into exile. The ultimatum was due to end on Wednesday 19

March at 20.00 p.m. (EST). Therefore, Aljazeera's correspondents in Washington covered major briefings and information coming from the American Capital. Correspondents in Baghdad were also regularly asked from Aljazeera headquarters to provide the latest developments. Aljazeera's correspondent Majed Abdelhadi gave the first reports of anti-aircraft fire and explosions one hour and half after the end of the ultimatum (Thursday 5:30 a.m. Baghdad time; 45 minutes before President Bush gave his address to the nation). Aljazeera gave the speech live coverage and allowed local analysts to interpret its significance. Soon afterwards, Aljazeera produced a major headline without voiceover tailoring Bush's speech for local audiences. The translated headline stated:

THE WHITE HOUSE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST BE READY FOR A WAR THAT MAY LAST FOR SOME TIME AND CAUSE THOUSANDS OF VICTIMS

As hostilities escalated, the main anchor in the studio in Doha - Tawfiq Taha went back and forth to the numerous correspondents on the ground, Majed Abdelhadi, Diyar Al Omari, and Mohammed Kheir Bourini. The fact that all of these correspondents wore helmets and bullet-proof jackets signalled the danger they faced. This danger was transmitted to the viewers; they were compelled to reflect upon how the local Baghdad population might cope with the imminent barrage.

At this juncture, Aljazeera's anchors asked about the legality of the American attempt to assassinate a foreign leader without a formal declaration of war. Some of Aljazeera's guest analysts put forward the argument that American law prohibited the assassination of foreign presidents; a prohibition which came in the mid-1970s after a review of the C.I.A. methods by the Congress.¹⁴⁴ There was also a comment to the effect that "Decapitation Strike" was an international war crime (since the actual strike had occurred before the formal declaration by President Bush).

¹⁴⁴ Following the Watergate Scandal, the United States Senate established the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, chaired by Senator Frank Church in 1975. The committee investigated illegal intelligence gathering operations conducted by the CIA and the FBI. The Church Committee found five confirmed occurrences of direct U.S. involvement in assassinations or assassination attempts against foreign leaders [Patrice Émery Lumumba - the first legally elected Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo (killed in 1961); Rafael Trujillo - the dictator of the Dominican Republic (killed in 1961); Ngo Dinh Diem - South Vietnam's Prime Minister (killed in 1963); Iraq's President Abdul Karim Qasim (killed in 1963); Salvador Allende - the democratically elected President of Chile (killed in 1973)]. As a result of the Church Committee proceedings, President Gerald Ford formally issued the Executive Order number 11,905 in 1976. This document stated: "No employee of the United States Government shall engage in, or conspire to engage in political assassinations". President Carter and Reagan issued subsequent Executive Orders with minor modifications to include in the assassination prohibition, contractors and the intelligence agencies (Johnson 1988: 426)

Decapitation Strike unfolds: Contesting frames

On CNN, three anchors; Aaron Brown, Jamie McIntyre, and John King summarised the main points of the President's speech, after which Jamie McIntyre gave further information about the strike. Aaron Brown opined about why the strike came much earlier than the planned full-scale bombing campaign. As there were no images of the target or clear-cut information on the military operation, Brown soon found himself in the unenviable position of speculating about the operation, using phrases and expressions that conveyed more uncertainty than knowledge. This can be felt in the following comments:

Aaron Brown (CNN anchor):

As Jamie reported, it appears to be an attack on a leadership bunker or a place where perhaps Saddam Hussein was. Perhaps he and the government of Iraq were hiding out, trying to stay safe...attacked by cruise missiles. The United States government, the United States military has done this sort of thing before with less success. It's not an easy thing to do, and we won't know for some time if it was successful. It may be a long time... (CNN 19 March 2003)

Aaron Brown then turned to John King (CNN Senior White House Correspondent), who took the opportunity to summarise the presidential speech. Here, King played the role of official interpreter by insisting with the President that this was not a war on the Iraqi population, nor a war on Islam, but a war on Saddam Hussein and his regime.

John King (CNN Senior White House Correspondent):

[The president] said the United States has no ambition in Iraq, it simply wants to free and liberate its people and remove a tyrant from power. The president making no secret that the goal is regime change. Also, a political message to the people of the United States, though. Mr. Bush saying this conflict could be longer and more difficult than some predicted and would require a long and sustained effort to build up a new Iraq in the wake of this war (CNN, 19 March 2003).

Then, General Wesley Clark provided the military perspective on events. The general found it difficult to distinguish between his former job as N.A.T.O chief and his new role as military analyst at CNN. It was striking to see his routine use of the word "we". This gave the impression he was in charge of military forces.

General Wesley Clark (CNN military analyst; formerly the Head of NATO)

We've got continuous visibility over much of Iraq. We've got scouts forward. We've got special operations forward. We've got satellites. We've got aircraft. We've got moving-target indicators off those aircraft. So, when the Iraqis start to move their forces, we're going to see them (CNN, 19 March 2003).

He also used the opportunity to do some advertising for CNN:

General Wesley Clark (CNN military analyst; formerly the Head of NATO)

Some of them may be in the headquarters plugged in and watching CNN. We always did watch the television broadcasts, CNN included, when we were there in Kosovo and Albania and so forth, because it is a source of up-to-the-minute news (CNN, 19 March 2003).

There was talk of military objectives when CNN International correspondent Walter Rogers commented. The latter interviewed a captain of the 7th Cavalry, who did not miss the opportunity to reiterate official framings of the conflict:

Walter Rogers (CNN international correspondent)

...we try to view ourselves liberating the people of Iraq and trying to remove that regime, not invading Iraq. And not fighting the people of Iraq...my troop, this squadron, the 3rd Infantry division have the best equipment in the world, and we're trained (CNN, 19 March 2003)

Later, Aaron Brown referred to the "embed" program, but instead of addressing the question of journalistic objectivity and independence, Brown discussed the program in terms of whether it endangered the fighting units. The rationale of embedding itself was not the subject of examination:

Aaron Brown (CNN anchor):

We know, many of you, when we start talking about where troops are, what troops are doing, get very nervous. And we do, too. The rules that we are operating under, rules that the Pentagon and news organizations around the world have agreed to is that, while our correspondents are embedded, they are in place, they will be free to broadcast or file. They won't be censored. But they do remain under the control, to some degree, of unit commanders as to whether they can file. And, certainly, at no time will we be discussing specifically where they are, specifically what they're going after. We are very -- going to be very conservative on this. We are not interested in endangering a single life to get a story more quickly (CNN, 19 March 2003).

Subsequently, CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer took over to absolve the U.S. administration of any wrongdoing in their attempt to kill President Saddam Hussein.

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

If you go after what are called command-and-control areas and the leadership, including the president of Iraq, happen to be inside those so-called command-and-control areas, it would not necessarily violate the prohibition that was incorporated by President Gerald Ford in 1977 that forbids assassination of foreign leaders. In a military kind of environment, when there is a war, U.S. government lawyers have determined, if you go after the leadership, if you try to kill the command-and-control leadership in the course of a war, that is not necessarily a violation of that rule barring assassination (CNN, 19 March 2003).

But undeniably the most important strategic framing in this broadcast hour came when CNN gave room to Senator Joseph Lieberman, who constructed some of the most resonant deep frames:

This is all about one evil dictator who possesses brutal weapons, with which he will threaten and hurt a lot of people, including a lot of Americans, unless we take them away from him...Saddam has ruled by fear and has killed any number of people under him, himself, who have shown some disloyalty. So, if it becomes clear that he is gone, then you have to ask, what is the motivation for all those in the Iraqi military to continue to want to fight us? We are offering them a better way and a better life...we are standing together behind the American men and women in uniform, confident that they're going to achieve the victory that our security demands and the world's security demands...Saddam Hussein would have used these weapons against us eventually, or given them to terrorists who would have (CNN, 19 March 2003).

It is clear that Senator Lieberman's comment included two important deep frames, the Orientalist frame and the counter-terrorist frame. It also included the military meso-frame.¹⁴⁵ These frames were assembled as follows:

The Orientalist deep frame:

This is all about one evil dictator who possesses brutal weapons, with which he will threaten and hurt a lot of people, including a lot of Americans...

¹⁴⁵ The military meso-frame is a sub frame of the conflict frame. It focuses on military prowess in times of war, praises the power of military technology and the courage of the troops.

...what is the motivation for all those in the Iraqi military to continue to want to fight us?
We are offering them a better way and a better life...

The military meso-frame:

We are standing together behind the American men and women in uniform, confident that they are going to achieve the victory that our security demands and the world's security demands.

The terrorist deep frame:

Saddam Hussein would have used these weapons against us eventually or given them to terrorists who would have.

It shall be recalled that Senator Lieberman was a prominent member of the Democratic Party. In the 2000 United States presidential election, Lieberman was the Democratic nominee for Vice President, running with presidential nominee Al Gore, against the Republican Candidate George W. Bush. However, in these comments, Lieberman reiterated the same themes promoted by President Bush. Accordingly, one can say that the strategic framing of the war reproduced a bi-partisan political consensus, and was not just an expression of President Bush's views. Equally important was the fact that the CNN anchors did not scrutinise Senator Lieberman's declaration. It was simply commented on, non-critically, in a way which legitimised the framings involved.

Meanwhile, Tawfiq Taha on Aljazeera started the coverage on 19 March 2003 [22:30 EST]¹⁴⁶ by raising the prospect that large segments of civilian infrastructure would be hit (as had been the case previously during the 1991 Gulf War). Questions were raised as to whether the Iraqi forces could mount stronger resistance compared to 12 years earlier. When news broke that the "Decapitation Strike" had begun, Aljazeera turned to its Iraqi correspondent in Baghdad, Diyar Al-Omari, who stated that the Pentagon had "acknowledged violent Iraqi resistance". As Aljazeera's anchor, Tawfiq Taha, asked Diyar Al-Omari whether this was the most violent raid thus far. Diyar answered: 'As long as the Baghdad Bridge is still standing, the worst is yet to come' (Aljazeera, 19 March 2003).

¹⁴⁶ Due to time zone difference, this occurred on 20 March 2003 at 3 a.m. GMT.

Diyar's correspondence was interrupted to cover events in Mosul, the Northern Iraqi city, also under attack. Aljazeera's correspondent in Mosul, Mohammed Kheir Bourini, with an excited tone of voice, reported an American air raid over the city, and sporadic anti-aircraft gunfire. Then, Diyar Al-Omari was given another opportunity to speak and this time, he said that the Iraqi forces were much more experienced after 12 years of conflict with the United States. Diyar spoke about new methods implemented by the Iraqi anti-aircraft crews, who were said to be well trained, and who had forced American aircraft to flee the scene. He also spoke about a reward offered by the Iraqi regime to every soldier who succeeded in taking down an enemy plane.

Diyar Al Omari (Aljazeera's correspondent in Baghdad):

Nonetheless, Iraqi anti-aircraft crews were doing their job for honour, duty, and country. I also came across reports that Iraqi forces have stopped an attack in the vicinity of Al-Nasiriya, a city which became a graveyard for American Tanks back in 1991, and was the real reason why the Americans agreed for a cease fire (Aljazeera, 19 March 2003).

Interestingly, in contrast to this national resistance frame, the editors back in Doha immediately relayed the commentary of U.S. Colonel John Midvey from West Point, the renowned American Military Academy. He states that the ongoing air raid is a 'limited operation' and that it constitutes more of a 'message' to the Iraqi military that things are getting serious and that they had better overthrow Saddam Hussein for their own sake. Colonel John Midvey also says that these are mock raids designed for psychological warfare purposes. Tawfiq Taha from Doha, obviously unhappy with this comment, points out that these statements lack logic, since mock raids do not trigger the explosions that have been reported. Tawfiq Taha adds that the U.S. military command has cancelled the day's briefing. In his opinion, this means that things are not going according to plan. Then, Tawfiq Taha from the studio in Doha asked Diyar Al Omari, Aljazeera's correspondent in Baghdad, to comment on Colonel John Midvey's opinion. Diyar repeats his commentary that anti-aircraft gunfire was still active, and that this obliges the U.S. aircraft to fly far away. He also makes reference to the communiqué of the Iraqi Army stating that it has gunned down a few cruise missiles.

Immediately afterwards, Tawfiq Taha from Doha gave time to the other Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad Majed Abdelhadi. Appearing immovable with a helmet and bullet proof jacket, close to major targeted state installations in Baghdad, Majed Abdelhadi stated

that anti-aircraft gunfire was initially very heavy despite the absence of visible planes, and that a missile had struck an area in his vicinity. Majed reported upon many local details, such as the fact that the lights in Baghdad were still switched on, in contrast to bombing raids in 1991. This comment was followed by an Aljazeera camera providing an overview of the Iraqi capital, and the movement of cars on the bridge.

Majed then stated that millions of Iraqis had stayed home because of their fear of the expected heavy bombardment. In this regard, Majed Abdehadi remarked upon the anxiety and fear that had affected the Iraqi population, as well as journalists on the ground, since the end of the U.S. ultimatum. The body language of Majed was itself very expressive: he looked fearful and anxious. He was still giving his account, when without warning, the Iraqi anti-aircraft gunfire started to sound. The substantial background noise in the background, reminded the audience that war was indeed a very dangerous business.

7.3- Shock and Awe: Baghdad is Burning

After a two day delay, the long expected “shock and awe” bombing campaign was finally unleashed. It became clear that the delay was itself part of the plan, for the media heavily speculated during this period on why there was such a stoppage, asking about the time when “shock and awe” would start. On CNN and other U.S. networks, this speculation served the strategic purpose of publicising the war so as to create a desire for “shock and awe” among U.S. and international audiences. This was effectively the grand opening to the war narrative, the huge conflagrations caused by the bombing were meant to display “shock and awe” as spectacle. American mainstream media focused on the magnitude of the bombings revealed by television, omitting almost everything else, including the actual consequences of the explosions on civilian populations. The purpose of this exercise was to demonstrate the military hardware and military might of the United States.

This opening episode could also be interpreted as retribution for what Americans experienced on 11 September 2001. Like the 9/11 attacks, “Shock and Awe” had a devastating impact on densely populated targets. The Pentagon had given notice of its intentions in the months preceding the war. Thus, in an interview given to CBS on 24 January 2003, Pentagon planner Harlan Ullman predicted that the Iraq blitzkrieg could approximate the devastation of the most intense bombing campaign; ‘The sheer size of this has never been ... contemplated before,’ the official boasted to CBS News, who added that ‘there will not be a safe place in

Baghdad. This 'would be a firestorm, a Dresden or Tokyo with 60 years of new technology' (CBS, 2003)

Baghdad experienced an enormous pounding from U.S. missiles. Huge fireballs rocked the heart of the Iraqi capital, and the sky became filled with smoke. By dubbing this attack plan "Shock and Awe," the Pentagon hoped to instil a mixture of trauma and admiration; in two days, over 800 cruise missiles were unleashed, more than were used in the entire 1991 Gulf War. But while many American audience members were awestruck by the barrage of bombing on key landmarks in Baghdad, Arab audiences would have been distressed to see a historic Arab capital treated in this way. In direct contrast to the slogan "Shock and Awe", Aljazeera ran the headline: "Baghdad is burning." Images of explosion and conflagration would have been enough to infuriate the Arab audience. However, the actual headline 'Baghdad is burning' added another emotional dimension. Most importantly, these images and the headline were displayed without any accompanying commentary. This lasted about six minutes.

Scene establishments

On CNN, the headline for this operation was named "Strike on Iraq", and the graphic design was distinctive, as it displayed this title on the flag of Iraq, which contains the slogan "Allah Akbar" (Allah is great). Then CNN showed live (but infra-red and greenish) images of Baghdad. It was a dark night, lit only by what CNN described as Iraqi anti-aircraft fire. On some occasions, the camera tilted upwards to search for cruise missiles that may have been coming in, looking for targets in and around Baghdad. While these images offered no meaningful information, Wolf Blitzer, other anchors and analysts at the studio offered their own summation of the scene.

Eventually, sirens were heard, and the crackling sound of gunfire became louder. At this juncture, CNN's camera was stationary. Anchor Wolf Blitzer stated that these were 'live pictures to give our viewers some context'. Blitzer interrupted some of the journalists who were commenting by saying: 'Just listen a little bit to the sound of the gunfire, like if we are listening to explosions heard over Baghdad, just listen little bit more to this fire.' Split screens were used to show four images from different news organizations including Aljazeera and Abu Dhabi TV. Basically, the images showed the same Baghdad locations which included

governmental buildings being hit by bombardment. The by-line was entitled: OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM; BAGHDAD ACTIVITY NOW UNDER WAY

On Aljazeera, Diyar Al-Omari was reporting live from Baghdad. He announces a new wave of American bombardments on the Iraqi capital. In the background, the sound of explosions and bombs was echoed. Buildings are bombed and suffer major damage. Iraqi anti-aircraft gunfire is seen sending flashes into the air. Majed Abdelhadi, Aljazeera's other correspondent in Baghdad, was placed nearby the places targeted. As he commented on developments, explosions occurred only about 500 meters away, creating huge fires in the process. His cameraman panned upward to show the actual aerial bombardment and the falling of the missiles over the buildings in Baghdad.

“Shock and Awe” unfolds: Contesting frames

Different narratives

During the initial unfolding of the “Shock and Awe” attacks, Wolf Blitzer on CNN posed some questions about what was going on in the sky over Baghdad. He asked the same questions to everyone, starting with military Analyst General (ret.) Don Shepperd. He explained in detail the source of the flashes appearing on the horizon:

General (ret.) Don Shepperd (CNN military Analyst):

On the monitors there are no impacts going on, at least in downtown Baghdad. But what I have seen is an obviously alerted Iraqi defence system with anti-aircraft fire going up in the air.....any of those shells, any single one of them, can bring down an American or coalition airplane, Wolf. So this is dangerous stuff (CNN, 21 March 2003)

Soon after emphasising the danger presented by Iraqi anti-aircraft weapons, General Shepperd minimized its likely impact on American warplanes by focusing on the Iraqi radars' ineptitude.

General (ret.) Don Shepperd (CNN military Analyst):

But I do not see any tracking fire. I do not see any fire that is tracing across the sky following an aircraft, indicating to me they are not seeing anything on, I have not seen anything that I can identify as a missile launch, indicating to me, again, that they are probably not seeing anything on the radar right now (CNN, 21 March 2003).

After that, Blitzer decided to use his last war coverage experiences in Baghdad to reiterate the inadequacies of the Iraqi radar:

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

Normally in the past, based on these kinds of experiences that I have covered over Baghdad, normally in the past the start of these kinds of anti-aircraft fire by the Iraqis, their radar may not be good enough. It seems like they are almost just shooting in the air in a wild fashion, hoping to get lucky and shoot down a plane. But they have no real specific targets. Is their radar better than that? (CNN, 21 March 2003)

General Shepperd, once again, agrees with Blitzer's analysis and summarized the inferiority of Iraqi air defence capabilities.

General (ret.) Don Shepperd (CNN military Analyst):

They are shooting into sectors, hoping that they will hit something, hoping that one of the airplanes will fly into it. That is all they can do. But much of this anti-aircraft fire is not radar-guided at all, so it does not depend upon radar. And that is the reason that U.S and coalition forces use the night, because if they can track you on radar, they can do that day or night. But if they cannot track you, then they must see you to fire accurately, and if they cannot see you, such as at night, then they are greatly hampered (CNN, 21 March 2003).

Subsequently, Wolf Blitzer contrasts the Iraqis poor standard of radar with the superiority of U.S planes:

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

We are seeing that tracer fire continue to go up, Iraqi anti-aircraft fire. They are shooting into the skies, hoping to get lucky, shoot down a U.S. plane. In the past, those F-117A Stealth fighters, hard to detect. Certainly they fly pretty high, cruise missiles even harder to detect (CNN, 21 March 2003).

At this stage, CNN announced the start of A-Day, the start of the aerial bombardment, the massive air strike campaign that has been dubbed "Shock and Awe":

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

We have been told that this is the start of what the Pentagon is now calling A-Day, the letter A, the start of the aerial bombardment, a massive air campaign expected over the next 24 to 48 hours, perhaps as many as 3,000 so-called smart bombs, precision-guided weapons, laser-guided weapons as well as satellite-guided weapons (CNN, 21 March 2003).

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

CNN has confirmed the start of A-Day, the start of the aerial bombardment, the massive U.S. air strike campaign that has been dubbed Shock and Awe, a campaign that was expected to last at least 24 to 48 hours. Iraqi anti-aircraft fire was firing almost randomly, wildly, into the skies, hoping to shoot down U.S. planes, U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles. The – there is no indication any of that happened. We have been reporting that huge explosions have occurred in the outskirts of Baghdad, presumably explosions resulting from U.S. bombs, U.S. Tomahawk cruise missiles, and other sophisticated munitions (CNN, 21 March 2003).¹⁴⁷

While the CNN reported the starting of the aerial bombardment, journalists voiced their concern about the lack of briefings coming from the Pentagon about the development of the war:

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

We are standing by; in about half an hour from now, we are expecting a Pentagon briefing. The defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers, will be briefing reporters, presumably telling us some more about what we're seeing on our television screens right now (CNN, 21 March 2003).

He then proceeds to gather some new information from various CNN correspondents including Bob Franken in Kuwait and Kevin Sites in Northern Iraq. Yet, these CNN correspondents did not provide any new information. Everyone seemed to echo the military frames, stressing the superiority of the U.S. planes and hardware. Nothing was really said about the development of the conflict itself. Take for example the following comments

Bob Franken (CNN correspondent):

There has been a parade of planes all day and into the night that's taking off.....they have a variety of fighter jets here. They have everything from the FA-18 to the F-16, both of them, of course capable of bombing.....these are ferocious planes. I have seen them on the battlefield, they shoot at something like 6,000 rounds per minute, or something like that, and literally can shred a tank..... (CNN, 21 March 2003).

However, with the lack of a supporting Pentagon briefing, correspondents could only speculate about possible battle plans, asking whether or not there was any change in the

¹⁴⁷ These quotes by Wolf Blitzer were made a few minutes apart. The second quote was made when CNN confirmed the actual attack.

“Shock and Awe” strategy. Anchor Barbara Starr goes on to assure viewers that the aerial bombardment will, in any case, carry on.

As the bombs actually fell over Baghdad, CNN anchors and guests expressed admiration. For example, John Burns (CNN Guest) considered this wave of bombardment as “biblical” and “an astonishing sight,”¹⁴⁸ whereas Nic Robertson (CNN Senior International Correspondent) thought the event was “Armageddon” and “awesome.”¹⁴⁹ At one point, there was some acknowledgment of the human dimension involved. Freelancing from Baghdad, May Ying Welsh (Independent Journalist) said that Iraqis she had met were “definitely” affected by the bombing. She also affirmed, contrary to reports from the Pentagon, that civilians lived near the government buildings under attack. Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor) after long minutes of near jubilation acknowledged that the attacks were ‘terrible...if you’re on the other end of them.’ Similarly, Wolf Blitzer (CNN Anchor) remarked that ‘we can only imagine what terrifying state most of those people are presumably in.’

However, these expressions of concern were outweighed by other comments praising the precision of the U.S. military operation. Such comments assumed that most Iraqi civilians were safe and that the U.S. war effort revealed an elevated sense of humanity. For example, CNN military analyst Wesley Clark affirmed that “Shock and Awe” was ‘precision bombing...not carpet bombing...not directed at populated areas,’ while Nic Robertson, who was at that time in Baghdad told CNN he ‘felt safe during the bombing.’ Sometimes, CNN anchors made unsubstantiated speculations. Thus, John Burns reported that during the “Shock and Awe” bombardment in Baghdad, ‘Iraqis wandered out of their homes, hotels, on the embankment on the east side of the Tigris, and went forward to the river to get a better look...These people...have an almost complete confidence that... [the U.S. military] have got the coordinates right.’

¹⁴⁸ John Burns (CNN Guest, New York Times):

It was an astonishing sight, even for those of us who have seen American air power unleashed in Bosnia and Kosovo, Afghanistan and, of course, in Baghdad itself back in 1991. It was something Biblical. It made you think of words like Beelzebub, and Milton. It was just astonishing to see an area of several square miles in an instant begin to explode everywhere (CNN, 21 March 2003).

¹⁴⁹ Nic Robertson (CNN Senior International Correspondent):

I have not witnessed anything on this scale before. The multiple detonations, that almost, to be honest, Wolf, it had an Armageddon like feel to it, albeit in a limited area, multiple flashes, detonations that impacted your body, that blew the window open, that blew the plaster off the walls of the room I was in. It was massive, it was awesome, and for people who perhaps didn't have that same degree of knowledge of the weaponry and a certain knowledge that perhaps the location they were in wasn't about to be targeted, it certainly would have been shocking as well. It was -- it was awesome is perhaps the only way to describe it, Wolf (CNN 22 March 2003).

On Aljazeera, the narrative of bombardment was entirely different. The imminent arrival of “Shock and Awe” was announced by Dana Budeiri:

Dana Budeiri (Aljazeera's correspondent in the Pentagon):

The authorities in the Pentagon declared that the heavy attack of Baghdad, or what is called Operation Shock and Awe, will start at any moment. A briefing from General Myers is expected in less than an hour from now. This is an additional indication that the expected attack will happen at any time from now onwards. In addition, it has been declared that the B 52 planes have departed from Britain on the way to Iraq. This gives the impression that a strike on Baghdad will happen very soon (Aljazeera, 21 March 2003)

In these comments, Aljazeera's correspondent in the Pentagon provided an approach based on facts. Dana Budeiri characterised the operation as a “heavy attack on Baghdad”, preferring to discard the military appellation (she used the term “what is called Operation Shock and Awe”). She referred to the fact that the briefing of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence was scheduled shortly, and that the Bombardiers had left their British bases for Iraq. For her, these facts indicated the imminence of the Baghdad bombardment. Unlike CNN anchors and correspondents, Dana Budeiri did not refer to the might of the American war machine or the lethality of its equipment.

Immediately after Dana Budeiri's report, Aljazeera became even more on alert. They provided up-to-the-minute coverage from Baghdad and Mosul. After a while, Aljazeera anchors announced that the press conference with General Myers had started and that live coverage would take place. Baghdad correspondent Diyar Al-Omari commented on the increasing fire coming from the Iraqi defences and explained that American planes were flying at lower altitudes as they approached their targets.

At a given moment, as the pace and frequency of the bombing increased and the sound of the explosions amplified, Aljazeera's anchors kept silent for about six minutes. The control room in Doha stopped all discussions and commentaries in order to emphasise the amplified sound of explosions. This silence was very meaningful; it conveyed feelings of sadness over the human losses that would result from such an intensive bombardment. After a while, Jumana Namur, the main anchor in Doha turned to Majed Abdelhadi in Baghdad for comment. The latter referred to the frequency and damage of the American air strikes thus far. He also gave an assessment of the Iraqi anti-aircraft response, and described the reaction of Iraqi civilians.

He referred to the fact that Iraqi civilians were taking refuge inside mosques and praying to God for salvation.

Aljazeera continued to televise the bombs hitting Baghdad with enormous explosions. Amplified sounds of these explosions accompanied the visual footage. Cameras revealed the multiple bombardments of various locations. The situation in Baghdad became unsafe for Aljazeera crew members who quickly fled their position, but only after placing multiple remote controlled cameras facing toward the targeted locations. No commentary followed for some time, as the images were left to speak for themselves for about four minutes. In the intervening time, massive explosions were heard in the background. Cameras shook because of the constant bombardment. The televised images became all white as if thunder had struck the cameras. One hears the voice of journalists running away to hide. Adjacent edifices, which seem to be governmental buildings, were subsequently hit by bombs, and smoke covered the scene.

Adnan Charif in Doha could not describe the picture. One hears him whispering an Islamic prayer "*la hawla wala kouwat ila billah*" which literally means 'there is no movement or power except by Allah's will.' Such a prayer usually accompanies disasters. Then he commented:

Adnan Charif (Aljazeera anchor)

This is one of the biggest strikes on Baghdad...This strike reminds us...We don't want to talk about it ... Baghdad is burning...what can we say more? [silence] While watching these revolting images from Baghdad, we try to contact our correspondent in Baghdad (Aljazeera, 21 March 2003)

Anchor Adnan Charif continued his commentary:

Adnan Charif (Aljazeera anchor)

What can we say after these shocking images? This is a strike which allegedly intends to take out weapons of mass destruction from Iraq. What are these weapons used right now: aren't they weapons of mass destruction? This is a question that imposes itself in these moments, as we watch that scene with pictures and sound. The tongue is powerless to describe this situation. (Aljazeera 21 March 2003)

Again Adnan tried to contact the Aljazeera crew in Baghdad to get some additional information, but they had taken cover to avoid being killed by the massive bombing

campaign. Soon afterwards, another huge explosion hit the same targeted place. Adnan then repeated his sarcastic question: ‘aren’t these weapons of mass destruction?’ The whole sequence lasted about four minutes.

Soon afterwards, Jumana Namur, took over the anchor role, and posed a particular question for Aljazeera's military analyst General (ret.) Saad Al Chazli. She asked him why the Americans were repeatedly trying to strike the same targets over and over. His answer emphasised the fact that the highest military priority in war is to flatten command and control stations. The next priority would be to hit the main infrastructure, such as power grids and water infrastructure etc. as this would destroy any will to resist from the Iraqi side.

Then, Anchor Jumana Namur went back over the issue of the Iraqi anti-aircraft response. She asked the General about whether anti-aircraft batteries could intercept missiles over the capital city Baghdad, and whether the coalition missiles were flying at a high or low attitude. General Chazli seemed puzzled by the fact that Iraqi anti-aircraft crews were unable to gun down any American missiles thus far. The questions of Anchor Jumana Namur indicate a pattern in which Aljazeera tries to find shortcomings in the coalition military plans. This led her to ask General Chazli about whether this was going to be an easy and quick battle for the coalition forces, or whether Iraqi forces might make it harder for them. The General answered tactfully that there were still many unknowns surrounding the exact capabilities of the Iraqi forces.

7.4- Discussion and Critique

“Decapitation Strike”

It was clearly noticeable that the framings of reality contained in the speech of President George W. Bush were echoed in the CNN coverage. As a result, CNN carried the following frames: the Orientalist deep frame¹⁵⁰, and the conflict meso-frame¹⁵¹ (with all its sub-frames, namely the military sub-frame¹⁵², the liberation sub-frame¹⁵³, and the pre-emptive war sub-

¹⁵⁰ To reiterate: the Orientalist deep frame refers to a form of representation that turns “Oriental” lands and people into an epistemological construct that is easy to grasp and dominate.

¹⁵¹ The conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions. Typically, this frame takes sides and determines the hero and the villain.

¹⁵² The military sub-frame focuses on military prowess in times of war. It praises the power of military technology and the courage of the troops.

¹⁵³ The liberation sub-frame suggests that the purpose of the military conflict in Iraq was to liberate Iraqi citizens.

frame¹⁵⁴). The only exception is the religious frame¹⁵⁵, which was emphasised by President Bush in his speech but did not find resonance in CNN's coverage.

The Orientalist deep frame was there from the outset; consider for example the judgment of CNN anchor Aaron Brown

Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor)

Again, around the country now, there are all sorts of military operations waiting to move in on the borders. Ben Wedeman is in the northern part of Iraq. Ben is with Kurdish troops. This is part of the complicated ethnic and religious makeup of Iraq that, over the weeks that this war plays out, we suspect we'll spend a fair amount of time talking about, probably not the night for it now. (CNN, 19 March 2003 22:55 EST)

Brown's comment that "this is part of the complicated ethnic and religious makeup of Iraq" illustrates the Orientalist deep frame. The fact that the Iraqi people include different ethnic groups and religions does not uniquely represent a "complicated ethnic and religious makeup." If we take the American people as an example, it is also very diverse and includes people from Caucasian descent, as well as from African, Latino and Asian origins. Hundreds of heterogeneous churches, synagogues, mosques and other sects proliferate throughout America, without anyone commenting that this is a "complicated ethnic and religious makeup." On the contrary, the dominant discourse will praise American diversity as "cosmopolitan" rather than complicated.

Another comment which exemplifies the Orientalist worldview is the use of the term "Arab Street" to describe the Arab public opinion.

John King (CNN Senior White House Correspondent):

And in that, and in only four minutes, as you noted, the president touching on that important political message aimed at the citizens of Iraq and more broadly the Arab street across the Middle East (CNN, 19 March 2003)

¹⁵⁴ The pre-emptive war sub-frame suggests that the Iraq Conflict was necessary as a pre-emptive measure to prevent the regime of Saddam Hussein from using weapons of mass destruction against the West or to transfer these to terrorist groups.

¹⁵⁵ The religious sub-frame is based on "manifest destiny", which conflates the will of God with the national objectives of the United States. This sub-frame implies that it is the will of God to export the American ethos to the rest of the world.

Traditionally, after World War Two the phrase ‘Arab public opinion’ was referred to in Western media. However, it was substituted during the struggle for independence with the belittling term “Arab Street” (Zayani, 2008: 46). Underlying this phrase is the assumption that Arab public opinion is “Oriental” in essence, and thus inherently hostile, emotional, and irrational. According to media scholar Mohamed Zayani, to employ the term Arab Street is to insinuate vulnerability to easy manipulation and the inclination to follow a mob mentality; ‘it suggests dangerous masses awaiting to rise up in anger and spill into the streets in response to a particular event or in a violent popular reaction against a particular incident’ (Zayani, 2008: 47). Underlying this statement is the assumption that Arabs are only responsive to force not reason.

Another assumption carried by this phrase is that Arab and Islamic societies, by their nature, lack any public sphere within which to debate and discuss political issues. Such an assumption carries Orientalist prejudices. As academic Marc Lynch argued, ‘the theoretical reduction of Arab public opinion to the Arab street systematically distorts accurate understanding of its dynamics’ (Lynch, 2003: 56). In Lynch’s view, this reductionism ignored the fact that ‘the relatively unique transnational dimension of Arab public spheres has long and deep roots’ and that ‘the Arab world has decades of experience with political argumentation at the transnational level’ (p.59). This reductionist approach also overlooked the impact of new media, including satellite television stations, such as Aljazeera, and the internet in reinvigorating the Arab public sphere.

Reinforcing otherness were other rhetorical techniques used by politicians on CNN. Historically, for example, the speeches of Presidents Bush (Senior and Junior) often contained the “nation-as-person” metaphor. As I have explained previously, this tendency is revealed in George Lakoff’s analysis of Gulf War media coverage in 1991 (see chapter 6 section 6.4). One of the most widely used framing techniques was to conflate a given nation state with the personality of its leader. International relations, in this view, is akin to a neighbourhood whose inhabitants are categorized as villains, victims, or heroes. Thus, Iraq as state, regime, people, and territory become synonymous with Saddam Hussein. In this context, the “nation as a person”¹⁵⁶ metaphor contrasted with some of the themes circulated by the Bush

¹⁵⁶ The “nation-as-person” metaphor made it easy for the American troops and public to understand the rationale behind the war. Indeed, the metaphor personalised the war as one with the Iraqi dictator even though the war killed other Iraqis the United States was supposedly not at war against.

administration, particularly the assertion that this was not a war on Iraqis (or Islam), but solely a war on Saddam Hussein. However, the latter theme was not frequently employed.

There were also other comments on CNN which exemplify the Orientalist frame. For instance, Senator Joseph Lieberman provided the following comments:

Senator Joseph Lieberman:

Well, my thoughts, obviously, are with the American military who are there, hoping and praying for their success, right now hoping that this attempt at decapitation was successful, because, after all is said and done, this is all about one evil dictator who possesses brutal weapons, with which he will threaten and hurt a lot of people, including a lot of Americans, unless we take them away from him. I understand the odds against that decapitation working, but it might. And, if it does, all of us, including the Iraqi people, are going to be very fortunate (CNN, 19 March 2003).

Saddam has ruled by fear and has killed any number of people under him, himself, who have shown some disloyalty. So, if it becomes clear that he is gone, then you have to ask, what is the motivation for all those in the Iraqi military to continue to want to fight us? We're offering them a better way and a better life (CNN, 19 March 2003).

What we are doing here is not only in the interests of the safety of the American people, because, believe me, Saddam Hussein would have used these weapons against us eventually or given them to terrorists who would have. But this is -- what we are doing here, in overthrowing Saddam and removing those weapons of mass destruction, taking them into our control, is good for the security of every nation in the world. And it is a task we are taking on. It is not a selfish task. It is a task of high justice and necessity and I'd say idealism in the best tradition of American principles and patriotism (CNN, 19 March 2003).

By characterising Saddam Hussein as an 'evil dictator, who possesses brutal weapons,' a religious dimension is added to racial "otherness". The "other" thus becomes a monster controlled by a malevolent force in need of exorcism (read military intervention) (Gunn, 2004).

In the subsequent CNN coverage, the pre-emptive war sub-frame complemented the military sub-frame. The latter focused on military prowess, praised the power of military technology and the courage of the troops. This sub-frame pervades a popular culture, which valorises violence (as news professionals acclimatise the public to the acceptability of war).

Mainstream American media undeniably adhered to this sub-frame by featuring analysts with very close connections to the Pentagon. The Pentagon's military perspective was therefore always prominent. In the case of CNN, its main military analyst was General (ret.) Wesley Clark, the former head of NATO, and former chief commander of NATO troops during the War in Kosovo. General Clark's past credentials heavily influenced his commentary. As I have indicated, he always identified himself with coalition troops, and used the pronoun "We" when discussing military situations. The following extract reiterates the point:

General Wesley Clark:

We've got continuous visibility over much of Iraq. We've got scouts forward. We've got special operations forward. We've got satellites. We've got aircraft. We've got moving-target indicators off those aircraft (CNN, 19 March 2003 22:44 EST).

Although General Clark was hired by CNN in his capacity as an analyst rather than a military commander, his comments blurred the line between journalism and military discourse. Other military analysts on CNN's payroll included Retired Generals Don Sheppard and David Grange who gave a favourable spin to the military plans. The reproduction of military discourse was further revealed when on numerous occasions CNN's journalistic commentary incorporated aspects of psychological warfare. One important aspect is that of perception management; this combines 'truth projection, operational security, cover and deception and psychological operations' (Dearth, 2002: 2). To this end CNN, wittingly or unwittingly, contributed to the tactic of encouraging the Iraqi population to accept the war on the grounds that it was not the target of it.

Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor)

I was saying the president was making a lot of the points that he has been making for a long time. This is not a war on the Iraqi population, not a war on Islam, it is a war on Saddam Hussein and his regime (CNN, 19 March 2003 22:35 EST).

Additionally, CNN coverage contributed to the psychological tactic of inducing Iraqis to surrender (on the grounds that American victory is guaranteed)

Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor)

I don't think anybody, I suspect, on the planet doubts that the American forces will overwhelm, ultimately, the Iraqis and win this. It is a complicated process that comes after, putting Iraq together (CNN, 19 March 2003 23:29 EST).

On Aljazeera, coverage of the “decapitation strike” was fundamentally different. The resistance theme was recurrent throughout their coverage. Unlike the American media for whom the outcome of the war was never in question, Aljazeera’s anchors recurrently asked whether Iraq would resist the coalition assault. Local correspondents tried frequently to assert that Iraqi forces would be better organised compared to the Gulf War in 1991.

The following comments made by Aljazeera’s anchors and correspondents within the first hour of “Decapitation Strike” highlight the theme of resistance:

Diyar Al Omari (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

The Pentagon has ‘acknowledged violent Iraqi resistance (Aljazeera, 20 March 2003).

Diyar Al Omari (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

...new methods implemented by the Iraqi anti-aircraft crews, who are now well trained, obliged the U.S. airplanes to flee the scene...Iraqi forces have stopped an attack in the vicinity of Al-Nasiriya, a city which was a graveyard for American Tanks back in 1991 (Aljazeera, 20 March 2003)

Diyar Al Omari (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

An official communiqué states that the Iraqi Army has gunned down few cruise missiles (Aljazeera, 20 March 2003).

Tawfiq Taha (Aljazeera anchor)

The U.S. military command cancelled the briefing for journalists that day, this means that things are not going according to plan (Aljazeera, 20 March 2003).

During the early hours of “Decapitation Strike,” Aljazeera’s anchors sometimes framed the situation as if the “barbarians” were at the gates of Baghdad. The ‘barbarian vs. civilised’ construction shapes the binary logics associated with Orientalism and Occidentalism.¹⁵⁷ In this case, the Occidental frame was employed to highlight the cruelty of invading armies and mobilise nationalist spirits.

¹⁵⁷ As discussed in chapter two, Occidentalism is the product of a discourse that constructs a monolithic image of “the West”. It is the mirror image of Orientalism. Occidental views tend to depict everything coming from the West as moral arrogance and foreign ideological hegemony. For example, the influential Iranian intellectual Jalal Al-e Ahmad launched the concept of “Westoxification” in the 1960s in order to describe the supposedly poisonous effect of Western civilization on other cultures.

The image of colonial powers occupying Arab lands has long traumatised Arab consciousness especially in the aftermath of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, signed by Britain and France in 1916. In one stroke, Arab lands in Arabia and the Levant were divided into zones of permanent French and British colonial influence. Arab resentment rose further when Western Nations backed the establishment of Israel in 1948. In the subsequent Arab-Israeli Wars, local Arab regimes constantly invoked the Barbarian invader image to position Western Powers as necessarily hostile to Arab interests. In fact, pan-Arabism, as an ideology aimed to unify the Arab peoples of the Middle East under the banner of a large Arab single state, constructed the West (and later Israel) as the “other”. However, although pan-Arabist diatribes might share some rhetorical elements with anti-Western Occidentalist harangues, there are wide differences between the two.¹⁵⁸

The emergence of the Occidentalist “otherness” frames within Aljazeera’s coverage during the early hours of bombardment was not surprising. It was Diyar Al-Omari, an Iraqi journalist, who stressed this frame most often. Al-Omari appeared affected by what was about to happen to his home country. In this respect, the impact of Barbarianism was set against nationalist sentiments in a perfect combination of self versus other. This juxtaposition becomes clearer when nationalist sentiments are framed and mobilised by the notion of “resistance”. After stressing the cruelty of the invading soldiers and praising the Iraqi soldiers who do their job for “honour, duty, and country”, Iraqis are called upon to resist. Thus, “heroic” acts of defence are praised in ways which exaggerate their real nature.

Hence, unsurprisingly Aljazeera focused upon the horrors expected from the bombing campaign. This contributed to the general sense of refusal against a war that the Qatar based channel considered illegal from day one. The illegality of the war was an important meta-frame for Aljazeera’s entire coverage. In this context, the notion of resistance was articulated by the behaviour and rhetoric of Aljazeera journalists, who took full advantage of their “un-embedded” status. The notion of resistance was also employed to counter the American / British official line that the campaign was going on as planned.

¹⁵⁸ There is a large difference between pan-Arabism and Occidentalism. From a historic perspective, pan-Arabists were the allies of the Western Powers against the Turks in the First World War (Arab nationalism was initially directed against the Turks because the Ottoman Empire implemented very unpopular policies in the Arab regions). Furthermore, Pan-Arabism drew inspiration from Western nationalisms. Early theoreticians of pan-Arabism, such as George Antonius and Michel Aflak, were directly inspired by the unification of the German and Italian states in the 19th century. In addition, pan-Arabists incorporated Western ideologies such as socialism in their programs. What pan-Arabists rejected was the Western political interference in the Arab region, as exemplified by the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreements.

Also, Aljazeera emphasised the human-dimension to war and this allowed them to invoke the “injustice frame” and the “victim frame” (Snow and Benford 2000: 615). In war zones, there is no doubt that civilians are the most exposed and vulnerable. Such vulnerability exponentially increases when battles take place inside cities, the more so when massive aerial bombings occur. It is then quite plausible to suggest that unarmed civilians are being victimised. Historic precedents, such as the London blitz, the Allied bombing of Germany and the fire bombing of Tokyo, all entailed the destruction of civilian life. So, when Aljazeera portrayed the Iraqi conflict in terms of its human dimension, victimhood and injustice inevitably came to the fore. Indeed, the Qatar based channel boasted that it followed this general editorial line; its managers openly declared that their channel ‘put more concentration on the sufferings of the people after the attacks’ (Figenschou 2006: 77).

Visual analysis

During the "Decapitation Strike" sequence, CNN's footage lacked substantive context. During one hour, CNN's images came from an extreme wide-angled shot of Baghdad. Such images were captured from afar, using very long lenses. The still images appeared greenish because of the use of infra-red lenses. As the camera remained stationary, it conveyed none of the human dimension of Baghdad. The only movement seen was the occasional flashing of anti-aircraft gunfire. On some occasions, the images displayed came from archives, and showed cruise missiles launch-pads positioned in an unnamed aircraft carrier. Approximately 95 percent of the footage used by CNN during the “decapitation strike” carried no human dimension. Iraqis were never at the centre of the visual coverage. American soldiers were also not the focus of the coverage at this stage (apart from one interview from Kuwait, and in one instance where American soldiers were shown preparing military airplanes on an aircraft carrier). So, the entirety of the coverage focused on Baghdad from afar. This gave the impression that Baghdad was a ghost town.

With the cameras placed far away, one could not determine what was actually happening on the ground. The Baghdad locations shown by the camera could not be identified. For a long period of time all that one could see was something that looked like a mosque on the right side of the screen, and another construction that could not be recognized. Similarly, the footage did not show any bombing sounds or lights. Sometimes, other images of other locations in Iraq were displayed. However, these locations seemed quiet and did not convey any sense of the war taking place. At one time, the colour palette became very bright for about

four minutes; this happened when the camera took an extreme wide-angled shot of a central Baghdad location while the anchor's voiceover accompanied the footage. After that, the footage brightness diminished.

During the “Decapitation Strike”, Aljazeera’s camera positioning relayed an entirely different footage. Cameras depicted the neighbouring places in Baghdad from afar. Viewers were brought close to city life. On these occasions, the camera was regularly moving left and right, zooming-in, zooming-out to capture some of the nearby landmarks of the Iraqi Capital. As a result, residential buildings, public places, parks, mosques, and streets clearly appeared in the footage. Viewers could see cars moving in the background, as street lights embellished the city. The human dimension of Baghdad was thereby conveyed. The palette used by Aljazeera contained bright colours, thus giving a lively feel to Baghdad. Due to this technique, the Iraqi capital looked romantic. This complemented those remarks from anchors and correspondents that sympathised with the plight of Iraqi people awaiting military attack. Additionally, Aljazeera's correspondents on the ground conveyed the sounds of city life. At times, the correspondents were silent such that car horns and engine noise became clearly audible. Also, when the anti-aircraft gunfire started, it was loudly reproduced by Aljazeera; thus emphasising for the audience the general sense of danger.

Keyword Analysis

The very title “Decapitation Strike” employed by CNN originates from nuclear warfare theory. In this context, a "Decapitation Strike" is a first strike attack that aims to remove the command and control infrastructure of the opponent, in the hope that their capacity for nuclear retaliation will be degraded or destroyed. By drawing upon cold war annals, and nuclear brinkmanship with the Soviet Union, the Pentagon aimed to build a connection between the military capabilities of Iraq, and the huge military might of the now defunct superpower. By so doing, the Pentagon could create a climate of fear among the American public concerning the purported availability of nuclear weapons in Iraq.

If one separates the two words "decapitation" and "strike", additional connotations arise. Thus, "decapitation" has medieval roots as a method of punishment against rebels and dissidents. This method was also a state terror tactic; decapitations were generally conducted in public places in order to instil fear among the general public. "Strike", on the other hand, generally connotes a military operation conducted from the air. Together, the two words

semantically conveyed extreme deadliness, surprise, and sudden impact. Another frequently used military term was "selective strike". The term was used by CNN's Walter Rogers and John King during the first hour of "Decapitation Strike" to describe the military operation conducted against the Iraqi President and high-ranked regime leaders. This phrase exemplified the sense of technological superiority and clean war. The term "selective" implied that the American administration's removal of Saddam Hussein would save the Iraqi people a costly and bloody war. "Selective strike" not only implied that American forces had the technological capacity to strike anytime and anywhere, but also that this was the only objective (rather than, for example, the control of Iraq's oil resources).

Another interesting phrase was "real movie", which was employed by CNN Anchor Aaron Brown to describe the "decapitation strike" sequence. He said: 'it is like a brief intermission in some terrible, but real movie' (CNN, 19 March 2003). This phrase exemplified the entanglement of reality and fiction. Academics, such as Robert Stam, have argued that television news inherits its discursive mode of operation from both cinema and journalism. Thus, Stam considers "filmic procedures" to be vital to the process of making television news (Stam 1983: 33-34). In movies, the script tends to establish the star of the movie as well as the story line and the genre of the film. The plot then unfolds and reaches resolution by the end. The "Decapitation Strike" sequence resembled the introductory segment of a movie. It attracted attention and introduced the star, namely George W. Bush, and the villain, Saddam Hussein. This segment also prepared the audience for the main course of action about to unfold; "Shock and Awe".

One more phrase of interest at this juncture is that of "game plan"¹⁵⁹. CNN Anchor Wolf Blitzer use of the sports term was not new. Such terminology characterised the coverage of *Desert Storm* in 1991; as Jim Castonguay observed: 'During the Gulf War the commentary of military and football analysts, and the methods deployed to illustrate and explain sports and the war, became almost indistinguishable' (Castonguay 1997 [electronic article; no pagination]). By talking of a "game plan", Wolf Blitzer was packaging and selling military conflict as entertainment.

¹⁵⁹ Wolf Blitzer (CNN Anchor):

Aaron, there's no doubt that the original game plan was for a day or two of concerted air strikes before the U.S. ground forces which are amassed in the northern part of Iraq, would move in – the northern part of Kuwait, that is -- would move in (CNN, 19 March 2003).

Another interesting key phrase was “psychological warfare” which was employed by Christiane Amanpour.¹⁶⁰ The fact that “Decapitation Strike” came early in the campaign and 48 hours before the massive bombing campaign was of major psychological importance from a military point of view. Psychological warfare is basically an attempt to alter the behaviour of people in enemy-controlled territory. In revealing without examination that the so-called selective strikes against Saddam Hussein and some of his regime members were accompanied by electronic warfare (the control of Iraq’s radio broadcasting airwaves), CNN legitimises the widening domain of warfare. It shall be recalled that according to U.S. Air force documents, psychological operations are part of operation planning from the start¹⁶¹ (Dearth 2002: 4).

As mentioned earlier, the term "evil" was also used during CNN coverage.¹⁶² This keyword illustrates the rhetorical dependence upon neo-conservatism; a worldview which states that ‘the human condition is defined as a choice between good and evil’ (Halper and Clarke 2004). From a strategic communication perspective, “evil” is an extremely powerful word. It generates fear because it constructs the enemy as a monster controlled by a malevolent force (Gunn 2004). This in turn implies that a violent, military intervention is the only viable option. The use of the keyword "evil" is a well known technique for insulating one’s own rhetoric against counter-argument and rational challenge (Windt 1992). As part of the demonization process launched against the Iraqi leader, the phrase “leadership bunker” was employed.¹⁶³ This invokes an association with another evil figure in history: Adolph Hitler. This phrase therefore provided further justification for the "Decapitation Strike" episode and associated rhetoric.¹⁶⁴

"Brutal weapons" and "Weapons of mass destruction" were phrases used to describe Saddam Hussein’s purported arsenal. The inference was that possession of such weaponry would

¹⁶⁰ Christiane Amanpour (CNN Chief International Correspondent):

There has been a lot of psychological warfare. We have heard a lot about that, electronic warfare, and other kinds of psychological pressure to try to influence the Iraqi military not to fight and to take up non-offensive positions (CNN, 19 March 2003).

¹⁶¹ At the operational level, psychological operations are conducted ‘prior to, during, and following war or conflict to promote the commander’s effectiveness’ (Department of the Navy 2000: 2)

¹⁶² Senator Joseph Lieberman:

This is all about one evil dictator who possesses brutal weapons, with which he will threaten and hurt a lot of people, including a lot of Americans, unless we take them away from him (CNN, 19 March 2003).

¹⁶³ Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor)

As Jamie reported, it appears to be an attack on a leadership bunker or a place where perhaps Saddam Hussein was (CNN, 19 March 2003).

¹⁶⁴ In fact, this imagery was wrong. The Iraqi president was not fond of using bunkers because they were built by French engineers. Instead, he preferred the use of average villas as command and control structures, and changed them on a daily basis.

enable the infliction of terrible damage on innocent victims. This in turn connotes an image of a “barbarian” Iraq. In reality, Iraq had been stripped of its defences, and could not threaten neighbouring countries, let alone the world’s superpower. On the other hand, the United States possessed weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional firepower.¹⁶⁵ However, the “politics of naming” enabled the United States to highlight its opponent’s destructive tendencies, while fostering a righteous image of its own.

Last but not least, two keywords are of utmost importance, namely “better way” and “better life,” which were employed by Senator Joe Lieberman. He was the last political figure to intervene in this very important prime-time broadcast. He carefully chose his words to convey, domestically, the rationale for war. To this end, he played the Orientalist card. He advised the Iraqi military to surrender so that the United States could offer them a “better way and a better life”. The underlying message was that Iraqis would never reach these ideals without America influence.

Aljazeera’s response to the “Decapitation Strike” rhetoric centred on the keyword “resistance.” Clearly, Aljazeera’s anchors and correspondents expected stiff resistance from Iraqi forces. The word itself has deep cultural resonance. Historically, rituals of resistance against invaders became testimonials of honour in the collective Muslim consciousness. Resistance also symbolises manly courage in the Arab World (Peteet 1994: 34). Thus, the Qatar based channel portrayed the Arab-Israel conflict and the War on Iraq as ‘David vs. Goliath’ struggles, whereby Arab forces in unfavourable situations continue to fight against superior foes. The keyword “resistance” also resonates with the expectations of Arab audiences in times of foreign onslaught. This explains the tendency of Aljazeera to romanticise acts of resistance, including those of its own journalists.

Another keyword commonly employed by Aljazeera at this juncture was “invasion.” Unlike the American television networks which adopted the appellation “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, Aljazeera routinely referred to “the war on Iraq” and “the invasion.” These phrases reminded audiences that the war was regarded as illegal. Many nations, including European members of NATO, had rejected the American arguments for war. In the Arab world, Saddam Hussein’s regime was not widely supported, however, most observers believed that he had complied with the U.N. resolutions and that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction (a fact that was

¹⁶⁵ As a matter of fact, the U.S. used nuclear bombs against Japan in World War Two, deployed biological weapons in the Korean War, and used chemical weapons in the Vietnam War.

subsequently verified and acknowledged by the United States). The keyword “invasion” suggests the illegal presence of a hostile foreign army, and hence contradicts the Pentagon’s construction of the war as “liberation” and “Operation Iraqi Freedom”. Additionally within the Arab World, the invasion of Iraq and most particularly Baghdad brought to mind the sack of Baghdad in 1258. At that time, the Mongols led by Hulegu, grandson of Genghis Khan, massacred most of the city's inhabitants; a blow from which the Islamic civilization never fully recovered.

Another keyword used by Aljazeera was “fear.” Whereas on American television the Iraqi foe was demonised, the Qatar based channel emphasised Iraqi feelings of fear and anxiety in light of imminent military bombardment. Essentially, fear is a feeling that is heightened by a threat. Aljazeera addressed these feelings and thus helped Iraqis, who were demonized on American television, to regain their human dimension. Indeed, Aljazeera placed its reporters near the locations to be targeted. Despite their own apprehension, these reporters, in effect, identified with the predicament of the Iraqi population.

“Shock and Awe”

CNN also conveyed a sense of the human dimension, although this only happened for a short time. This outlook was evident when CNN interviewed by phone the independent journalist May Ying Welsh in Baghdad. She related how Iraqi civilians had expressed their fear and anxiety to her.¹⁶⁶ She also described how the bombs shook the foundations of targeted buildings, and confirmed that many civilians living nearby had been killed during “Decapitation Strike”.

May Ying Welsh (Freelancer, interviewed by phone):

It was a really terrifying experience, I can tell you. And also, I mean, none of these buildings are just standing there by themselves. Civilians do live around these buildings. There are residential pockets near all kinds of buildings that are targets in the city. So from the first two nights of the bombing, which were relatively light, they had 37 civilian casualties. I do not know what the civilian casualties are going to be like now (CNN, 21 March 2003).

¹⁶⁶ May Ying Welsh (Freelancer):

I was able to speak with a woman who lives in the apartment building next to me. She told me, she was absolutely terrified (CNN, 21 March 2003).

Welsh's comments contradicted the routine military claims of surgical and clinical bombings. These claims were later reinforced by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld when he declared that "Shock and Awe" was the most humane bombing in history. During the Department of Defence briefing on 21 March 2003, he stated that:

The targeting capabilities and the care that goes into targeting to see that the precise targets are struck and that other targets are not struck is as impressive as anything anyone could see. The care that goes into it, the humanity that goes into it, to see that military targets are destroyed, to be sure, but that it's done in a way, and in a manner, and in a direction and with a weapon that is appropriate to that very particularized target.¹⁶⁷

Another interesting theme was the emphasis upon spectacular warfare. As I have outlined, from the beginning, the military sold "Shock and Awe" as a spectacular and overwhelming display of military might which would destroy the will of the Iraqi side to fight. Researchers, such as Deborah Lynn Jaramillo (2006), argue that CNN and Fox News Channel positioned and packaged the 2003 U.S. led war on Iraq for a domestic audience. In this context, she contends that war developments were streamlined into a filmic product which linked together narrative, style, ideology and commercial profits. CNN and other American television news networks mimic Hollywood filmmaking techniques to offer audiences the same formulaic entertainment they get from movies and other prime-time programs.

During the 1991 Gulf War, the military had learned how to make their campaign a staged event for the major television networks. Thus, the American public knew through CNN that *Desert Storm* had begun before the Pentagon's formal announcement (Van Tuyl 2002: 234). In addition, the U.S. military info-warriors prepared, months in advance, the types of stories that would attract media coverage during the different phases of *Desert Storm*. Strategic frames emphasising the cleanliness and efficiency of the American hi-tech arsenal were given special preparation (Wolfsfeld 1997: 133).

The notion of the war-as-spectacle, which thrills and entertains people, does not require the involvement of the population at large in the actual war effort. Their role is to express patriotic feelings in their living rooms (Castells 2000: 486). This, of course, entails close military involvement in news production (a theatre of war in its own right). Millions of dollars are invested in imaging and neural technologies to produce a 'militarized form of the image'

¹⁶⁷ See Department of Defense News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld And Gen. Myers. 21 March 2003. The transcript can be found at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2074>

(Mirzoeff 2005: 73). Subsequently, the borderline between truth and reality, factual information and propaganda is blurred, while bloodless and hygienic images have shrunk the gap between real wars and virtual wars (Der Derian 2001: xviii).

During “Shock and Awe”, Wolf Blitzer and other anchors contributed to the war-as-spectacle. While bombs rained on Baghdad, Blitzer and his colleagues appeared jubilant, as if they were watching fireworks. The following comments show this orientation:

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

The bombardment of Baghdad. The U.S. blasts the city with deafening force. See how it unfolded on live television around the world (CNN, 21 March 2003 17:00 ET).

Wolf Blitzer (CNN anchor):

Here's a look at the bombing of Baghdad. Listen to this, Jamie. These are shots being fired now in Baghdad. I want our viewers to listen in (CNN, 21 March 2003 17:36 ET).

Bob Franken (CNN correspondent)

They are getting ready for an ear-shattering sound. Here comes another one (CNN, 21 March 2003 17:02 ET)

At the same time, the psychological warfare sub-frame was a built-in feature of CNN coverage. It occurred after anchors and military analysts alleged that Iraqi forces were in disarray, that their commanders were negotiating their general surrender, and that Saddam Hussein was hit. In fact, Pentagon officials encouraged these speculations to generate discord among Iraqi rulers and to weaken Saddam Hussein's authority.

During the 2003 War on Iraq, Michael Ryan, a former editor for *Time*, observed that ‘American media, essentially, have become an extension of the military psychological operations, with Rumsfeld hoping they can help to scare the daylights out of Iraq’ (Kumar 2006: 62). At CNN, the views and frames of the military institutions were also conveyed by former military commanders such as General Wesley Clark and retired Air Force General Don Shepperd. In addition, embedded journalists with coalition military units conveyed and reinforced military frames. For Clark S. Judge, one of the White House spin doctors, the whole concept of embedding ‘counts as the first major victory in the war in Iraq’ (Judge 2003: B2). It counted as a victory because embedded journalists ‘saturated the world's airwaves and

newspapers with reports of the division's exploits and experiences in combat' (Plenzler 2004: 261).

The problem with embedding was not simply that military officials might spread disinformation through embedded journalists, or that journalists might sing the praise of the military. As Todd Morman has observed, the main problem was that embeds had access to a narrow range of war news sources. Because the military controls the transportation of reporters, they cannot determine where they go, what they see, and what they report. Consequently, embedded journalists 'have no way to check the validity of the second-hand information they are being given by military officials.' In Morman's view, 'this can result in an unusually narrow view of what is really happening on the ground' (Morman 2003 [electronic article: no pagination]).

It is clear that Aljazeera's anchors could not bear to watch Baghdad being bombed so intensively. They and their reporters were imbued with deep pan-Arabist sensibilities, which tended to equate the bombing and invasion of Baghdad (a historic Arab city) with the desecration of an imagined sacral body. Hence, on many occasions during Aljazeera's coverage, an implied parallel was drawn between "Shock and Awe" and the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258. This parallel was also made by official Iraqi sources as well as by pundits invited to comment on other Arab media. This phenomenon has been compared by French sociologist Halbwachs with the process of retouching a painting, such that 'new images overlay the old' (Halbwachs 1952: 72).

As indicated in earlier chapters, the Middle East and North Africa have been shaped by Pan-Arabism; a form of cultural inter-nationalism that seeks to unify Arab peoples and nations. Pan-Arabism is classically opposed to colonialism and Western political interference in the Arab world. This ethos underpinned the coverage provided by Arab satellite news channels during the Iraq war. The prevailing perspective was that Arab sovereignty and heritage had been violated by the invasion of Iraq. Majed Abdelhadi (Aljazeera Correspondent in Baghdad) referred in his comments to "people praying in mosques". Likewise Adnan Charif (Aljazeera Anchor) uttered some Islamic prayers when the heavy aerial bombardment on Baghdad started.¹⁶⁸ This reveals how "Shock and Awe" was depicted as a catastrophe striking

¹⁶⁸ This reflects a process whereby people experience a state of crisis but then turn to God for the crisis to be resolved. This rhetoric is very powerful in the Middle East for religion is deeply rooted in the common consciousness.

Iraq. At one point, Aljazeera's Adnan Charif referred to American bombs as "weapons of mass destruction" because they had flattened whole Baghdad neighbourhoods. This war of words illustrated the fact that Aljazeera was challenging CNN's framing of the conflict. It shall be recalled that the War on Iraq was justified on the premise that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. By referring to the bombs and missiles used in "Shock and Awe" as "weapons of mass destruction", Aljazeera's anchors showed their rejection of the U.S. rationale for war (as well as the reproduction of this rationale on CNN and other television networks)

Visual analysis

The juxtaposed images at the start of this chapter were screened by CNN and Aljazeera on 21 March at 5p.m. ET/10p.m. GMT. They reveal the huge explosions that rocked Baghdad during the massive aerial assault. The footage also shows luminous traces of Iraqi anti-aircraft fire. Aljazeera's images were the most vivid and informative; they showed the impact of major explosions on the buildings. As the missiles and bombs landed, CNN often used Abu Dhabi television footage but the latter was not simply relayed; CNN edited the incoming images of bombardment in a fast paced way and seemed to use more images from distant cameras.

The bombardment was shown from various locations, and gave the audience wide shots of numerous explosions inter-cut with close-up visuals concerning the size, damage and combustion of the explosion. This editing style enabled the viewer to stay within the choreography of "Shock and Awe" and to track the full scale of the strike. Any footage that did not show spectacular bombing or conflagration was trimmed out. A dissolve¹⁶⁹ was used to link the dramatic news segments. The result was a vivid sequence of bombardment, exactly as underlined in the title of "Shock and Awe".

The CNN trailers played a similar role:

LARGE EXPLOSION ROCKS IRAQ'S CAPITAL AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT LIGHT UP
SKIES, AS LARGE-SCALE "A-DAY" BOMBARDMENT OF IRAQ GETS UNDERWAY
SHOTS BEING FIRED OVER BAGHDAD
PENTAGON: BEGINNING OF THE SHOCK AND AWE CAMPAIGN

¹⁶⁹ A dissolve is an editing technique in which a fade-in is superimposed on a fade-out. See: Mamer, B. (2008). *Film Production Technique: Creating the Accomplished Image* (5 ed.): Cengage Learning p.427.

“SHOCK AND AWE” UNDER WAY BOMBS FALLING ACROSS BAGHDAD BAGHDAD UNDER HEAVY BOMBARDMENT

On Aljazeera, numerous images showed the bombing of Baghdad. The huge sound of the explosions was amplified in the background. Multiple cameras revealed the impact of the bombardments from various positions in Baghdad. Aljazeera's control room regularly abstained from commentary, leaving the images to speak for themselves.

The massive bombardment shook the cameras many times. The images depicted massive conflagrations, smoke and fires around all the locations covered. It is also interesting to note that Aljazeera transmitted numerous publicity clips for its brand during these sequences. In one instance, a voice-over describes the professionalism of Aljazeera news channel and its up-to-the-minute coverage of the war in Iraq. Unlike CNN, such publicity did not focus on the character of the anchors or correspondents. The clip's visuals revealed planes firing, missiles dropping, explosions, targeted places, and U.S. soldiers.

In another instance, Aljazeera screened a video recording of Saddam subtitled in English: "Iraq has diligently implemented the 1441 resolution". Another publicity break contained poignant music accompanying the aerial bombardment, and the ensuing explosions and fires.

Keyword analysis

On CNN, certain keywords and phrases with military connotations were constantly repeated. These included 'precision-guided munitions' and 'smart bombs.' The missiles' supposed precision and the bombs' smartness were regularly emphasised by the Pentagon info-warriors and CNN coverage. Such coverage disseminated the myth of a “clean” war (in contrast to the old-style “dirty war” reminiscent of guerrilla battles in the Vietnam jungles). The rhetorical emphasis on precision bombing presumes “humane” destruction; even though, unacknowledged by info-warriors, the shells of some missiles were tipped with uranium contaminants.¹⁷⁰ The rhetoric of surgical strikes emanated from military and political elites who were also primary news sources. Indeed, in his news briefing shortly before "Shock and Awe", Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld pointed out that U.S. weaponry had “a degree

¹⁷⁰ During the conflict, numerous targets were hit by US A10 Thunderbolt aircraft, which are equipped with conventional missiles, but also with guns that fire rounds of depleted uranium (DU). The use of DU by coalition forces was confirmed by US Central Command on 26 March 2003. See: United Nations Environment Programme. (2003). Desk Study on the Environment in Iraq. Accessed on: 14 November 2009; http://www.unep.org/pdf/iraq_ds_lowres.pdf. (p.80-81)

of precision that no one dreamt of in a prior conflict.”¹⁷¹ But in contrast to the Western weaponry deemed “humane”, “surgical”, and “clinical”, the weaponry deployed by the Iraqis was characterised as wild, inefficient, disorderly, and irrational. For instance, Wolf Blitzer commented that the Iraqi anti-aircraft crews are ‘almost just shooting in the air in a wild fashion, hoping to get lucky and shoot down a plane’ (CNN, 21 March 2003).

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

During “Shock and Awe”, CNN anchors were directly inspired by the lexicon of sport. The wave of bombardment was described on CNN as “literally awesome,” “just amazing,” “awesome,” and a “fireworks show.” These words, which are normally used during the coverage of major sports events, were used on CNN to mobilise viewer identification. Although sport and politics had long been mixed together, this tendency intensified during the Bush administration. Academics Mark Falcoux and Michael Silk analysed the mediation of two major sporting events that took place in the first week of February 2002; the delayed National Football League (NFL) Super Bowl and the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics opening ceremony. They found out that sport in its mediated forms had become ‘embedded in the cultural politics of “post 9/11 America”.’ As a result, sports’ vocabulary was increasingly used to amplify the nationalist discourse. This discourse played a prominent role in reconstructing American identity through us versus them strategies (Falcoux & Silk 2005: 60, 63).

Furthermore, the use of sports terms is a highly efficient perception management tactic. Indeed, CNN journalists were able to manage spectators’ emotions in the face of images which revealed huge devastation. Judith Butler has stated that television news is about spectacle, what is seen as well as what is heard. Television news is also about what is ‘felt’ as well as what is ‘known’;

To produce what will constitute the public sphere [...], *it is necessary to control the way in which people see, how they hear, what they see*. The constraints are not only on content — certain images of dead bodies in Iraq, for instance, are considered unacceptable for public visual consumption — but on what ‘can’ be heard, read, seen, felt and known [emphasis added] (Butler 2004: xx).

¹⁷¹ This was mentioned during the abovementioned Department of Defense News Briefing on 21 March 2003. See: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2074>

In the context of “Shock and Awe”, the management of audience emotions was done by connecting this mortal environment with the terminology of sports (this conveyed the sense of intense competition devoid of human suffering or outrage). This exercise was made easier by the sanitised imagery which did not display the suffering of Iraqi civilians. To this end, CNN reiterated the humanitarian claim that the bombing would relieve Iraqis from the oppressive Hussein regime. This approach resolved a dilemma faced by the Pentagon, and observed by CNN Senior International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour. She declared in the period preceding the fall of Baghdad that ‘the coalition troops want to be seen as benefactors not just as bombers’ (CNN, 29 March 2003)¹⁷².

Other keywords employed during the conflagrations were “biblical” and “Armageddon.” These words reflected the impact of Christian Zionism on American media and politics. It shall be recalled that the neo-conservative movement is a natural ally of Christian Zionism, and representatives of both movements rose to prominence under the Bush presidency. Christian Zionists believe, as exemplified by Pastor John Hagee in his book *Jerusalem Countdown*, that a confrontation in the Middle East is a necessary precondition for the battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ. According to this prophesy, the United States must join Israel in a struggle against Middle Eastern nations to fulfil God's plan for both Israel and the West. So the use of these keywords during the coverage of “Shock and Awe” underlines the willingness of CNN to cue religious fervour for the Bush presidency's war agenda.

In contrast, as I have emphasised, Aljazeera used a different set of keywords and phrases. Instead of using “shock and awe”, Aljazeera's journalist Tawfiq Taha used the expression “Baghdad is burning” when bombs and missiles started falling on Baghdad. Aljazeera later used the by-line “Baghdad is burning” dozens of times in conjunction with images of devastation. The images of havoc, conflagrations and fire without aural accompaniment spoke for themselves.

On at least two occasions,¹⁷³ Aljazeera's anchors uttered religious phrases such as “*La hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaah*” (There is no movement nor power except by Allah's will). This is a common Muslim expression in the face of major difficulties. While this is a religious

¹⁷² Amanpour's quote revealed some of the contradictions which underpinned the Pentagon's framing of the conflict. On one hand, the military frame depicted the might of the U.S. war machine as in the bombardment of Iraqi cities. On the other hand, the humanitarian frame depicted American troops as benefactors helping the suffering Iraqis.

¹⁷³ This phrase was employed twice by Adnan Charif (Aljazeera Anchor) on 21 March 2003.

expression in essence, it is also part of non-religious parlance in the Muslim world. The employment of this phrase by Aljazeera's anchors conveys the feeling that a major catastrophe is happening. This feeling directly contrasts with CNN's euphoric depictions of "Shock and Awe" along with the "liberation" message the Bush administration wanted to be transmitted across the Middle East.

7.5- Conclusion

The 2003 Iraq War was undeniably an important chapter not only in the course of the Iraq War, but also in the Bush administration's "War on Terror" (in the name of security, democracy, freedom and human rights). The start of this war was depicted differently by CNN and Aljazeera. While CNN employed the military-inspired title "Decapitation Strike" for the war prologue, Aljazeera chose to frame the event as an "assassination attempt". CNN anchors and correspondents relayed the White House rationale for the attack, amidst speculative commentaries on the supposed locations of the Iraqi leadership. They also filled air-time with speculations that Saddam Hussein may have been hit. In addition, these speculations helped to construct a "need" for the bombing campaign to get underway. In contrast, Aljazeera anchors and correspondents denied that Saddam Hussein or any high ranked Iraqi official were hit during the first bombing. They downplayed the effectiveness of the first air strikes. They also hinted at their illegality by reminding viewers that the formal declaration of war was only issued once the raid was well under way. Therefore, the sequence was framed on Aljazeera as an "assassination attempt."

In the first hour of the subsequent, and much heavier, aerial bombardment, there was again a sharp juxtaposition in CNN and Aljazeera's coverage. For the former, the sequence was named "Shock and Awe"; a climactic event in a spectacular war. The bombing of Baghdad was choreographed as an enjoyable fireworks display. In this context, CNN adopted, for the most part, a pro-military perspective which promoted the objective of Iraqi liberation, and the might of American firepower. Yet, there was no emphasis on the ongoing human consequences of the aerial bombardment. In contrast, Aljazeera framed the sequence as "Baghdad is burning". This title was employed for hours at a time and was interspersed with footage of the ensuing destruction and civilian casualties. There were also moments of silence in Aljazeera's coverage, as the control room regularly abstained from commentary, leaving the images to speak for themselves; silence was considered a more powerful statement as this implied grief over the loss of civilian lives.

There was undeniably a clash of terminologies between CNN and Aljazeera. The following columns illustrate this:

<u>CNN's Terminology</u>	<u>Aljazeera's Terminology</u>
Operation Iraqi Freedom	Invasion of Iraq / War on Iraq
Decapitation Strike	Assassination attempt
Shock and Awe	Baghdad is burning
Liberation troops	Occupation troops
The Dictator / Saddam	President Saddam Hussein
Collateral damage	Carnage
Reconstruction of Iraq	Destruction of Iraq

In terms of deep frames, CNN's coverage reproduces the Orientalist frame which was particularly noticeable in Senator Joe Lieberman's statements. He boasted about the 'better way' and the 'better life' that America would offer to the Iraqis. Such remarks, combined with the liberation theme and the use of numerous rhetorical devices (e.g. the nation-as-person metaphor), underlined the supremacist perspective of the Orientalist frame. He presumed that the Orient would have no future, except if the civilised Occident defeated and dominated the Orient.

Aljazeera, on the other hand, employed primarily a pan-Arabist frame with elements of Occidentalism. This former frame considered the bombardment of the historic capital of Iraq as an assault on the common Arab heritage. The anchors and correspondents of the Qatar based channel emphasised the human cost of the war. They also referred to religion and prayers to highlight the terrifying experiences of Iraqi civilians. In one instance, Aljazeera anchor, Adnan Charif, directly challenged the Bush administration's rhetoric, describing the U.S. missiles as weapons of mass destruction.

The coverage of CNN also included elements of U.S. information warfare. The omnipresence of ex-Generals at the CNN control room in Atlanta effectively reproduced the militaristic discourse without scrutiny. CNN viewers were invited to identify with the Pentagon's military objectives whenever references were made about the lethality and precision of U.S. missiles as well as the courage of American troops. The Pentagon's info-war strategy also downplayed references to war casualties, preferring instead to talk of "liberation" and "re-construction". In contrast, Aljazeera's correspondents and guests emphasised the theme of resistance. For example, Diyar Al Omari (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad) referred to a battle in the

1991 Gulf War, in which Iraqi armoured divisions allegedly prevailed. Aljazeera anchors frequently asked their military analysts whether Iraq would be able to resist the coalition assault, in contrast to CNN for whom the outcome of the war was never in question.

Chapter 8

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8. Journalists as Combatants: the U.S. bombing of Aljazeera's office and the Palestine Hotel

This chapter examines how CNN and Aljazeera covered the U.S. bombing of the Palestine Hotel (8 April 2003 11:45 Baghdad time). In this regard, I explain how this story was shaped, linguistically and visually on each network. This story was the subject of contesting frames and different editorial priorities. On the one hand, the Qatar based channel considered the events in question to be a "black day in the history of journalism" because of the fatalities and casualties among reporters. On the other hand, the Atlanta based channel depicted these events as regrettable accidents. Eventually, they relegated this story to the status of being a vehicle for anti-war rhetoric.

8.1- Context and chronology

Significant events took place after "Shock and Awe" (21 March 2003) and prior to the 8 April bombings (described in this chapter). Although these events might seem unrelated, they reveal ongoing differences between CNN and Aljazeera's conception of wartime journalism. After "Shock and Awe," coalition forces asserted their control over key southern Iraqi cities. The heaviest battles took place on 23 March 2003 near the city of Nassiriya, a key crossing of the Euphrates River about 225 miles southeast of Baghdad. Marines battled Iraqi forces and suffered numerous casualties. Ten U.S. Marines were confirmed killed after they ran into an ambush. Footage of British and American soldiers wounded and killed by Iraqi forces emerged; five were shown as prisoners of war and at least four were shown dead in what appeared to be a hospital room. The footage was shown first on Iraqi state television and then relayed by Aljazeera on 23 March 2003¹⁷⁴. The U.S. military acknowledged that twelve mechanics were missing.

¹⁷⁴ Aljazeera aired a thirty-second video of exuberant Iraqis celebrating over the corpses of two dead British servicemen. The anchor apologised for the 'horrific' pictures, explaining that 'it is in the interests of objectivity that we bring them to you.' Aljazeera's Editor-in-chief, Ibrahim Hilal later explained to the BBC the Arabic Channel's editorial policy: 'Once we get a bit of information, we have to tell the whole world what is really

Nonetheless, coalition forces continued their advance from the south into Najaf and from the southwest into Karbala. The latter city witnessed an intense battle, following which one U.S. Apache helicopter was captured, along with its two crew members. These events were reported by Aljazeera on 24 March. Aljazeera also reported on the same day that another American helicopter had been destroyed and that other coalition helicopters had come under heavy fire, with only two of them managing to achieve their objectives.

Evidence of Iraqi resistance contradicted the U.S. military's promises of a swift and painless victory march into Baghdad. Therefore, the Pentagon's info-warriors had to rethink their Psyops strategy. The supposed ordeal of 19-year-old private Jessica Lynch became their major coup. On 23 March, she was travelling with the Army's 507th Maintenance Company when the convoy was ambushed after taking a wrong direction. After being injured in her legs and spine, Lynch was taken prisoner. Five of her comrades were also captured but held in separate locations. During the same ambush, eleven soldiers were killed. On 1 April, U.S. Special Forces decided to rescue Private Lynch from the Iraqi hospital where she was being treated for her wounds. After the success of this operation, reporters were briefed at Centcom in Doha on the dramatic saga of Lynch's rescue.

The Pentagon turned this story into a stunning piece of news management.¹⁷⁵ Jessica Lynch was portrayed as a "little girl Rambo," firing her gun down to the last bullet before being captured. She was then allegedly captured and "tortured" by the Iraqis, only to be saved by a videoed commando type operation showing Jessica Lynch, draped in a U.S. flag, being taken away in a helicopter (Compton 2004: 24 - 29). This compelling story featuring her ambush, alleged heroic resistance, and ultimate rescue became a major publicity exercise for the Pentagon.¹⁷⁶ Michael Getler, from *The Washington Post*, commented on the sensationalized aspects of the story:

going on inside this war even if it is horrible because this is part of our transparent job. What we are doing is showing the reality. We didn't invent the bodies; we didn't make them in the graphics unit. They are shots coming in from the field. This is the war.'

For more on this, see: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/correspondent/3047501.stm>

¹⁷⁵ In contrast to story allegations put forward by the Pentagon's info-warriors, Jessica Lynch was simply injured in a traffic accident. Her gun jammed and she never used it. Later, she was taken to an Iraqi hospital where she received care and was never subjected to torture. The doctor treating her was the one calling U.S. authorities to let them know about her status and location. He also informed them that there were no Iraqi soldiers around.

¹⁷⁶ Seven months after the rescue story broke, *Saving Jessica Lynch*, a movie based on Lynch's ordeal was aired on NBC. Its title referred to the 1998 Steven Spielberg film, *Saving Private Ryan*, an all-time blockbuster. The November 9, 2003 broadcast of *Saving Jessica Lynch* attracted a total audience of 14.9 million, ranking it 16th

Her rescue, filmed by the military and shown on television, came at a crucial time in the U.S. offensive. It seemed to give everyone a lift. The follow-up [Washington] Post exclusive about her actions and ordeal was a powerful additional element at the time. People remember that story (Getler 2003:10).

American networks eagerly embraced the story. On 2 April, CNN's Paula Zahn named the raid "Saving Private Lynch," evoking parallels with Spielberg's movie. The brief footage of American soldiers carrying Lynch to safety was aired ad infinitum. CNN used graphic design and computer animation to simulate how the rescue might have happened. The Jessica Lynch story was designed to boost domestic morale in the United States. European and Middle Eastern audiences remained sceptical. In fact, Aljazeera and other Arab media allocated only limited coverage; and after corroborating the Iraqi side of the story, including the medical staff that treated Jessica Lynch, they concluded that the American reportage was false.

At the same time, American forces encountered fierce fighting from small units of the Iraqi Republican Guard even on the outskirts of Baghdad (2 April 2003). In the south, coalition troops encountered heavy resistance which delayed their progress. To the surprise of Pentagon planners, Iraqi forces stationed in localities such as Umm Qasr, Basra, and Nassiriya fought staunchly. Consequently, there was a halt in the offensive, supply lines were stretched and coalition forces sustained numerous casualties. At this juncture, the Pentagon reshaped prevailing news narratives. Notwithstanding the Jessica Lynch coverage, televised images of U.S. prisoners of war (POWs) and dead soldiers (shown on Iraqi National Television and Aljazeera) replaced the euphoria of "shock and awe". Journalists started to question the military planning¹⁷⁷, as this turn of events contrasted with the original promises of Pentagon officials that the Iraq campaign would be a "cakewalk"¹⁷⁸.

At this point, the international news media were openly speculating about the prospect of urban warfare inside Baghdad (especially once U.S. forces took control of Saddam International Airport on 3 April). With the presence of hundreds of journalists in Baghdad, the

among the top twenty over-the-air television programs for that week (Entertainment Weekly 21 November 2003).

¹⁷⁷ In a *Washington Post* article titled "Clashes at Key River Crossing Bring Heaviest Day of American Casualties," questions were asked about the adequacy of the Pentagon strategies for this campaign. (Glasser & Chandrasekaran 2003: A1). Similarly, CBS Pentagon correspondent David Martin stated on 1 April 2003: 'There's beginning to be a credibility gap between what officials here in the Pentagon are saying about the progress of the war and what commanders in the field are saying.'

¹⁷⁸ In an article for the *Washington Post* titled "Cakewalk in Iraq," Kenneth Adelman, a national security official who served on the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board, promised that the invasion of Iraq would represent no problems for U.S. forces (Adelman 2002: A27).

Pentagon was fearful of a long lasting siege¹⁷⁹, which would turn the war into a quagmire for U.S. troops. This fear was heightened by international media, which occasionally voiced criticism concerning civilian casualties.¹⁸⁰ Against this background, Arab media continued to show stark footage of property destruction and wounded children. Arab journalists also interviewed Iraqi officials, such as Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, whose perspective on events challenged the American narrative.

On Tuesday 8 April 2003, at about 6.30 a.m. (Baghdad Time)¹⁸¹ two American air-to-surface missiles hit Aljazeera's office in Baghdad. Reporter Tareq Ayyoob was killed and a cameraman wounded. Surviving Aljazeera staff sought refuge at the adjacent villa of Arab satellite channel Abu Dhabi TV, which then came under U.S. attack less than 15 minutes afterwards.¹⁸² On the same day (8 April 2003), at about 11:45 a.m. (Baghdad Time) [3.45 a.m. ET], a U.S. army tank fired into the 15th floor of the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad, (where almost all foreign journalists were based), killing two cameramen and wounding three media workers.

These events occurred just as U.S. troops were attempting to control Baghdad. The military hierarchy would have been nervous about the prospect of negative coverage undermining their information management. The Pentagon was still experiencing the “Vietnam Syndrome;” the belief that unpatriotic coverage contributed to military loss. Acknowledgement of these matters leads to the realisation that journalists and media outlets are themselves military targets. The numerous difficulties and dangers experienced by "unilateral" journalists during the Iraq conflict, combined with the practice of embedding journalists with coalition troops, exemplify the information warfare paradigm. Embedded journalists are aligned with official military discourse at the same time as the communications and information systems of the "enemy" have to be destroyed (Van Ham 2003: 440).

¹⁷⁹ For example, Michael R. Gordon wrote an article for the *New York Times* titled “Goal of U.S.: Avoid a Siege.” In this article, he quoted an unnamed high-ranked Pentagon official as saying: ‘The enemy is taking what forces he can muster and is ordering them back into the city. He is bringing in the Republican Guard for a last stand. We have been trying to kill anything that is moving toward the city. We don't want a big siege at the end of this’ (Gordon 2003)

¹⁸⁰ For example, Jo Wilding wrote an article for *The Guardian* titled “Too many civilian casualties” in which she expressed criticism of the mounting civilian casualties as the result of U.S. bombardment (Wilding 29 March 2003).

¹⁸¹ This corresponded to 10:30 p.m. ET (the day before).

¹⁸² Abu Dhabi TV correspondent Shaker Hamed broadcast an emergency call for help: “25 journalists and technicians belonging to Abu Dhabi TV and Aljazeera are surrounded in the offices of Abu Dhabi TV in Baghdad.” Hamed appealed on air to the Red Cross, the International Organization of Journalists, Reporters Sans Frontieres, and the Arab Journalists Union “to intervene quickly to pull us out of this zone where missiles and shells are striking in an unbelievable way” (Foerstel 2006: 98).

8.2 - Story establishments

Notwithstanding CNN trailers, the first CNN anchor to report about the events in question was Carol Costello. This happened on 8 April 2003 at (8 April 2003 5:00 a.m. E.T.).

Carol Costello (CNN Anchor):

Parts of central Baghdad erupted into an urban battlefield early today with U.S. tanks and war planes taking on a high rise government building along the Tigris River. One of Aljazeera's television reporters was killed by an air strike and a cameraman for Abu Dhabi Television narrowly escaped injury when his location was targeted (8 April 2003).

Then, Carol Costello (CNN Anchor) reviewed some skirmishes involving U.S. Marines in southeast Baghdad. She also made reference to air raids conducted in Baghdad against a presumed hideout of Saddam Hussein. She also talked about video released by the Pentagon about an air raid against Iraqi leaders in Basra, including the home of an Iraqi General. After that, Anchor Carol Costello returned to the main story of the day.

Carol Costello (CNN Anchor):

The Arab television station Aljazeera says one of its journalists was killed when a U.S. air strike hit a Baghdad building housing Arab media. The journalist, identified as Tareq Ayyoub, was carried away from the wreckage in a blanket. Another Aljazeera journalist was injured in the blast. The Pentagon denies it was targeting Aljazeera.

The Palestine Hotel in downtown Baghdad came under fire, too, today. We have reports now a Spanish reporter was killed. The hotel is known primarily as the home base for many international journalists remaining in the city. Several other journalists were wounded by what appears to be a shell hitting the 15th floor. The source of this fire is not yet known (8 April 2003 5:04 a.m. E.T.).

In spite of the extreme newsworthiness of these events, CNN chose to air in full Private Jessica Lynch's reunification with her family at a news conference in Landstuhl, Germany. This took about 45 minutes. Subsequently, CNN gave airtime to Rym Brahimi their correspondent in Amman (Jordan) to get more information on the aforementioned incidents. Rym expressed her sadness regarding the turn of events.

Rym Brahimi (CNN Correspondent in Jordan):

Carol, this is a very sad day for us in the journalistic community. Two journalists have been killed. I was talking, indeed, to somebody who was just at The Palestine Hotel literally minutes before this hit against The Palestine Hotel, hit the 15th floor of the building, where the Reuters journalists had an office (CNN 8 April 2003).

She went on to describe the events and advanced the possibility that the firing had come from a tank (possibly two tanks) advancing on the Al-Jumhuriya Bridge. She then mentioned the possibility that there might have been an exchange of fire between the tanks and buildings in the vicinity of the Palestine Hotel.

Rym Brahimi (CNN Correspondent in Jordan):

There's been an exchange of fire between those tanks and some buildings across the river from there. It's possible that one of these tanks may have been the one to hit the Palestine Hotel (CNN, 8 April 2003).

Then, Rym Brahimi went on to talk about the bombing of Aljazeera's bureau, acknowledging that the deceased journalist, Tareq Ayyoub, had worked for CNN at some point, and that she knew him personally. She described him as a 'very hard working, extremely helpful colleague.' Afterwards, Rym Brahimi was pressed by CNN anchor Carol Costello to endorse the official version of the incidents.

Carol Costello (CNN Anchor):

Let's go back to The Palestine Hotel, because government sources say the media certainly is not being targeted. But we do understand that someone saw snipers on the roof and maybe that's why this explosion occurred.

Rym Brahimi (CNN Correspondent in Jordan):

I can't comment on that. I don't know, I can't say whether or not that is accurate. I know that from the beginning The Palestine Hotel, from the beginning of the war, was the hotel where all the journalists were staying. There were very few journalists -- in fact, I don't know of any journalists who at the eve of the war, when the war began, were still anywhere else but at the Palestine Hotel (CNN, 8 April 2003).

Military spokespeople offered conflicting accounts of the incident; shortly after the attack on the Palestine Hotel, a CNN trailer quoted the Third Infantry Division's Commander, General Bouford Blount, as saying their tank had come under sniper fire from the hotel roof. Thus, the tank had fired at the source of the shooting. Then, Brigadier General Vince Brooks made the following statement at CENTCOM, Qatar a news conference (covered by CNN at about 7:15 a.m. ET):

Brigadier General Vince Brooks (Deputy Director of Operations - CENTCOM):

Initial reports indicate that the Coalition force operating near the hotel took fire from the lobby of the hotel and returned fire and any loss of life, civilian loss of life or unintended consequences, again, we find most unfortunate and also undesirable (CNN, 8 April 2003).

But Brooks' explanation was met with scepticism by journalists present at the news conference, as is revealed in the following exchange:

Geoff Mead (CNN Guest; Sky News Correspondent):

If I can continue on the point you made there. If you're claiming the fire was coming from the lobby of the Palestine Hotel, why was the tank round directed at an upper floor? And what does that kind of marksmanship, or lack of it, suggest about the risks to civilians as your forces penetrate further into Baghdad?

Brigadier General Vince Brooks (Deputy Director of Operations - CENTCOM):

The response of fire is something that we always have to get more details as time goes on, first, specifically, where the fire was returned and what was hit and where the fire came from. So I may have misspoken on exactly where the fire came from (CNN, 8 April 2003).

However, this version of events was disputed by journalists present at the news conference. They insisted that no gunfire had come from the hotel lobby, or from the hotel's surroundings. Brigadier General Brooks then stated:

Brigadier General Vince Brooks (Deputy Director of Operations - CENTCOM):

The action occurs when the action occurs – and everything thereafter is speculative or investigative (CNN, 8 April 2003).

Aljazeera chose to investigate the Palestine Hotel events by giving airtime to journalists who were there. The correspondents questioned the veracity of the U.S. military's declarations. For instance, Spanish journalist Carlos Hernandez maintained that there had been no hostile fire against American tanks, either from the hotel, or from its environs. Another journalist, David Chatter, noted that more than 1,500 meters separated the Palestine Hotel from coalition tanks on the bridge; far beyond the effective range of a rifle or a rocket-propelled grenade launcher. Other correspondents highlighted the military capacities and resilience of the Abrams Tank. They also stated that combat in the vicinity of the Palestine Hotel had ended two hours before the tank had fired. Crucially, Aljazeera aired camera footage shot by journalists inside the hotel immediately after the attack. This footage showed images of Reuter's Taras Protsyuk,

and Telecinco's Jose Couso covered in blood, along with other wounded journalists screaming for help.

8.3- Bombings aftermath: news events, feedback loops and the battle over meanings

On 8 April, the dominant theme of Aljazeera's coverage was that journalists had become targets in war. In this context, the meso-frame that predominated was that of the aggrieved victim. Aljazeera described the death of its correspondent as the latest in a long history of attacks against the channel beginning with the Afghan campaign (in which Aljazeera's office was also bombed). In Iraq, one of its cars had come under attack by U.S. forces only two days before. And, two months prior to the attack Aljazeera had given the location of its Baghdad office to the US military.¹⁸³

The U.S. bombing of Aljazeera's premises and the shelling of the Palestine Hotel, where most un-embedded foreign journalists were staying, persuaded the network that journalists were being deliberately targeted. Against this backdrop, Aljazeera reported at about 1.35 p.m. (Baghdad Time) what veteran BBC correspondent Kate Adie had been told by a senior Pentagon official before the war; that the military would not hesitate to target any broadcast satellite links, even if they belonged to journalists. In the same context, Aljazeera aired statements by U.S. Admiral Craig Quigley, to the effect that the Pentagon was indifferent to media activity in enemy controlled territory. Aljazeera also informed viewers that in the early days of the conflict, they had been asked by the Pentagon to remove correspondents from Baghdad. In subsequent news segments, the Qatar based channel aired footage from the French TV channel, France 3, which had filmed the U.S. tank aiming and firing at the Palestine Hotel. The footage gave support to the view that there was no shooting coming from the Palestine Hotel. Aljazeera's anchor and correspondents thereby argued that the tank fire was intended to curtail media scrutiny of military operations in Iraq. Consequently, as I have

¹⁸³ Omar Al Issawi (Aljazeera Correspondent):

'What we know for sure is that two months ago, Aljazeera communicated to the Department of Defense the exact GPS coordinates of our bureau in Baghdad...the letter was addressed from our managing director to Victoria Clarke at the Department of Defense' (CNN, 8 April 2003).

outlined, Aljazeera's main news theme for this day was "a black day in the history of journalism".¹⁸⁴

On 8 April (5 a.m. ET/ 9 a.m. GMT), Aljazeera's anchor Jumana Namur mentioned the bombing of the Abu Dhabi TV office, and the death of Western journalists after their hotel was bombed. She added that American tanks had reached the centre of Baghdad and bombed government buildings and civilian neighbourhoods. She also referred to the incidents that happened five hours earlier, in which the Aljazeera bureau was targeted. She made reference to the "martyrdom" of Tareq Ayyoub, the correspondent in Baghdad. She also stated that Aljazeera's cameraman Zouhair Nadhim had been wounded in the same incident.

In the meantime, the meso-frame which dominated CNN's 8 April coverage was that of the accident. But CNN faced a problem with this understanding of events. The view that the attacks on Aljazeera and the Palestine Hotel were deliberate pervaded international news coverage. So instead of investigating the incident, CNN reviewed what international media had said about it. In the heated atmosphere leading to the Iraq war, there was huge resentment in the United States concerning the sceptical position of countries such as France, Germany and Russia. By highlighting what the media of these countries said about the incident, CNN insinuated that these media were biased because of their governments' stance toward the Iraq war itself. CNN also interviewed an Arab media editor to get the Arab perspective on the matter. But overall, instead of analysing the issue and factually allocating responsibility, the incident was framed as a mishap which was being used by anti-war quarters as rhetorical ammunition against the United States. The following comment from Anchor Aaron Brown illustrates the position adopted by CNN:

Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor):

When you ask the question how is the war being fought, the answer often depends on what channel you're watching and where in the world you are watching it. And today, the big story, it was a huge story around the world, was the loss of innocent life in Baghdad, not just the civilians. This time, of course, it was journalists as well (CNN, 8 April 2003).

The fact that CNN Correspondent Bruce Burkhart responded to this question by highlighting the nationality of the people (Russia, France, Germany, Arab) whose opinions were about to

¹⁸⁴ This was the title of the first news item on Aljazeera after the shelling of the Palestine Hotel (8 April 2003 12:00 Baghdad Time). Aljazeera Anchor Jumana Namur was the first to use it. The title was used in subsequent news segments all day long.

be beamed, suggests an attempt to discredit these opinions in advance for carrying an anti-war bias. Burkhart also made sure to emphasise the Pentagon's view that the passage of events represented a loss in the "propaganda war":

Bruce Burkhart (CNN Correspondent):

It was the story in much of the world today, not the targeting of Saddam Hussein, but the alleged targeting of journalists. This Russian anchor starts the newscast by saying "here is the most important event at this hour, which will be the major topic of our program, an American tank shot at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad where the journalists are staying." And a few moments later, in introducing their reporter in Baghdad, "an American tank took dead aim at the Baghdad hotel where journalists are staying." The Russian reporter said he was only one floor away from the explosion and gave a detailed account of the chaos and the carnage in the hotel and added this. "I want to point out that this was not the first strike against journalists today the Americans have probably carried out. This is only the latest which we saw with our own eyes. This morning, we learned that America carried out an air strike against the offices of Al-Jazeera." And then, there was more. An interview with Al-Jazeera's Moscow bureau chief; a profile of a Ukrainian cameraman who died in the mishap; the view in France was much the same. Here, the anchor says a building that has been deliberately targeted by a U.S. tank, when everyone knows that only journalists were staying at this hotel. And in Baghdad, the reporter had this account. "On this balcony, a couple of moments before, a cameraman was filming a tank on the Liberty Bridge. And this tank, here it is, right at the moment it aims at the hotel...From China's CCTV, the English language newscast, a much more subdued reaction. That seems to be consistent with what we've seen there since the war began.

Voiceover (images of the Palestine Hotel):

The Pentagon said Iraqi snipers were believed to be operating near the Palestine Hotel, where the full Reuters staff were injured after a blast to strike an upper floor of the high rise. The Pentagon said it could not say if U.S. troops were responsible for the blasts.

Bruce Burkhart (CNN Correspondent):

But in Germany, as in Russia and France, viewers got this view of the story. A reporter described how the hotel was occupied by most of the journalists and how everyone knew that. And then said, "why was the building fired on anyway?" This is how the military explained it. "We only returned the fire that was coming from the lobby of the hotel," the translator quotes General Brooks. Then the reporter adds, "Why then, of all things, was the 15th floor hit?" That remains unclear. *In the propaganda war being fought on TVs across*

the globe, this one has to go down as a loss for the U.S. (CNN, 8 April 2003; emphasis added)

Then CNN's anchor Aaron Brown questioned Abu Dhabi's TV chief news editor, Nart Bouran in an attempt to suggest that there was no clear-cut evidence that the U.S. Forces had deliberately attempted to target the hotel. Brown sought to elicit the view that these events reflected an anti-Americanism that was deeply entrenched among Arab audiences.

Aaron Brown (CNN Anchor):

Nart, let me ask this question in two parts. Try and answer both. Do you believe that the Americans deliberately targeted journalists, part one, and do you think your viewers believe that Americans deliberately targeted journalists?

Nart Bouran did his best to answer these delicate questions, but having the earlier attack on Abu Dhabi TV taped on video¹⁸⁵, the issue then became more than just a matter of opinion. The images reveal the surroundings of the Abu Dhabi TV villa/office just prior to the attack. The situation seemed quiet until the tank fired in direction of the hotel.

Nart Bouran (Abu Dhabi's TV chief news editor)

Our correspondent was on the -- just a couple of minutes on the roof, reporting to us live. And there was nothing happening there. We know the office. There's nothing there. And then, all of a sudden, we felt the small arms fire coming at us. And then from the tank, directly, because we'd have that all on camera. And then, they ran downstairs. There was nothing around us to indicate that there was anything suspicious going around us. Otherwise, how could all of our correspondents be on the roof reporting at the time? As far as the other question is concerned, I think it's very difficult to convince people that this was not a deliberate act against journalists in that area. I think it's going to be very, very difficult.

Even then, Aaron Brown tried to cast doubt on this testimony and to reframe the issue in terms of soldier nervousness:

Is it not a reasonable explanation that these tank commanders and soldiers on the ground see activity on the roof? They're nervous. They think sniper. And they take action?

¹⁸⁵ The attack on the Abu Dhabi TV premises took place at about the same time as the attack on Aljazeera. At first, surviving Aljazeera staff sought refuge at the adjacent villa of Abu Dhabi TV, which then came under U.S. attack

Nart Bouran replied to these suppositions by emphasising that the locations of the correspondents were known to the whole world, and the “accident” perspective was not really plausible:

Nart Bouran (Abu Dhabi's TV chief news editor):

Yes, I guess the answer to that is yes and no. Because you can see our cameras. I mean, literally, our camera was targeted straight into the camera. We have been operating there for two and half years. This is not like it is a secret location. Everybody knew where we were. We've been broadcasting those live pictures to the whole world during the last almost three weeks now. I would assume anyone going to that kind of an operation in that kind of an area with all these position targeting smart bombs, and hitting specifically rooms where they think that people are -- that they would know that this is an Abu Dhabi TV and Aljazeera TV. And to be perfectly honest, in that vicinity, nothing else was hit except those two offices (CNN 8 April 2003).

On Aljazeera, the aggrieved victim frame was reinforced by the constantly reiterated theme “black day in the history of journalism”. This theme represented an opportunity for the network to openly criticise the coalition. This was done by using the footage of Abu Dhabi Television (Aljazeera’s bureau having been bombed). This footage depicted the three attacks (Aljazeera, Abu Dhabi TV and the Palestine Hotel), while the voice-over of Diyar Al-Omari commented as follows:

Voiceover, Diyar Al Omari (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

A lot of questions behind the targeting by American and British forces of Arab and Western media: Why this targeting and who benefits from it? The first strike was directed against the office of Aljazeera situated in the Dijla River in the middle of Baghdad. American and British tanks bombed the perimeters of the office, which led to the martyrdom of our fellow Tareq Ayyoub, and to the injury of many other workers in the office. The second strike was directed against the office of Abu Dhabi TV, which is situated near Aljazeera’s office and which was surrounded by American forces. The third strike was directed against the Palestine Hotel, where all foreign journalists work, resulting in serious casualties especially the cameraman working with Reuters who was filming the bombing of Aljazeera office. Observers consider that these strikes targeted neutral media as they reported the war events. These objective media are now put in a situation of confrontation, where they face dangerous weapons in the absence of any reason. The search for a safe place becomes a hard task for the media, as the American and British forces do not differentiate anymore

between targets, so everyone here is exposed to missiles that could be launched at any time (Aljazeera, 8 April 2003).

Then, Aljazeera broadcasted the last report of Tareq Ayyoub, transmitted two hours before his death. He is shown facing the camera and wearing a helmet and a bullet-proof jacket. Ayyoub can be seen hiding from the bombardment, drawn, and scared by what is happening around him. His eyes tremble and his face expresses helplessness. During this time, Tareq Ayyoub reported that there had been a strange silence prevalent in Baghdad, in contrast to previous days.

Tareq Ayyoub (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

Is it the silence that comes before the storm? Or have the protagonists decided to give each other some time? Nobody knows the reason behind this silence. We were expecting the renewal of these clashes tonight in the earlier hours but until now there are no explosions as we have seen in the previous days, or like what happened yesterday in the morning when there was an active air force activity, explosions, and anti-aircraft gunfire... (Aljazeera 8 April 2003)

Tareq Ayyoub went on to speculate that both Americans and Iraqi forces were playing a waiting game and that the spirit of resistance among Iraqis was still high. He said:

Tareq Ayyoub (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

Sadness prevails among the historic capital. Feelings of anxiety reign among people here after waves of incessant bombardment. The latter failed however to soften their determination. Tareq Ayyoub Aljazeera, Baghdad (Aljazeera, 8 April 2003).

Afterwards, Aljazeera showed the footage of other journalists wearing bullet-proof jackets with clear bolded inscriptions showing their media status. They were filmed while carrying a victim of the war. We later understand from the commentary that it was Tareq Ayyoub. The location looked chaotic and covered by smoke.

Then, to get more information, Aljazeera's newsroom turned to its Baghdad correspondent Majed Abdel Hadi, who called the U.S. missile strike and Ayyoub's death a "crime." visibly upset, he added:

Majed Abdel Hadi (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

I will not be objective about this because we have been dragged into this conflict... We were targeted because the Americans do not want the world to see the crimes they are committing against the Iraqi people (Aljazeera, 8 April 2003).

Because Aljazeera's bureau was destroyed it relied on the footage from other channels such as Abu Dhabi TV. The latter showed images of a huge fire blazing from the Aljazeera office. Aljazeera correspondent Tayseer Alouni, who became known while covering the Afghan War, was seen carrying the wounded Ayyoub into a car. Maher Abdullah, another correspondent, recalled the bombing of the Aljazeera bureau:

Maher Abdullah (Aljazeera correspondent in Baghdad):

One missile hit the pavement in front of us, ripping out windows and doors, while another one hit the generator (Aljazeera, 8 April 2003).

Then, Aljazeera turned to a media conference headed by Jihad Ali Ballout, a spokesman for the channel. He communicated to the international media what had happened in Baghdad. Jihad Ali Ballout said that Tareq Ayyoub, a Jordanian national was standing on the roof of the station's office just after dawn, transmitting a live broadcast from Baghdad when the building was hit by two missiles. Mr. Ayyoub, in his mid-30s, was carried to a car by colleagues but died on the way to the hospital. Jihad Ali Ballout also said that An Iraqi cameraman, Zouhair Al-Iraqi, who had started work with the station several days previously, was wounded.

Afterwards, Aljazeera went live to Amman in Jordan to get the reaction of Tareq Ayyoub's wife. Visibly devastated, she stated the following:

Dima Tahboub (widow of Aljazeera journalist Tareq Ayyoub):

My husband died while trying to reveal the truth to the world, please do not conceal this fact under no circumstances: not for the sake of public opinion, not for the sake of American policy, not for the sake of British policy. Please be honest at least this time. For the sake of all those people who died: Innocent people, not military, not militia, not people in the army. Please tell the truth only this once. Thank you very much (Aljazeera, 8 April 2003).

Aljazeera also broadcast the memorial service of Tareq Ayyoub in his house in Amman. His family was present, including his mother, and daughter, as well as other family members and friends. Then, footage of the Aljazeera office in Amman, where he was working, was shown. Feelings of sadness and anger were clearly prevalent among the attendance. Then, Aljazeera

showed a march of Jordanian journalists protesting against the death of Tareq Ayyoub. Some of the protesters were filmed holding the picture of Bush wearing a Nazi uniform with a Swastika in the background. Finally, a testimony from Yasir Abou Hilala, Aljazeera's Bureau Chief in Amman, was aired. Yasir mourned his former colleague, praising his professionalism and courage.

8.4- Discussion and Critique

On CNN, visual imagery in relation to the three main incidents was relatively rare. Mostly, footage was taken from other international TV stations (e.g. Russian TV, Chinese TV), but this was not the main focus. Instead, CNN emphasised studio discussions and press conferences involving the U.S. military, yet they still omitted visuals of the incident itself. In contrast, Aljazeera used plenty of imagery (after the bombing this included footage supplied by Abu Dhabi TV). This contrast is revealed in the juxtaposition of images on the first page of this chapter. The images show footage of Aljazeera and CNN on 8 April 2003 at 5 a.m. ET/ 9 a.m. GMT. The juxtaposition reveals that Aljazeera provides live pictures of the attack against its premises (using footage from Abu Dhabi TV), whereas CNN at this stage used a trailer to inform viewers about the incident.

It should be noted that Aljazeera tried to provide a comprehensive coverage on the attack against its Baghdad bureau. They provided a constant flow of images about the incident. Images of an American plane flying down in a firing position, dropping missiles and several bombs on its office were broadcast. Footage also showed a close-up of the Tigris River and the nearby Aljazeera office being targeted. The explosions that rocked the office were heard in the background, while smoke was seen emanating from the location. There were additional images showing an American tank firing at the surroundings of the Aljazeera office. Next, Aljazeera aired footage of its correspondents and staff carrying the body of Tariq Ayyoob (see image below).

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Later, Aljazeera made sure to re-broadcast Ayyoob's most recent report as a way to commemorate his memory (see image below).

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The source of Aljazeera's footage was Abu Dhabi TV. When Aljazeera's Baghdad bureau was hit, the latter recorded the immediate aftermath of the strike; however its camera operator became a target soon afterwards. Subsequently, footage showed the camera losing balance, while the plane zeroed in the direction of its position, launching a couple of missiles.

When the ensuing attack on the Palestine Hotel took place, Aljazeera aired footage showing an American tank on the Republic Bridge, near one of the presidential palaces, firing several times towards the Palestine hotel (see image below). It was a wide shot that shows the tank and the targeted hotel. The film was obtained by Aljazeera from French Television (France 3), whose journalist was caught in the crossfire.

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Afterwards, Aljazeera showed footage from inside the Palestine Hotel; panic stricken international journalists were shown inside their offices. A Ukrainian journalist, working for Reuters, was severely injured, while another journalist was wounded. The scene was bloody. Next, a female journalist was filmed shouting, as other people in the scene were trying to rescue the injured journalists.

In terms of keywords, Aljazeera often referred to the phrase "black day in the history of journalism". For Aljazeera, the fact that various international media were the victims of the coalition forces on the same day represented a transgression of the law of warfare. In their view, U.S. forces had identified Aljazeera as an enemy propaganda station which was transmitting disturbing accounts of Iraqi civilian casualties to a wide Arab audience. In this context, however, the bombing of the Palestine Hotel was counter-productive. Aljazeera was able to claim "victim status" and to attract the sympathy of international journalists and human rights groups. For instance, the watchdog group Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) demanded an investigation. In a letter to the U.S. Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, the group stated that the attacks on correspondents violated the Geneva Conventions (Knightley 2003: 11).

Another keyword used by Aljazeera was martyrdom. In Islamic jurisprudence, the martyr commits sacrifice for the sake of his or her community's survival. As a result, the martyr attracts admiration from the community and may expect substantial rewards in the afterlife. The fact that Aljazeera presented this title to one of its journalists added a sacred dimension. The Arab network then became more than a standard news outlet; it was a symbol of resistance for all journalists targeted by bombs and missiles in defence of their community.

By contrast, CNN Correspondent Bruce Burkhart employed the 'propaganda war' theme. In one sense, this was a striking admission. In American popular culture, as in academia, propaganda was usually regarded with disapproval. Academics, Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell have observed that 'to identify a message as propaganda is to suggest something negative and dishonest. Words frequently used as synonyms for propaganda are lies, distortion, deceit, manipulation, mind control psychological warfare, brainwashing, and palaver' (Jowett and O'Donnell 1999: 6). From this perspective, only totalitarian enemies – not democratic forces – were capable of resorting to propaganda. Yet, Burkhart depicted the United States as being implicated in, and losing, the propaganda war.

Rhetorically, CNN downplayed the bombing incidents, which had led to the death of three international journalists. These fatalities were considered as merely another accident resulting from the 'fog of war'¹⁸⁶. Subsequently, CNN allocated less than half an hour to the story. Commentaries and discussions about the future of post-war Iraq received more prominent coverage. Burying issues is a commonly used crisis communication method. It is called "masking" and involves "image restoration strategies" in the form of excuses, blame-shift, defence and other defensive mechanisms (Benoit 1995). The way CNN dealt with the events in question exemplifies how issues can be downplayed or simply ignored. As Norman Fairclough has observed, media frames 'constitute versions of reality in ways which depend on the social positions and interests and objectives of those who produce them' (Fairclough 1995: 103-104). In this case, CNN adopted the U.S. military standpoint that a tank had fired in self defence against a sniper. On this account, the fatalities were regrettable but understandable. There was no effort made to link these events to wider issues concerning the treatment of un-embedded journalists in Iraq generally.

¹⁸⁶ The fog of war is a term used to describe an ambiguous military situation. The term itself was used few times on CNN during its Iraq War coverage. For example, on 7 April 2003 Anderson Cooper (CNN anchor) stated: 'We'll try to check in with you a little bit later on. In the fog of war -- and we have heard so much about the fog of war -- things can go terribly wrong. It happened today in northern Iraq, where U.S. special forces are working with Kurdish fighters' (CNN, 7 April 2003 00:00 ET).

Such a stance recalls Shanto Iyengar's argument in *'Is Anyone Responsible?'* He argued that the media systematically deflected any criticisms of those in power by framing the news as 'only a passing parade of specific events, a "context of no context"'. He refers to this kind of coverage as episodic framing, whereby various news events appear entirely unrelated. Iyengar also contends that the episodic frame personalises the issues at stake. This 'prevents the public from cumulating the evidence toward any logical, ultimate consequence' (Iyengar 1991: 143).

While positioning the incident in this way, CNN also tried to infer that international media had over-reacted because of their anti-war bias. Here, it was noticeable that CNN focused upon reactions from countries such as France, Germany, and Russia. When CNN interviewed Nart Bouran, Abu Dhabi's TV chief news editor, it tried to convey the impression that this was another Arab "conspiracy theory". Resorting to this, deflected attention away from factual inquiry into the events and issues at hand. The key point here is that the first question 'do you believe that the Americans deliberately targeted journalists?' was not asked in isolation. The follow up question 'do you think your viewers believe that Americans deliberately targeted journalists?', suggests that Arab publics are possessed by subjective beliefs at the expense of rational enquiry.

Evidence concerning the bombing of Aljazeera's office and the Hotel Palestine points to the likelihood of a deliberate act, not a conspiracy. The former building's position was well known to the Pentagon before the war and easily established through Global Positioning Systems (GPS) co-ordinates. This fact was reiterated by Aljazeera's spokesperson Ibrahim Hilal; 'Our office is in a residential area and even the Pentagon knows its location,' he said. However, Hilal stopped short from saying that the attack was intentional (Cozens 2003). Nevertheless, previous events add weight to the deliberate attack thesis. The aerial bombing of Aljazeera's Kabul office in 2001 was still vividly remembered. More importantly, on 7 April 2003 (one day before the attack on its premises in Baghdad), an Aljazeera staff member was stopped at a U.S. Marine checkpoint. After showing his papers, he was allowed to leave; a soldier apparently opened fire on his car as he drove away. Although he was not hurt, his car was badly damaged, and Aljazeera understood that this was a message. One week earlier, the Sheraton Hotel in Basra, in which Aljazeera correspondents were the only guests, had been aerially bombed despite the fact the location was known to the U.S. military. While these correspondents were not hurt, the attack affected their ability to report (Gierhart 2008: 21).

Retrospective developments reinforce the suspicion that the 8 April attack on Aljazeera's bureau in Baghdad was deliberate. On 23 November 2005, the British *Daily Mirror* noted that this bombing 'raises fresh doubts over U.S. claims that previous attacks against Aljazeera staff were military errors' (Maguire & Lines 2005: B2). Official leaks at that time strongly suggested that the targeting of the Qatar based channel was on the agenda of President Bush if not Prime Minister Blair.¹⁸⁷ The allegation that sniper fire had emerged from the Palestine Hotel was rejected by about 100 international journalists who were on the scene. Scepticism of the U.S. military standpoint was strengthened when Brigadier General Vincent Brooks stated 'that while embedded journalists receive protection from the military, those who operate as non-embeds do so at their own risk.' Such declarations could only be interpreted as a threat to journalistic autonomy and media freedom. In this regard, it should be noted that while 3000 journalists reported on the developments of the Iraq War, only 800 were embedded with coalition forces (Leaper, Löwstedt & Madhoun 2003: 72-73). However, the existence of a large number of unilaterals may well have irritated the Pentagon's info-warriors. In this context, British journalist Martin Bell stated:

Independent witnessing of war is becoming increasingly dangerous, and this may be the end of it. I have a feeling that independent journalists have become a target because the management of the information war has become a higher priority than ever (Byrne 2003a [electronic article; no pagination]).

It is a matter of fact that 17 media representatives died during the Iraq War. John Simpson, BBC world affairs editor, called upon 'the U.S. government to investigate why more journalists were killed by American soldiers than by any other means during the Iraq war'. According to Simpson, the deaths of many of the journalists are due to what he called "the ultimate act of censorship" that is embedding. Through this system, the Pentagon had journalists reporting its perspective, whereas those operating independently of U.S. and British troops covered angles unwanted by the military (quoted in Byrne 2003b [electronic article; no pagination]). In this context, the International Press Institute (IPI) criticised the discriminatory way that unilateral journalists were dealt with by Coalition forces and details

¹⁸⁷ On 22 November 2005, UK's *Daily Mirror* newspaper revealed that a 'secret British government memo said British Prime Minister Tony Blair had talked President George W. Bush "out of bombing" Aljazeera in April 2004.' The memo was leaked by civil servants who were subsequently charged in court under Britain's Official Secrets Act. Following the original report, British Attorney General Lord Goldsmith warned news outlets from publishing any further details about the memo, or else they would be prosecuted under the Official Secrets Act. For more, see: Kevin Maguire (23 November 2005), *Law Chief Gags the Mirror on Bush Leak* at: http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/top-stories/tm_objectid=16401707&method=full&siteid=115875-name_page.html

the complaints of press freedom violations: harassment, detainment, equipment confiscation, and deportation (Leaper, Löwstedt, & Madhoun 2003: 76).

The privileged access given to embedded journalists, and the discrimination suffered by unilateral un-embedded journalists reflected the practices of information warfare. More specifically “information exploitation” and “system destruction” are conventionally employed. The former practice involves activities, such as withholding information, omission, bifurcation and censorship, whereas the latter involves the destruction of “enemy” information systems, including media outlets. Previous examples include the NATO bombing of Serbian Television during the Kosovo War (1999), which caused six fatalities among media workers.

During the Iraq conflict, information warfare practices influenced CNN’s framing of the attacks against Aljazeera’s offices and the Palestine Hotel. Indeed, CNN never considered the issues of journalist safety and media freedom in relation to these military attacks. Rather, CNN embraced the accident version put forward by the Pentagon, and rejected the perspectives of other news media as subjective at best, and conspiracy theory at worst. On Aljazeera, the attacks were especially significant. The Arab network had stood against restrictions on its activities in the Arab World. Its coverage of the Afghan War in the face of intimidation from the Bush administration only reinforced the image of Aljazeera as a fiercely independent network. The continuation of such intimidation during the Iraq War suggested to Middle Eastern audiences that U.S. foreign policy was hypocritical. On the one hand, the alleged purpose of the Iraq invasion was to establish democracy. On the other hand, Aljazeera was criticised for holding a perspective different from that of the Bush administration. Thus, Aljazeera’s coverage expressed loudly what others said quietly, that the United States’ support for democracy in the Arab World was not genuine. It is true that the Pentagon tried to build some bridges with Aljazeera to reduce their criticisms. For instance, the establishment of Central Command (CENTCOM) in Qatar before the war enabled courtesy visits between Aljazeera journalists and CENTCOM officials. After the war started, Aljazeera put forward some of its journalists as embeds. It could not however communicate adequately with the U.S. military. Amr El-Kakhy, Aljazeera’s sole embed with the US military during the war, later wrote of the mistrust he encountered:

Actually there were a lot of misconceptions about Aljazeera from different commands. I was told a lot of the troops said: “Why should we have Aljazeera? They are the enemy. It is the enemy’s channel” (El-Kahky 2004: 181).

Tine Ustad Figenschou notes that the U.S. military respectively, ‘courted, criticised, harassed, and eventually bombed Aljazeera’ (Figenschou 2006: 75). Internationally, therefore, Aljazeera as such, became the subject of news media attention. The Qatar based channel shrewdly capitalised on this situation. The Arab network profiled the attack on its office as a major event, stirring specific readings of what had occurred. It sought to establish the collective Arab understanding of the war. In this case, the understanding was that the channel was targeted for revealing the truth of the conflict.

Aljazeera also played upon the emotional identifications of its audiences. The long moments dedicated to its dead journalist Tareq Ayyoub were especially significant. The impact of this coverage was reinforced by the fact that viewers were familiar with the Jordanian journalist’s reports during the war. The human dimension resonated further when the channel interviewed Tareq’s wife and attended the mourning in his family home. Aljazeera’s emotionally-charged coverage of the incident was followed by tens of millions of Arab viewers. Aljazeera’s depiction of Tareq Ayyoub as a “martyr” gave an Islamic touch to the mission of uncovering the truth. As explained earlier, a martyr in Islam is someone who manifests profound personal commitment to the general community. By naming the deceased a martyr, the Arab network called upon the Muslim imaginary to side with the channel. This naming also involved a subtle play of words: Martyr, or “shaheed” in Arabic, literally means witness. In this context, Tareq Ayyoub was the witness of the war in Iraq. His killing was then witnessed by millions of viewers. Thus, this act of martyrdom would renew the strength of the community that witnessed the sacrifice.

But there was also another connotation to the message of martyrdom. The Qatar based channel had become a symbol of resistance. His journalists and anchors were targeted by bombs and missiles, as were members of Iraqi forces and other armed groups. So, by drawing upon this deep seated sensibility, Aljazeera positioned its correspondent as someone who had sacrificed himself at the service of both the Muslim and pan-Arab imagined communities. As a result, the Arab network mobilised enormous popular support in the Arab and Muslim world. The mobilisation of this support was employed to stop the coalition targeting journalists and their locations. For its international audience, Aljazeera emphasised that other

journalists were also the victims of deliberate attacks on independent journalism. Through this frame, which draws a parallel between the attack on its bureau and the assault on the Palestine Hotel, the Arab network formed solidarity with human rights organisations and advocates of journalistic freedoms around the world.

Aljazeera thus scripted a new narrative. The heroes were not resistance fighters or Iraqi soldiers, but correspondents who defended media freedom. They pursued the sacrosanct mission of revealing the “truth” to the outside world. The villains were well established: they were the coalition forces who had violated the rules of protection available to the civilians, including journalists, within international humanitarian law.¹⁸⁸ By constructing an oppositional narrative, Aljazeera ruined the original American script for the Iraq war. As I have outlined, the story of this war had distinctive Hollywood like features. The ensuing “master war narrative” contained the following sequence: Shock and awe, triumphant heroes, victory and control (Schwalbe, Silcock and Keith 2005: 458).

8.5- Conclusion

The events that unfolded on April 8th again highlighted a clash of frames between CNN and Aljazeera. On CNN, the dominant meso-frame of the day was that of the accident, episodically reported. Although the attacks on journalists occurred three times in one day, they were constructed on CNN as separate episodes with no links to a broader picture. The events thus appeared as isolated accidents which absolved the U.S. military of deliberate wrongdoing. Aljazeera, on the other hand, explicitly linked the three attacks. At the same time, the Arab network adopted the meso-frame of the victim. This frame depicted the Qatar based channel as a victim of its quest to provide straightforward facts about the Iraq War. Such a frame resonated with audiences in the Middle East and Europe. Aljazeera declared to its audiences that it was targeted because of telling the truth; the Qatar based network thus positioned itself as a source of propaganda critique and as a legitimate alternative source of information for media outlets worldwide. This positioning proved to be very successful. Aljazeera could increase revenues by selling its footage all over the world. The channel won international acclaim for its incisive and daring coverage.

¹⁸⁸ The Geneva Convention IV and Protocol I (1949) protects civilian population, prohibits attacking civilian objectives, and insists that the conflicting parties take all precautionary measures to avoid civilian casualties and losses.

The events in question also revealed the dangers of information warfare for independent journalists. The embedding program was at the heart of the Pentagon's quest to control information. Numerous studies have criticised the embedding program, given that such reporters were not truly independent and depended on the military to file their stories (Bucy 2003; Ewers 2003; Kalb 2003). In this context, embed reporter Clive Myrie admitted to reporter John Kampfner in the BBC program *Correspondent* that:

As long as you are aware of that [that the military will try to look good in the eyes of the public] then you can begin to try and tell whatever story you are trying to tell in as objective way as you can, bearing in mind that the unit you are with is feeding you, dressing you, protecting you, whatever (BBC2 18 May 2003).

By its very nature, embedding could not provide audiences with the 'big picture.' Michael Wolff, a writer for *New York* magazine, observed:

Eventually you realise that you know significantly less than when you arrived, and that you are losing more sense of the larger picture by the hour. At some point you will know nothing (Wolff 2003: 6-7).

An additional criticism was directed towards the Pentagon's tendency to use embedded journalists as public relations conduits for the military perspective. For instance, Andrew Hoskins points out that:

The journalists closest to the heart of battle itself ironically contributed mostly narrow and decontextualized snapshots of the war. Moreover the shrinking of the physical distance between embed and soldier was matched by a shrinking of the critical distance between journalist and story. In effect the Americans had successfully planted spokesmen and women for the Pentagon all over the battlefield (Hoskins 2004b: 60).

Therefore, one can say that the Iraq War operations were transparently available to journalists while at the same time being the subject of official manipulation (Chouliaraki 2006: 261). Yet, in spite of its emphasis on information control, the Pentagon was shaken by the alternative information, analysis, commentary and worldview offered by international un-embedded journalists. Many of these journalists worked for Aljazeera and other Arab television channels. They challenged the Pentagon's narratives piece by piece and offered counter-narratives of their own.

This contest was not to the Pentagon's liking. Their literature on information management specifies that any challenge to the strategy of information management is an obstacle to the war effort, which must be removed. Some media specialists, such as Philip Knightley (2003) and Nicholas Mirzoeff (2005), considered that the targeting of independent journalists signalled the end of any meaningful autonomy for war correspondents. The clear message to all unembedded journalists was to stop reporting alternative viewpoints during wartime, and especially those involving the United States.

The assault on independent media was denounced by media advocacy organisations. The International Press Institute (IPI) criticised the lack of protection provided to journalists. They considered that journalists, whether embedded or not, should be treated like civilians as stipulated in the Geneva Convention.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, the New York advocacy group "Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting" (FAIR) issued a media statement headed: "Is killing part of the Pentagon press policy?" It stated:

On April 8 ... US military forces launched what appeared to be deliberate attacks on independent journalists covering the war, killing three and injuring four others. In one incident, a US tank fired an explosive shell at the Palestine Hotel, where most non-embedded international reporters in Baghdad are based. Two journalists, Taras Protsyuk of the British news agency Reuters and Jose Couso of the Spanish network Telecinco, were killed; three other journalists were injured. The tank, which was parked nearby, appeared to carefully select its target, according to journalists in the hotel, raising and aiming its gun turret some two minutes before firing a single shell (Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting 2003).

This targeting of journalists raised considerable opposition in many parts of the world. In Spain, the Spanish Minister of Defence Federico Trillo asked for explanations from Washington. In Britain, Simon Walker, a spokesman at Reuters, confirmed that the agency had made a formal complaint to the Pentagon. Moreover, the press freedom organisation *Reporters Sans Frontieres* filed a lawsuit in Spain against three American officers (Sergeant Shawn Gibson, Captain Philip Welford and Colonel Philip DeCamp) responsible for the attack on the Hotel, in which José Couso, a Spanish national, had died. Across Europe, such repercussions only added to anti-American tendencies fuelled by the Iraq invasion. In fact, an opinion poll conducted in 2003 by the Pew Research Centre, revealed that 57 percent of interviewees in France, 55 percent in Germany and 62 percent in Spain had an unfavourable view of the United States because of its war in Iraq (Pew Research Centre 2006).

¹⁸⁹ See: Protocols Additional to the 1949 Geneva Convention, Articles 50 and 79.

On the whole, the sequence described in this chapter illustrates an unbridgeable conflict in interpretation. In a setting where journalists became casualties of war, Aljazeera and other international news outlets argued they were victims of censorship, propaganda and military attack, while CNN and other American news outlets accepted the explanations of their military officials.

Chapter 9

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9- Liberation vs. Occupation: The Toppling of Saddam's Statue

In this chapter, I analyse the footage of CNN and Aljazeera in relation to the fall of Baghdad, which represented also the defeat of Saddam Hussein's regime. In this context, the toppling of Saddam's statue was a highly symbolic and controversial passage of events. Thus, this chapter analyses how CNN and Aljazeera narratively and visually framed the events that unfolded on 9 April 2003 [10:00 – 12:00 ET].

9.1 Context and Chronology

On 8 April 2003, foreign correspondents reported that U.S. forces had advanced into the central neighbourhoods of the Iraqi capital. News reports also said that Kurdish fighters and U.S. troops had extended their control of northern Iraq, including the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul. The advance into Baghdad was occasionally disturbed by sporadic fighting.

On 9 April 2003 at 9:00 a.m. (Baghdad Time), international journalists stationed at the Palestine Hotel received their usual briefing from Iraqi information ministry officials about where the journalists could go in Baghdad. This time however, there were no Iraqi militia men guarding the hotel. By 9:30 a.m. (Baghdad Time), foreign correspondents at the Palestine Hotel had noticed a mass departure of Iraqi males of fighting age from the north-eastern neighbourhoods of Baghdad. They were travelling on foot, carrying their belongings. Red chevrons, used by the Iraqi security forces, were also seen taking the same routes, although the drivers were this time wearing civilian clothes.

At 10:30 a.m. (Baghdad Time), reports indicated that looting was widespread in Saddam City, the large Shiite neighbourhood. At an adjacent electrical supply depot, grown men piled whatever they could take on to forklifts and drove them to their homes. Earlier that morning, American tanks had quickly traversed the area and departed. At 11:00 a.m. (Baghdad Time), information spread that Marines had moved into the north of Baghdad, taking control of the last bridges across the Tigris. It became clear that the Iraqi regime had lost its grip on the city. In the meantime, the last officials of the Iraqi information ministry left the Palestine Hotel.

At 3:00 p.m. (Baghdad Time), small groups of Iraqis began drifting toward the Saddam Statue in Firdos Square, on the eastern bank of the Tigris. This part of Baghdad was situated on the opposite shore to a conglomeration of security buildings, which had been bombed for three weeks by the US military. Shortly afterwards, American tanks appeared in the square. The crowds seemed to know what was expected of them. A man went up to one of the Marines, whose tanks now encircled the location, and asked for permission to destroy the statue. By 4:00 p.m. (Baghdad Time), American officers had told international journalists at the adjacent Palestine Hotel to visit Firdos Square. Iraqis were going to pull down the massive 12 metre statue of the President. This was one of Iraq's most recent sculptures erected in honour of Saddam Hussein's 65th birthday in April of 2002. Pulling the statue down was meant to show contempt for the Iraqi leader, and to affirm the triumph of coalition forces.

Toppling the statue proved to be a hard task. For about one hour and a half, the small crowd attacked the statue with little effect. The large metal plaque at the base of the statue was unmoved by the inefficient hits of sledgehammers and other rudimentary equipment. Iraqi men also secured a noose around the neck of the statue but were unable to tear it down. American troops, surrounding the square, joined in and used an armoured vehicle with rope to gradually pull down the statue. Marine Corporal Edward Chin of the 3rd battalion 4th Marines climbed up and covered the face with an American flag. The crowd reacted negatively, perhaps interpreting the initiative as American triumphalism. The flag was quickly taken away, and replaced a few minutes later by the old Iraqi flag, to roars of approval. At about 6:50 p.m. (Baghdad Time), the Saddam Statue finally came down.

This general sequence of events was evident on CNN and Aljazeera. They both relayed the same footage, which was, however, edited differently. Initially, both CNN and Aljazeera showed a small crowd. Yet, by the end there were more visual close ups on CNN, which conveyed the impression of a large crowd chanting, jeering and dancing around the fallen effigy, hitting it with their shoes in a symbolic gesture of contempt. On Aljazeera, the edited footage showed more often the wider camera shots, which revealed pretty low numbers of Iraqis. This made the event appear less dramatic and spontaneous. This general difference is exemplified by the juxtaposed images on the first page of this chapter. The pictures from CNN and Aljazeera are representative of the pattern of coverage that both networks presented on 9 April 2003. CNN did sometimes use wide angle shots but not as often as Aljazeera. The latter used closer shots but not nearly as often as CNN. One has also to bear in mind that large

sections of those present on the Firdos Square that day were media workers. Nonetheless, from whatever perspective, the toppling of the Saddam Statue was a major symbolic event.

From that episode onwards, the United States and the United Kingdom acted as the new masters of Iraq. On 15 April 2003, in a U.S. brokered meeting, Iraqi representatives agreed to help build a new regime. It was the first step in the long task of setting up a new civil authority. On 1 May 2003, President Bush capitalised on the preceding events. From the upper decks of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln Aircraft Carrier, underneath a banner entitled "Mission Accomplished," the American President declared that the coalition forces had prevailed in the Iraq War, and that major combat operations had ended. This closure proved to be ceremonial and premature; at the time of writing, violence in Iraq continues unabated.

The toppling of Saddam Statue was chosen for this research because it clearly revealed a contest of frames. Aljazeera had been bombed one day earlier with the loss of a correspondent. Consequently, they regarded the toppling of Saddam's statue as an arranged episode of defeat and humiliation. Aljazeera emphasized that this was a staged event rather than a mass demonstration and highlighted the fact that Iraqis could not topple the statue without American tanks.

In contrast, CNN represented this event as the start of a new era. The symbols of the defeated regime had been overthrown. As Aljazeera emphasised the staging of proceedings in Firdos Square, CNN anchors such as Paula Zahn insisted on the "spontaneity" of the "celebrations" in Firdos square. CNN also framed the event in terms of liberation and regime change. Some of its correspondents such as Christiane Amanpour compared this event to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Overall, CNN positioned the statue's fall as an important historical occasion; with anchor Paula Zahn commenting that the activity in the square was "really extraordinary to watch." Meanwhile Corporal Steven Harris (U.S. Marine Corps) commented on CNN about the "jubilation" shown by the Iraqi people in the square.

The supposed climax of the victory narrative was also an occasion for American networks to settle their accounts with Arab media. Thus, CNN linked images of the toppling statue, which symbolized Arab military defeat, to a defeat of the Arab media as well. For instance, Octavia Nasr from CNN commented that:

Octavia Nasr (CNN correspondent):

...It is very interesting to see them try to apologize to their viewers...And the Al-Jazeera reporters, Abu Dhabi, Al Arabiya, LBC, all of them are trying to explain to their viewers that these celebrations are real... (CNN, 9 April 2003)

As this statement suggests, CNN anchors and correspondents expressed little sympathy towards the coverage of Aljazeera and other Arab media. They were generally positioned as bad guys, who were providing a mouthpiece for anti-American rhetoric.

9.2 Scene establishments

On CNN, American soldiers and tanks were shown encircling the Firdos Square in Baghdad. Within this square, Iraqis appeared to walk without restrictions, and to interact peacefully with the soldiers. The latter appeared calm, patrolling the area, and eying the rooftops for any suspicious activity. Focus was then directed toward the reaction of Iraqis in the vicinity of the statue, with emphasis on their joy and cheerfulness. For almost one hour, cameras depicted Iraqis trying to bring down the statue using hammers and ropes. Initially, American tanks were pictured watching the square from a distance. After a long interval, Iraqi men were still unable to topple the statue. Some of them tried to climb to the top of the statue; others hit the statue with shoes and rocks. Eventually, American tanks started slowly moving towards the crowd.

The construction of the scene conveyed a strong message: The Iraqis are the ones trying to get rid of Saddam Hussein. The Americans were only there to provide support. In this context, CNN used certain rolling trailers and repeated them as needed to communicate the same message:

- Iraqis use rope and hammer in attempt to take down statue
- Coalition tanks move into Firdos Square in Baghdad
- Robinson: Some Iraqis shouting out "thank you"
- Robinson: Mood in central Baghdad "jubilant"
- People tearing down metal Saddam sign
- Iraqis climb tank to reach Saddam statue
- Iraqis target Saddam symbols in Baghdad
- Shots fired near Firdos Square in Baghdad
- Cheney: hardest battles could still be ahead
- Cheney: outcome is certain. The Iraqi people will be free

Studio discussions involving Paula Zahn, Simon Robinson and Christiane Amanpour interpreted the footage for the audience. Christiane Amanpour commented that this was ‘one of the biggest shows of support we've seen yet.’

On Aljazeera, the established scene was not entirely different. Video footage showed angry Iraqis shooting at statues of Saddam Hussein. They could be seen beating their shoes against a huge poster of the Iraqi president and tearing it down. Aljazeera's footage then showed the full process of Saddam's statue being pulled down by an American tank in front of a jubilant crowd in Firdos Square. At given points in the coverage, the Qatar based channel showed the crowd as a large gathering, by zooming in on them. However, unlike some of its competitors, Aljazeera did not use archive footage in its editing for negative purposes (Al Arabiya, for instance, aired two reports on the life of Saddam Hussein which concentrated on the poor decisions he took as President of Iraq). On the contrary, the Qatar based channel showed a video clip of the ousted Iraqi president being carried on his supporters' shoulders in the Al-Adhamiya district one day before. In addition, the commentary from the studio in Doha noted that the statue toppling lacked spontaneity.

On CNN, anchors and correspondents framed the event in terms of liberation, regime change and the making of history. Thus, Christiane Amanpour compared the event to the fall of the Berlin Wall. Numerous criticisms were directed at the ousted regime. Amanpour, for example, discussed the ‘trauma’ of living under the regime of Saddam Hussein, and characterised the statues as ‘psychological tools’ of dictatorship. Then, attention shifted to the events in the square; these were deemed ‘really extraordinary to watch,’ by anchor Paula Zahn.¹⁹⁰ Also, U.S. corporal Paul Harris, speaking on the phone with CNN from Firdos Square, observed that there was ‘a lot of jubilation’ from Iraqis on the square. He estimated a crowd of about seventy.¹⁹¹ ¹⁹² Half an hour later, Simon Robinson (CNN guest) inflated this number to 1000.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Paula Zahn (CNN Anchor):

And from the bottom part of the screen, we can see several more people trying to scale up the base of that statue. Corporal Paul Harris:

Yes.

Paula Zahn (CNN Anchor):

This is really extraordinary to watch’ (CNN, 9 April 2003)

¹⁹¹ Corporal Paul Harris:

Well, I just see a lot of jubilation right now, especially when we first rolled in, and everybody's being patient, waiting for this rope to get round Saddam, and that's showing, you know, that we're taking it to him, we're going to keep taking it to him as long as we can. As long as he's here, we're not done (CNN, 9 April 2003).

¹⁹² Paula Zahn (CNN Anchor):

9.3 Liberation/ U.S. Victory: Two narratives unfold

The CNN Iraqi liberation narrative was shaken when the American flag was put on the top of Saddam Hussein statue. This happened when First Lieutenant Tim McLaughlin passed the flag to Corporal Edward Chin, who then covered Saddam statue's head with it. The flag remained there for about five minutes, and then Corporal Chin replaced it with a pre-1991 Gulf War Iraqi flag.

This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Aljazeera, 9 April 2003 10:41 ET

During the American flag incident, Barbara Starr, the CNN Pentagon Correspondent, clearly noted: 'This is not a picture that the Pentagon wants to see...The Pentagon has worked very hard to try and not show those images.' She added that these pictures could be very counter-productive as 'the US military knows these pictures are being broadcasted throughout the Arab world'.

Nevertheless, Barbara Starr tried to justify this situation:

Barbara Starr (CNN's Pentagon Correspondent):

I can tell you when the American flag went up; there was an almost audible gasp in some Pentagon offices here. This was not the picture the Pentagon wanted to see. Christiane is right, often in wartime soldiers undertake these signs of celebration when they believe they have achieved victory, and it may well be that this small group of troops was just going to put up that flag very briefly and take it down, but of course, not a good reaction of the people there in Baghdad. And the Pentagon has made it very clear, through General Tommy Franks, out to the troops in the field that this is not about the American victory over this country. This is about liberating this country (CNN, 9 April 2003).

'How many people -- we're looking at a shot now of it appears to be maybe some journalists and some Iraqi civilians standing underneath the statue of Saddam Hussein. How many people, would you say, are out there right now?'

Corporal Paul Harris:

'I'd say about at least 70. Everybody else is just around on the streets, talking to the Marines' (CNN, 9 April 2003).

¹⁹³ Simon Robinson (Guest from TIME):

'I'm on that square where you can see the statue with the rope around its neck. Looking at Marines, there are a lot of -- I'd say there's around 1,000 Iraqis in all in the whole area. There's Iraqis picking little yellow flowers and coming up and giving them to Marines. A lot of the Marines, I think, are still nervous' (CNN, 9 April 2003)

Afterwards, Starr highlighted the Pentagon's prevailing concern, namely the pockets of resistance in Northern Iraq. Then, in a positive tone, she drew attention to the fact that no aerial bombing had occurred in Baghdad, and that civilians were thereby spared.

Barbara Starr (CNN's Pentagon Correspondent):

What is really interesting today, as you noticed, we haven't seen any aerial action over Baghdad. No bombs dropping from the air because there are so many civilians in the street. They are continuing to maintain air patrols ...they were fairly sure they wouldn't inadvertently kill civilians... (CNN, 9 April 2003).

After that, CNN anchor Paula Zahn's main concern was to counter the perception that coalition forces were occupiers. She repeated the same question to Starr for more clarification:

Paula Zahn (CNN anchor):

Let's just come back to these sensitivities that the Pentagon brass had about the showing of that American flag ever so briefly on the top of Saddam Hussein's head. It now appears as though the pre-gulf war Iraqi flag come down. Once again, just for folks that might not have caught the first part of your explanation [Barbara Starr's explanation], talk about this concern about the perception that coalition forces are occupiers, at least that is the perception on some Iraqis' part, and they want to fight that perception (CNN, 9 April 2003).

CNN correspondent Barbara Starr invoked an entirely oppositional frame (coalition troops as occupiers), and highlighted a major source of concern among the Pentagon info-warriors; depicting U.S. troops as occupiers instead of liberators. For them, raising the American flag was counter-productive in terms of perception. The presence of an American flag on the battlefield framed the situation as victory vs. defeat rather than liberation vs. oppression; the former construction could inflame nationalistic passions among Iraqis.¹⁹⁴

The American flag incident disrupted the Pentagon's information management efforts during an extremely mediatised juncture. It provided ammunition for critics of the war. For example, Arab satellite channel Al-Arabiya commented during the incident 'that it should have been an

¹⁹⁴ It should be noted that the Pentagon faced a similar situation earlier in the war. During the battle of Umm Qasr, U.S. Marines had raised the American flag there but were ordered to lower it down. At first CNN did not air news of raising the flag at Umm Qasr, but reported five hours later that the Marines had brought the flag down. CNN anchor Paula Zahn explained at that time that the Pentagon ordered the flag lowered out of respect for the local Iraqi citizenry (CNN, 21 March 03).

Iraqi flag'. This obliged Starr to shift her focus to the Arab media, which would, in her view, invariably misrepresent such images:

Barbara Starr (CNN's Pentagon Correspondent):

What the Pentagon knows, what the U.S. military knows, is these pictures are being broadcasted throughout the Arab world. They are being seen in the Arab world, and they are not being seen kindly, because of course, there are many sectors of the Arab world that genuinely believe that US military action in Iraq was not about liberation, but about occupation. There are many people in the Arab world that believe it was about the US military, for example, taking over Iraq's oil industry, all of that. The Pentagon has worked very hard to try and not show those images (CNN, 9 April 2003).

In her attempt to justify the situation, correspondent Barbara Starr unwittingly mentioned some arguments adopted by those opposing the Iraq War. This in itself could be interpreted as a defeat for the Pentagon info-warriors who usually ensure that one interpretation of reality predominates on American networks.

Moving away from the discussion of how the American flag had spoiled the approved narrative, Simon Robinson sought to restore that narrative:

Simon Robinson (Time):

The Marines have attached a chain around the neck of Saddam, and now are reversing this large tank away from the statue and looks like- looks like it is about to go, as you said. When the American flag went up, there were no boos, but not much – not many cheers either. And then the pre-Kuwait war, pre-gulf war Iraqi flag was brought out, and there were cheers, a lot of clapping, cries. Of course, the Iraqi flag changed after the Gulf War. Saddam added a religious message in the middle of the flag. And the flag that was put up there was the old Iraqi flag, the flag I guess that older Iraqis remember from the days before Saddam. This tank is now reversing through a crowd of a few hundred people, perhaps a thousand people. Reversing away from the statue. I am not sure how far back it has to get before this statue will start toppling. It is late afternoon in Iraq. Next to, on the other side of the square, I can see, there is a large mosque, there is a large hotel behind me. And all around, Iraqi families out watching this momentous occasion in Baghdad and history.

Paula Zahn (CNN anchor):

So you were saying, when the American flag went up for a very short period of time, there were no boos, but there was no cheering either, but it wasn't until the Iraqi flag was wrapped

around the neck of Saddam, that there was real cheering going on?

Simon Robinson (Time):

Exactly. Exactly. And they are now tightening -- the statue is starting to topple -- it is coming forward. They are winding in the chains, they are not moving the vehicle back, they are just bringing it in, rather like a tow truck. And in fact, the left -- the right leg has snapped, and the left leg is going as pieces of debris are coming off the statue, and now it falls. A cheer goes around the square. People are waving their hands. And the statue, the hollow statue of Saddam is left dangling from this marble splint. People now throwing objects at it, throwing rocks and pieces of anything they can find, throwing dirt up into his face (CNN, 9 April 2003).

Zahn seemed to reconsider the American flag incident from a different perspective. Throughout this episode, she tried to make a clear distinction between the acts of “irresponsible” Marines that opened up the claim of ‘American occupation’ and the U.S. war command intention of ‘liberating Iraq’.

Paula Zahn (CNN anchor) asking Simon Robinson (Time):

I wanted to ask you a question about whether you were aware of any kind of command that went out to those Marines to bring that American flag down, because there is so much sensitivity about, perhaps, this being seen as a sign of occupation, not liberation? (CNN, 9 April 2003).

Robinson did not really have any confirmation that commanders had asked for the flag to be lowered.

Simon Robinson (Time):

I am not sure in this instance, but I do know that during the campaign Marines have been told to take flags off vehicles. They were not allowed to fly the flags from the tanks or armoured personnel carriers or anything like that... so there has definitely been directives from above not to be too triumphal about this whole thing (CNN, 9 April 2003).

Zahn proceeded to focus on the climax of the liberation narrative; close ups of the crowd, sounds and images of a cheering populace. As the Marines had replaced the American flag

with the pre-gulf war flag (which does not have the inscription “God is great”)¹⁹⁵, anchor Paula Zahn focused on this:

Paula Zahn (CNN anchor) talking to Simon Robinson (Time):

A lot of symbolism at play here. You were saying that this is the pre-gulf war flag that is attached or they are attempting to attach to the base of what used to be the statue of Saddam Hussein. And I guess the one thing that is missing from this is what was added after the gulf war, which is a religious statement saying God is great (CNN, 9 April 2003).

Aljazeera had a different approach. The Qatar based channel was not convinced that the statue toppling signalled the end of the war. Indeed, in its headline news Aljazeera anchor Adnan Charif claimed that despite the arrival of marine forces in Baghdad, the war might not be over. He quoted Vice-President Dick Cheney saying that he ‘does not overrule the possibility of continued fighting in the days to come’. Nonetheless, Aljazeera followed closely the events at Firdos Square. There were constant interactions between the studio in Doha and their correspondents on the ground (such as Maher Abdullah and Mohamed Ould Fal).

Aljazeera’s narrative contours were set by correspondent Mohamed Ould Fal. He offered a thematic commentary, linking the falling statue with the bombing of journalists the day before;

Mohamed Ould Fal (Aljazeera correspondent):

The battle of the Palestine hotel that happened yesterday represented the last violent scenes of the American and Britain war in Iraq. What we see today is not as bloody as what happened during the black Tuesday. From yesterday to today, many things have changed, media is no longer the enemy of the Marines as was the case yesterday, and what appeared to be an American fiasco yesterday, was transformed overnight into a confident victory. When American tanks besiege a hotel where most of international media gather without any convincing reason, one wonders whether it was just a message to the world that the Yankees have reached the heart of Baghdad. Yet, this seems to represent only the preface to a surprise with a deeper significance, as the giant statue of the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was still standing until this morning with potency, filling the space with pride and glory. The battle was

¹⁹⁵ This flag had three stripes, of red, white, and black, with three green stars in the white stripe. It was adopted on 31 July 1963. The meaning of the three stars was interpreted as being the three tenets of the Ba’ath party motto, namely Unity, Freedom, and Socialism. It was altered on 13 January 1991 by Saddam Hussein. The words of ‘God is great’ between the stars were written in Saddam’s own handwriting. This addition was supposed to garner wartime support from previously outlawed religious Iraqi leaders, and to garner support from the Islamic world against the United States.

not won, and so no time is better than this moment to spread the message that the coalition has reached the heart of Baghdad. This was to be followed by another message about the end of Saddam Hussein, through the toppling of his statue in a live scene witnessed by millions of television stations around the world. However, this operation was merely conducted by a few Iraqi youngsters assisted by American soldiers. In addition, this operation was full of mistakes, which in turn are full of meanings. Indeed, the Iraqis failed to bring down the statue of the President Commander in Chief Saddam Hussein. Their ropes and their muscles failed. It was then up to the American soldiers to take in charge this hard mission.

This scene represents the blurring of fact and fiction. Yet the American soldier coming on the top of a tank with his tall arm did not remember in the midst of this exciting victory that he is standing on the top of a land that is not American. Maybe he intended to be rude, or maybe he just misbehaved because of his lack of knowledge. All these excuses are worse than the insult itself and this remains the scene that will be recorded in history. And after the predicament of analysing the intention, the problem of interpretation remains: is this an American soldier hanging an American dictator? Or is it a foreign invader toppling the head of another nation? Isn't it that the flag used in this way usually honours the martyrs? And since when are criminals hanged with flags? To get out of this predicament in a decent way, it was remembered after a while that Iraq had its flag, and that there were Iraqi participants in this symbolic execution. However, another dilemma soon appeared as the flag associated with Saddam Hussein carries the expression of "Allah is great", and for this reason it was to be replaced. So panic has prevailed, the president should be executed without any flag, he should be stripped from this honour. The final moment carried another development, which maybe created a hidden fear in the hearts of the Marines. The statue bent but did not fall easily and even after its fall, its feet remained entrenched in the Iraqi concrete, which lies in the heart of Baghdad (Aljazeera, 9 April 2003).

To summarise Aljazeera's narrative, the toppling of the Saddam statue was an attempt to deflect attention from what had happened the day before when the U.S. military attacked international correspondents. The events in Firdos Square were for the most part a media-friendly complement to U.S. military propaganda. There was no doubt that the toppling of Saddam Statue was staged. It was clear that the American forces were the ones pulling the strings, while Iraqi youngsters were merely extras. Accordingly, putting an American flag on the top of the statue was not an individual act, it was premeditated. The fact that the statue's feet remained in the concrete, symbolically meant that the U.S. forces would not get rid of the Iraqi resistance easily.

Nonetheless, there was a noticeable tension in Aljazeera's narrative between Saddam as American dictator and Saddam as symbol of resistance. Indeed, Aljazeera correspondent Mohamed Ould Fal questioned the old alliance that linked the Iraqi dictator and successive American administrations, when he asked; 'Is this an American soldier hanging an American dictator?' By asking this question, Aljazeera's correspondent Mohamed Ould Fal succinctly recalled memories of the CIA's role in Saddam's ascension to power (Morris 2003: A28; Sale 2003). The question also brought to mind the American support for Iraq during their war against Iran (1980 – 1988). At that time, U.S.-Iraq relations were close, and high-level officials exchanged visits (Donald Rumsfeld was dispatched twice to Iraq in December 1983 and March 1984 as special envoy from President Ronald Reagan)¹⁹⁶. Subsequently, Iraq received American assistance through loan programs. With improved credit standing, Iraq could obtain loans from international financial institutions. The U.S. also provided economic aid to Iraq in the form of agricultural products (Battle 2003; Dawoody 2006: 14 - 15).

Saddam Hussein ended his alliance of convenience with the United States on 2 Aug 1990, when his troops invaded Kuwait in response to a dispute over oil production.¹⁹⁷ Once America's ally, Saddam had become its bitterest enemy. This led other enemies of the United States to support his anti-imperialist rhetoric. From that time onwards, Saddam, once representing secular socialist values, increasingly portrayed himself as a devout Muslim. This allowed him to co-opt the conservative religious segments of society, thus building an image of himself as a model of anti-American resistance in the Middle East. The reversals which characterised Saddam's foreign policy might explain the tension in Aljazeera's dual construction of Saddam as American pawn and anti-American resistance fighter. The latter frame underlay Mohamed Ould Fal's comment that 'the giant statue of the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was still standing until this morning with potency, filling the space with pride and glory'.

¹⁹⁶ During Rumsfeld's December 1983 visit, he met with Saddam, and the two discussed regional issues of mutual interest, shared enmity toward Iran and Syria, and the U.S.'s efforts to find alternative routes to transport Iraq's oil after the original routes were threatened by Iran. In his March 1984 visit, Rumsfeld discussed with Iraqi officials loans for Iraq, the alternative pipeline through Jordan, and the vigorous effort to cut off arms exports to Iran. Rumsfeld also conveyed to Iraq an offer from Israel to provide assistance against Iran; an offer which was rejected (Battle 2003).

¹⁹⁷ Some authors highlighted the American responsibility in starting this conflict. U.S. ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie met with Saddam in an emergency meeting on 25 July 1990. In spite of the escalating tension between Iraq and Kuwait, Ambassador Glaspie maintained a conciliatory line with Iraq, indicating that the United States would not take any position on the Iraq-Kuwait boundary dispute and did not want to become involved. This ambiguous position was interpreted by many (including Saddam Hussein) as a green light for Iraq to settle his dispute with Kuwait in his own terms (Palast 2007: 79-82).

Visually, CNN's footage of the toppling statue was shot from different angles and employed various camera movements. The camera was primarily focused upon the reaction of the Iraqis toward the Saddam statue, as well as their interaction with American soldiers. CNN showed American tanks on the top side of the camera frame, the statue in the middle of the frame, and the Iraqis in the down side of the frame. The composition of this high angle wide shot enabled the viewer to see the relationship between the three different elements in the frame; the Iraqis were hitting the statue with their shoes, and then American tanks came forward, and finally the Iraqis were seen cheering. Next, the American Marines gave the Iraqis a rope with which to topple the statue, but their attempt failed. The scene was dissolved and then the camera moved to a close-up of Saddam Statue with a rope on its neck. The camera then panned to show the crowd and went back to the central, high angle, wide shot frame (comprised of American tanks, local Iraqis, and the beleaguered statue). Subsequently, the Marines used their M-88 Hercules tank recovery vehicle to secure a chain around the neck of the statue. At this stage, screen within screen choreography was employed to show the reaction of American forces towards the crowd, and to remind the audience that various signs, pictures and icons of Saddam were destroyed elsewhere at the same time.

As I have outlined, the chain was secured around the neck of the Saddam Statue. First Lieutenant Tim McLaughlin passed an American flag up to Corporal Edward Chin, who then placed it over the statue's head. The flag remained there for about five minutes until Chin replaced it with a pre-1991 Gulf War Iraqi flag. This was draped through the chain around the statue's neck like a hankie. That flag came down, too, and the toppling of the statue commenced. The relevant footage included a front-on shot of the statue with people around it. The image then dissolved to a high angle shot of the Saddam statue on the floor. The Iraqi crowd was seen celebrating and humiliating the fallen statue, while journalists took pictures of the scene.¹⁹⁸

9.4- Discussion and critique

As I have noted, CNN depicted the toppling of the Saddam Statue as the climax of the Iraq campaign and as a successful conclusion for the coalition forces' journey. In fact, the Pentagon had prepared a master narrative for the 2003 Iraq war. There were occasional

¹⁹⁸ After the time-break in this footage, CNN put out a short edited version of the situation at Firdos Square. It consisted of Iraqis trying to topple the Statue, then Iraqis were seen celebrating, and finally the pre-gulf war flag was seen to envelop the head of the sculpture.

inadvertent references to this script, as when CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer observed in the first days of the war that a last-minute alteration to “Shock and Awe” was “totally unscripted” (CNN, 21 March 2003). In this storyline, reminiscent of Hollywood, the coalition undertakes the path of the Hero’s journey.¹⁹⁹ This is a journey of multiple challenges and threatening opponents, in which the hero prevails to gain the trophy at the end. French Philosopher Jean Baudrillard regarded the war in Iraq as synonymous with its filmic construction:

What we are watching as we sit paralysed in our fold-down seats isn’t “*like* a film”; it *is* a film. With a script, a screenplay, that has to be followed unswervingly. The casting and the technical and financial resources have all been meticulously scheduled: Including control of the distribution channels, these are professionals at work. In the end, operational war becomes an enormous special effect; cinema becomes the paradigm of warfare, and we imagine it as “real”, whereas it is merely the mirror of its cinematic being. The virtuality of war is not, then, a metaphor. It is the literal passage from reality into fiction, or rather the immediate metamorphosis of the real into fiction. The real is now merely the asymptotic horizon of the Virtual (Baudrillard 2006 [Electronic article; no pagination]).

From this perspective, the war narrative, as promoted by the Pentagon, had a predetermined beginning and end with a well-defined trajectory. The beginning of combat started with the “decapitation strike” on 19 March 2003, and the closure of the narrative, as established by the Bush Administration, took place on 1 May 2003, when President Bush, aboard of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln, declared that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended”. He wore a combat suit suggestive of the blockbuster *Top Gun*.²⁰⁰ Between the start and the ending, the war narrative follows a linear sequence: shock and awe, conquering troops, hero (Private Lynch), victory (toppling of the statue), and control (Schwalbe, Silcock and Keith 2005: 458). At times, there were tensions in this narrative between American victory and Iraq liberation

The 2003 Iraq War master narrative projected image-icons of the war, which were supposed to remain in the world collective memory. The toppling of the Saddam Statue was arranged to join the lexicon of historic images, such as the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima (which was also

¹⁹⁹ In books like *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space* (1987) and *The Power of Myth* (1988), Joseph Campbell wrote about the story-telling structure he found while studying myths and legends of many cultures. He called this structure The Hero’s Journey because heroes seem to share the same journey across cultures, namely a journey of transformation which leads them through great movements of separation, descent, ordeal, and return.

²⁰⁰ The U.S. news networks adopted the master narrative even in their web pages. CNN’s “War in Iraq” web pages put this notice at the top of the main page: ‘This page was archived in May 2003 when President Bush declared an end to major combat’ (CNN.com 2003).

staged²⁰¹), the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the collapse of New York's Twin Towers. It is a matter of fact that collective memories are now extensively shaped by visual images; as Walter Benjamin observed, 'history decays into images, not into stories' (quoted in Der Derian 2005: 28).

The Pentagon worked to bring closure to the war narrative and to assert its victory and control over Iraq with a publicly memorable event. As Barbie Zelizer argues, collective remembering has 'as much to do with identity formation, power and authority, cultural norms, and social interaction as with the simple act of recall' (Zelizer 1995: 214). In this context, one can draw similarities between the toppling of the Saddam statue and the destruction of the Lenin statues following the fall of the Soviet bloc. The *New York Times* reported on 11 December 1989 that thousands of Polish citizens attended the two-hour dismantling of a huge statue of Lenin in Krakow, Poland (New York Times 1989: A8). One can clearly see the striking similarity between these events and those described in this chapter. In fact, this analogy was explicitly invoked at a U.S. Department of Defence briefing to all major U.S. news outlets on 9 April 2003:

The scenes of free Iraqis celebrating in the streets, riding American tanks, tearing down the statues of Saddam Hussein in the centre of Baghdad are breathtaking. Watching them, one cannot help but think of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Iron Curtain. We are seeing history unfold, events that will shape the course of a country, the fate of a people, and potentially the future of the region. Saddam Hussein is now taking his rightful place alongside Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Ceausescu in the pantheon of failed, brutal dictators, and the Iraqi people are well on their way to freedom²⁰²

Playing with the dynamics of affective memory by establishing a similitude with the end of Soviet rule was a key objective of the Pentagon info-warriors. As Barbie Zelizer explains, 'collective memory thrives on remaking the residue of past decades into material with contemporary resonance; it is filled with reused and reusable materials' (Zelizer 1995: 217). Through the use of sophisticated depiction and display techniques, the toppling of the Saddam

²⁰¹ Raising the flag on Iwo Jima is a historic photograph taken on February 23, 1945, by Joe Rosenthal. It depicts U.S. soldiers raising the flag of the United States atop Mount Suribachi during the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II. However, Rosenthal actually captured the second flag-raising event of the day. The first one, the real one, took place soon after the position was captured early in the morning of February 23, 1945.

²⁰² A partial transcript of the briefing is available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2003/s828805.htm>
An AFP press release is also reporting on the above-mentioned briefing, see: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/04/10/1049567773284.html>

Statue was supposed to appear as a major historical event. Collective memory related to war developments would then shrink it into a particular moment. Earlier episodes of the war such as “shock and awe” intensive bombings, the resistance encountered, the civilian victims, and the attacks on unembedded journalists would be erased and replaced by an “artificial memory” supplied by American mainstream media. Artificial memory emphasises the present real-live event at the expense of anything occurring outside. Commenting on this process, Andreas Huyssen argues that ‘where the medium is presence and presence only, and presence is the live telecast of action news, the past will always necessarily remain blocked out’ (Quoted in Hoskins 2004: 110, 123).

Unsurprisingly, CNN’s coverage of the fall of the Saddam Statue was imbued with the Orientalist deep frame. This had been a consistent pattern throughout the war particularly through the use of the “nation-as-person” metaphor, which conflated Saddam Hussein with the state, regime, people, and territory of Iraq. News reports about getting rid of Saddam Hussein routinely employed this metaphor. This neglected the fact that the coalition bombs and missiles did not target solely that person. Thousands of people were ‘hidden by the metaphor;’ the United States apparently did not fight against them (Lakoff 2003). Through this metaphor, the Orientalist depiction of Saddam Hussein as the incarnation of evil, madness and irrationality was transferred to his countrymen.

The Orientalist deep frame was evident in CNN’s coverage of Iraqis in the square. Their inability to take down the Saddam Statue was imbued with a sense of ineptitude. CNN television coverage of the toppling statue transformed Iraqis into mere extras while the real accomplishment was attributed to American soldiers. Another Orientalist facet in CNN’s coverage appeared during the reports of looting and plunder during the fall of Baghdad. Here, Iraqis were no longer shown as an oppressed people in need of liberation but, in harmony with Orientalist traditions, as a threatening and dangerous crowd. Visual evidence of large scale looting from people from all ages, including women and children, inevitably established a negative image of Iraqis in general. The participation of women and children in the looting conveyed an image of ‘inborn barbarism’ (Trivundza 2004: 489). This appeared to show the unbridgeable gap between the enlightened West and the barbaric Orient. The coalition soldiers were depicted positively as liberators of the people or as enforcers of law and order. CNN did not judge it appropriate to investigate the role of the U.S. military in the spreading of chaos in Baghdad. They defended Iraqi strategic assets (oil fields, palaces, the Ministry of

Oil and the Ministry of Interior) but did not prevent looting in other locations. In fact, no American media outlet, including CNN, considered the new authorities inability to stop highly organised acts of vandalism perpetrated at the archaeological museum and other historic sites (Trivundza 2004: 489 - 490).

Additionally, CNN coverage of the fall of the Saddam Statue exemplified the conflict frame.²⁰³ Overall, this occasion was meant to demonstrate and celebrate the coalition victory for Iraqis and the world. American television networks were cautious not to show any excessive triumphalism on the airwaves; this was deemed by the Pentagon as counter-productive. Therefore, it was the Iraqi liberation frame, not the U.S. victory frame, which was predominantly used by CNN. In this regard, Barbara Starr and guest Simon Robinson from Time magazine sought to differentiate between "irresponsible acts" from individuals and the U.S. Military High Command's commitment to 'liberate Iraq'.

However, placing a pre-Gulf War Iraqi flag on the statue could not erase earlier images of the American flag; the damage was already done. For Aljazeera and other Arab media, the American flag incident exemplified American imperialism. Aware of this perception, CNN anchors and correspondents tried to portray U.S. troops as unwise but not ill intentioned. Had CNN circulated more shots of images from a wider angle, showing Firdos Square from a broader perspective, this symbolic victory would have been less apparent.

Aljazeera's visual and narrative positioning of the event emphasised the larger picture in terms of causes, consequences and responsibilities. Unlike CNN, Aljazeera's coverage recalled the attacks it was subjected to a day earlier (as well as other attacks on international journalists at the Palestine Hotel). Aljazeera's correspondent Mohamed Ould Fal highlighted the stark contrast between bombing foreign journalists one day, and then asking them to cover a staged episode the next. Awareness of this contrast shaped Aljazeera's scepticism of the Iraqi liberation narrative and the staged symbolism of the toppling statue.

Aljazeera's hostility to the coalition endeavour was amplified by the "otherness" frame, whereby coalition forces were portrayed as an unwanted external threat. More specifically, the American military appeared as "occupation forces." They were creating "havoc" in Baghdad by failing to prevent widespread looting. On this matter, Aljazeera journalists and

²⁰³ To reiterate, the conflict frame emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions. Typically, this frame takes sides and determines the hero and the villain.

analysts were surprised to see the Iraqi forces collapse so quickly. They believed for a while that the Iraqi forces would resist within Baghdad and undertake urban guerrilla warfare. When it became clear that the Iraqi forces were no longer in control, and the shock of yet another defeat and humiliation by Western armies looked likely, Aljazeera journalists resorted to speculations of conspiracy. Questions were raised about whether Saddam Hussein was not, in the end, an American agent, given the disconcerting easiness with which his army collapsed in every encounter with American troops.

While other Arab networks, such as Al-Arabiya, showed visuals of Iraqis burning a poster of Saddam, Aljazeera stopped short of such coverage. Their pan-Arab deep framing had led to partial identification with the plight of the regime during the war. Aljazeera could not easily change this position without irking its viewers. This explains why they showed Saddam being carried on the shoulders of his supporters one day prior to the fall of Baghdad. This was Aljazeera's only visual footage of Saddam²⁰⁴

Against this background, Mohamed Ould Fal and other Aljazeera anchors looked for any development, no matter how small or symbolic, to lift the morale of Arab audiences. Thus, he described the whole statue toppling operation as a staged event in which only a small number of Iraqi 'youngsters' participated. Such a description implied that these youngsters were not mature enough to understand the situation and thus were prone to manipulation. The fact that the Iraqis failed to topple the statue obviously pleased Aljazeera's anchor because the task fell back on the Marines at the end. This fitted with the Arab network narrative, which presented the episode as a staged event. By directly participating in the statue toppling, the Marines inadvertently revealed that the entire process was first and foremost an American endeavour, not a genuine uprising of the Iraqi people.

In fact, Aljazeera's insistence on the lack of spontaneity proved accurate. One year later, in retrospect, Reporter David Zucchino revealed in the *Los Angeles Times* that the toppling of Saddam's statue was in fact a U.S. Army psychological warfare operation, staged to look like a spontaneous Iraqi action. The article declared that:

²⁰⁴ One should, nevertheless, acknowledge the subtle anti-Saddam rhetoric of Aljazeera's correspondent Mohamed Ould Fal; some of his comments may well have been understood as supportive of Saddam, however, when he referred to resistance this was not because of Iraqis' loyalty to Saddam, but because of the predominant feelings against Western occupation. His question about Saddam being an American dictator would have been picked up by large segments of viewers because this perception had been propagated for decades by Saddam's internal and external foes, and was quite widespread.

The early, iconic image of Saddam's statue being toppled in a Baghdad square was not a spontaneous act by joyous Iraqis. It was an Army psychological warfare operation that began when a Marine colonel chose the statue for its symbolism and the psychological team encouraged Iraqis to participate. In the end, a Marine vehicle dragged down the statue with a chain, but the evocative image was indelible, because the military team filled the vehicle with cheering Iraqi children (Zucchini 2004: A28).

Another aspect of Aljazeera's reportage which proved to be valid was the symbolism of the statue's difficult fall. It came down slowly and messily, suggesting that the Americans had not achieved absolute victory. Correspondent Mohamed Ould Fal's observation that the 'statue bent but did not fall easily and even after its fall, its feet remained entrenched in the Iraqi concrete' delivered a central message; resistance was deeply rooted in the Iraqi nation. So despite the coalition's symbolic success in eventually toppling the statue, and their success in defeating the regular Iraqi army, Fal's comments inferred that the people of Iraq would continue fighting the occupation.

The day following the statue's fall, Aljazeera anchors dressed in black to express their sadness about the occupation of Iraq. Their news bulletins carried the following headline: "the fall of Saddam's regime...Baghdad under occupation". By contrast, CNN and American television networks interviewed pro-U.S. Iraqis.

9.5- Conclusion

As the finale of the war narrative, the toppling of Saddam's statue was arranged as an image-icon of the war and as a publicly memorable event. In this context, American news outlets drew analogies between this episode and events that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. As on previous occasions, CNN and Aljazeera provided contesting versions of the same event. The Atlanta based network adopted the Iraqi liberation narrative, whereas the Qatar based channel adopted the staged event narrative. From the same images, the two networks edited the footage in a way that supported their framing choices. Thus, CNN primarily used tightly cropped and/or close range camera shots to inflate perceptions about the number of Iraqis present at the square. This editing style also over-emphasised the jubilation of the crowd and their welcoming attitude to American troops. Aljazeera usually employed wider camera shots of the square to reveal the smallness of the gathering.

The CNN Iraqi liberation narrative was shaken when the American flag was put on the top of the Saddam Hussein statue. This incident somewhat validated the perception of Arab media that the Iraq War was an American occupation. Aware of this, CNN anchors and guests tried to interpret the flag incident as the act of “irresponsible” Marines, and to restore the original narrative. The latter included elements of the Orientalist deep frame, particularly the “nation-as-person” metaphor. Orientalism was also at play when the toppling exercise transformed Iraqis into mere extras while the real accomplishment was attributed to American soldiers. Moreover, the reports of looting in Baghdad characterised Iraqis as a threatening and dangerous crowd.

In contrast, Aljazeera’s coverage always doubted the spontaneity of this event, and suggested that the Americans were pulling the strings. Aljazeera also criticised the small numbers of Iraqis present, and questioned the episode’s actual significance. Moreover, unlike CNN, the Qatar based network offered a thematic commentary by linking the falling statue with other events. This thematic approach created, however, a tension in its narrative between framing Saddam as a former U.S. ally (and possible agent) or as a resister of occupation. However, because of its pan-Arab orientation, Aljazeera generally favoured the latter interpretation and predicted Iraqi resistance against the American occupation.

Postscript

At the time of writing this closing chapter (December 2009), the Iraq War which began on 19 March 2003, is still ongoing. After President Bush declared the end of major combat operations in Iraq on 1 May 2003, he appointed Paul Bremer as the top civil administrator in Iraq. The latter abolished the Iraqi ministries, institutions, and armed forces, while thousands of Baath Party members were banned from holding government jobs. Then, the U.S.-led coalition formed the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), which was composed of 25 Iraqi nationals. Their first task was to draft a new Iraqi constitution, under the authority of Paul Bremer.

These developments did not stabilise the situation in Iraq. On the contrary, coalition forces faced increasing opposition. By July 2003, the Commander of the U.S. forces in Iraq acknowledged that his troops were facing a low-intensity guerrilla-style war. And despite the fact that Saddam's sons Uday and Qusay were killed in a gun battle in Mosul (13 July 2003), and that Saddam Hussein was himself captured near Tikrit (14 December 2003) and later

executed by the new Iraqi government (30 December 2006), resistance to the U.S. led coalition and its Iraqi proxies continued.

The policies adopted by the coalition on the ground have fuelled social violence and deep sectarian strife between different ethnic and religious groups. It also spread insurgency, which primarily targeted Coalition armies, especially during the 2004 - 2005 period. The insurgency also targeted police and military forces of the new Iraqi government, considered as collaborators with the enemy. The intensity of the insurgency during 2004 reduced the coalition, when nine countries pulled their forces out. Later withdrawals have continued, leaving the United States as the sole country with troops on the ground by mid-2009. In late February 2009, the new American President Barack Obama announced an 18-month withdrawal window for "combat forces", leaving behind 30,000 to 50,000 troops to offer support and training to the Iraqi security apparatus. In this context, General Ray Odierno, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, said he believes all U.S. troops will be out of the country by the end of 2011.

The consequences of this war were disastrous for Iraq. Indeed, in 2007 an independent British polling agency estimated total war fatalities to be over 1.2 million (Opinion Research Business 2007). In the same year, the Iraqi government reported that there were 5 million orphans in Iraq - nearly half of the country's children (U.S. Labor against the War, 2007). The United Nations High Committee for Refugees estimated in 2008 that the war uprooted 4.7 million Iraqis (about 17 percent of the population), among which 2 million fled to neighbouring countries (UNHCR 2008). The high human and financial consequences have made the Iraq War the defining conflict of the 21st century, and a critical passage of American history alongside the Vietnam War. The mobilisation of media bias, which was an integral part of the game, has been retrospectively exposed. *New York Times* Journalist David Barstow recently uncovered vital information concerning the relationship between military commentators and news networks. This occurred after The *New York Times* successfully sued the Defence Department to gain access to 8,000 pages of e-mail messages, transcripts and records describing years of private briefings, trips to Iraq, and Pentagon talking points. Barstow won the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for exposing *The Pentagon Military Analyst Program*, which was launched in early 2002 by then Assistant Secretary of Defence for Public Affairs Victoria Clarke to help sell a sceptical public "a possible Iraq invasion." The program consisted of embedding Pentagon military propagandists into TV networks as commentators.

This was a major information warfare tool for selling the war on Iraq to the American public. In a *New York Times* article titled ‘Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon’s Hidden Hand’, David Barstow explains the modus operandi of this program:

Hidden behind that appearance of objectivity, though, is a Pentagon information apparatus that has used those analysts in a campaign to generate favourable news coverage of the administration’s wartime performance, an examination by The New York Times has found. Records and interviews show how the Bush administration has used its control over access and information in an effort to transform the analysts into a kind of media Trojan horse — an instrument intended to shape terrorism coverage from inside the major TV and radio networks. Analysts have been wooed in hundreds of private briefings with senior military leaders, including officials with significant influence over contracting and budget matters, records show. They have been taken on tours of Iraq and given access to classified intelligence. They have been briefed by officials from the White House, State Department, and Justice Department, including Mr. Cheney, Alberto R. Gonzales and Stephen J. Hadley. In turn, members of this group have echoed administration talking points, sometimes even when they suspected the information was false or inflated. Some analysts acknowledge they suppressed doubts because they feared jeopardizing their access. These records reveal a symbiotic relationship where the usual dividing lines between government and journalism have been obliterated. Internal Pentagon documents repeatedly refer to the military analysts as “message force multipliers” or “surrogates” who could be counted on to deliver administration “themes and messages” to millions of Americans “in the form of their own opinions” (Barstow 20 April 2008).

The Pentagon Military Analyst Program involved the aforementioned CNN analysts, such as General Wesley Clark, General Don Sheppard, and General David Grange. Barstow’s investigation also showed that numerous other military analysts participated in the program.²⁰⁵ The extent and scope of the program only confirms that journalistic dependence on official sources allowed the militaristic discourse to permeate and undermine the public sphere. The program also substantiates the power of the industrial-military-media complex in the United States. The latter has the capacity to integrate different propaganda, public affairs, military deception and psychological operations into specifically focused campaigns.

²⁰⁵ For a full list of military analysts involved in the program, see: http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Pentagon_military_analyst_program

For their part, the Qatar based network tried to reflect on the lessons learned after the experience of the Bush administration era. As mentioned earlier (p169), Aljazeera's Sudanese cameraman Sami Al-Haj was arrested during the war in Afghanistan and was extra-judicially held in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for over six years. After his release without charge on 1 May 2008, Aljazeera requested him to head the network's newly established department; the Public Liberties and Human Rights Desk. Its primary focus is to establish a specialised database for monitoring human rights abuses and to raise public awareness of particular cases and issues (Ajazeera.net 2008). Drawing on his ordeal, Sami Al-Haj proved to be a vociferous defender of journalistic freedoms worldwide, in association with renowned NGOs such as the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). This development reflects the Arab network's continued commitment to the rights and liberties associated with the public sphere.

10- General conclusion

The mobilisation of media bias works to reinforce or modify the attitudes and behaviour of audiences. This could be prompted by governmental authorities attempting to inflame patriotic feelings in favour of war. Similarly, military institutions may employ media strategies to demoralise the enemy and strengthen local morale. In the 20th century, military propaganda became more sophisticated during the wide-ranging conflicts that took place during that period (i.e. World War One, World War Two, anti-colonial wars of liberation). Elaborate ideological frameworks were designed to mobilise populations in favour of war. Established techniques included deception, information control, silencing dissent, as well as the manipulation of beliefs and language. Traditionally within the United States, media organisations were very supportive of their government's war efforts. This situation changed during the Vietnam War, especially after the Tet offensive in 1968, when television audiences confronted the reality of war in Vietnam. Organised opposition to the war eventually involved some elites and media professionals. Popular support for the Vietnam intervention and confidence in the military diminished considerably. From the perspective of American commanders, it was the American media that had caused their debacle in Vietnam.

In the aftermath of this war, the Pentagon sought to develop a better strategy of media management. Early results were seen during the U.S. military interventions in Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989), in which media pool systems were implemented. But it was during the First Gulf War (1991) that the U.S. military employed information dominance as an essential component of operational planning. The introduction of live war television coverage allowed the Pentagon to make war into a dramatic event for military purposes. Military sources shaped stories in anticipation of what the American news media would cover. These ranged from interesting personal testimonies from American troopers, to the lethality of hi-tech weaponry.

The Gulf War experience convinced the U.S. military that information dominance was the way to achieve supremacy over all potential foes. The U.S. military adopted doctrines that required the views and perceptions of national audiences to be shaped in accordance with military strategies. However, such practices could potentially undermine democratic processes and inflame cultural prejudices. In this context, making decisions about war and peace involved the most serious use of state power.

The preceding concerns proved to be valid. The Pentagon info-warriors demonized certain ethnic groups and played upon fears of the “other.” Having led many military campaigns in the Middle East over previous decades, military propagandists readily exploited the fear of Arabs and Muslims evoked by Orientalist themes in American literature and the mass media. In this regard, the discourse of Orientalism participated in the creation of a hegemonic discourse that used the rhetoric of “otherness” to justify political, economic and military expansionism. “Otherness” implies a complex mechanism for social exclusion. It defines and secures one’s own identity by distancing and stigmatising those who are different. Violent attacks perpetrated by Middle Eastern non-state actors appeared to justify the prevailing constructions of “otherness.” Indeed, these attacks were interpreted through the prism of Islam, which was said to represent an external threat to Western identity and interests. Arabs and Muslims became the embodiment of both external and internal “others”. The image of Islam and Arabs in American media discourse became associated with backwardness, religious fanaticism, and terrorism which threatened the West’s freedom, economy, and culture. Historically, these rhetorical attacks preceded the bloody conflicts about to unfold. Indeed, there was a correlation between the demonization of Islam and Arabs, and the subsequent wars of domination launched in the new millennium by the neoconservative-inspired Bush administration.

Meanwhile, developments in the Middle East followed another course. After a century of Western colonial and neo-colonial designs, pan-regional feelings of resentment were common. While some Arabs and Muslims embraced Occidentalism, the mirror image of Orientalism, and refused anything associated with the West, other less vehement yet still oppositional viewpoints emerged. For example, pan-Arabist theoreticians called for the unity of the Arab people in the context of modernity and economic development. They borrowed many Western political principles, yet they also sought to resist the dangers of Western hegemony. As a Middle Eastern worldview, pan-Arabism also permeated Arab transnational media. Subsequent political developments shifted the hub of these media from Egypt to Lebanon and then to London. A Saudi-BBC project for an Arabic satellite news television network eventually folded and went under Qatari patronage in 1996. Aljazeera emerged and immediately gave airtime to a range of religious, political and cultural viewpoints. Intellectuals, who in the past had no chance of featuring in public media, could express their opinions freely for the first time. This reinvigorated the Arab public sphere after decades of state censorship. It also renewed emphasis on key Arab political issues. Aljazeera’s brand of

pan-Arabism was not based on revolutionary principles, but rather on public sphere principles. The network's rationale was that access to public argument on a transnational level would liberate Arabs and ultimately strengthen the transnational Arab public sphere.

Aljazeera immediately filled a social need. Local audiences were not pleased with the type of coverage provided by leading global television networks. During the 1991 Gulf War coverage for example, Orientalist and military framing characterised the news coverage of CNN. The latter portrayed American troops as individual human beings, whereas Iraqis were dehumanised. Moreover, in tune with the Pentagon's communication strategy, CNN conveyed the incorrect impression that this war was clean and surgical. Similarly, in Orientalist terms, CNN's coverage of the 1994 American intervention in Somalia divided the protagonists into good guys (American troops) and bad guys (Somali warlords). This polarity moulded the different ethnicities and political forces in the Middle East into one undifferentiated form.

The start of the "war on terror" in late 2001 put the Arab network under the international spotlight. Aljazeera's criticism of American foreign policy decisions and official communication efforts was resented by leading members of the Bush administration, who branded the network as an Al-Qaeda mouthpiece. From a communication point of view, Aljazeera hindered the Bush administration efforts to promote its policies and actions to Arab audiences. The U.S communication strategy was devised by the Rendon Group and by the Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. These efforts were very efficient within the United States, but they proved inadequate to address Middle Eastern concerns. Because of Aljazeera's critical news coverage and current affairs programmes, negative opinions toward the American foreign policy increased. This placed the Arab network, literally, in the line of fire of the U.S. military. Shortly afterwards, during the Afghan campaign, Aljazeera's offices were bombed.

After Afghanistan, the Bush administration concentrated its focus on Iraq. Numerous claims were persistently circulated by the administration's key figures among international media. These included Iraq's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, its threatening attitude to neighbouring countries, and its alleged terrorist connections. The mobilisation of these themes ultimately won the approval of the American people for war, but failed to convince Middle Eastern audiences. As the drums of war started beating, CNN and Aljazeera stepped up their preparedness amidst threatening competition from Fox News and Al-Arabiya, respectively.

CNN and Aljazeera covered all events of the 2003 Iraq War from markedly different perspectives. The general result was a multitude of competing and clashing frames, which underlined the role of the media as the public interpreter of events and as disseminators of ‘packages for consciousness’ (Hallin 1986: 13). Both networks gave their audiences specific cues for reacting to political developments. CNN adopted many Orientalist frames. Accordingly, Saddam Hussein was portrayed as a backward but dangerous Oriental and no differentiation was made between the Iraqi leader and the nation state of Iraq. Iraqis were absent most of the time from the CNN coverage. Depictions of them contained virtually no human dimension. They appeared mainly as a threatening crowd. CNN extensively covered widespread looting by Iraqis, without questioning the responsibility of the coalition forces for law and order. During the toppling of the Saddam Statue, Iraqis were shown shouting and expressing their anger at Saddam and his era. Yet, they were depicted as unable to destroy the statue without the help of the U.S. military crane. This appeared to underline the immaturity of the Oriental character (alongside stereotypes of violent behaviour and threatening attitude). In contrast, Aljazeera portrayed the American-led war as direct aggression against an Arab nation. They used the pan-Arab frame to describe the war as an “invasion”, and after the fall of Baghdad as an “occupation.” Aljazeera focused on the human cost of the war and stressed the illegality of its prosecution. Overall, CNN was deeply imbued with Orientalist frames which portrayed Iraqis negatively, whereas Aljazeera’s deployment of pan-Arab frames did not necessarily entail the demonization of Iraq’s foes.

In terms of military control over the meanings of events, CNN clearly adhered to the Pentagon’s choreography of the war narrative. Military inspired titles were used for the most important episodes (e.g. “Decapitation Strike”, “Shock and Awe”, “Saving Private Lynch”). In particular, “Shock and Awe” was conveyed as a climactic event and as an enjoyable fireworks display. Heavy reliance on U.S. official sources significantly shaped CNN’s war coverage as anchors and guests carried the military’s version of events, including speculative commentaries and Psyops themes (e.g. Saddam Hussein was hit, whole Iraqi divisions were defecting, cities were surrendering). Also, CNN anchors and guests constantly referred to the lethality and precision of American missiles as well as the courage of American troops. During the toppling of Saddam’s statue, CNN, alongside other networks, arranged the episode as a war finale and as a publicly memorable event. In this context, American news outlets drew analogies between this episode and events that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall. CNN primarily used tightly cropped and close range camera shots to inflate the number of the

Iraqis present at the square. They also exaggerated the jubilation of the crowd to fit the Iraqi liberation narrative. On the other hand, throughout the war Iraqi casualties were either downplayed or buried under talk of “liberation” and “reconstruction”.

Aljazeera’s coverage effectively countered U.S. Psyops-themed messages. They denied that Saddam Hussein or any high officials were hit during “decapitation strike”, which was conversely framed as an “assassination attempt” by the Arab network. It also opposed the Pentagon’s perspective during “Shock and Awe” by focusing upon the ensuing destruction and civilian casualties. The entire opening sequence was framed as “Baghdad is burning”. Moments of silence characterised the coverage and this conveyed a sense of grief over the loss of civilian lives. During the attacks that affected journalists on 8 April 2003, Aljazeera reported on behalf of those who had died doing their journalistic duties. Subsequently, they positioned themselves as the champion of news media freedom in the face of censorious military practices.

Aljazeera had some problems in terms of military sourcing. They relied extensively upon the military analysis of Retired General Saad Al-Chazli.²⁰⁶ He often tried to emphasise that Iraqi forces could achieve their objectives, provided they used the terrain in their favour and their equipment to full potential (in contrast, for CNN the outcome of the war was never in question). There were other instances where the Arab network relied on dubious Iraqi information, and provided significant airtime to the Iraqi Minister of Information. However, Aljazeera was able to balance these opinions by giving room to U.S. military spokespeople and by covering CENTCOM and other Pentagon briefings. Therefore, one can say that, in comparison to Aljazeera, CNN was more prone to manipulability by military Psyops.

But a question remains: did Aljazeera provide a propaganda critique or was it simply a propaganda conduit for a different propaganda line? In my opinion, Aljazeera’s war coverage was not explicitly planned so as to represent participatory democratic ideals against militaristic discourse. The Arab network was first and foremost a news media organisation which aimed to attract audiences and generate profit. They were also not aligned with any particular social or political movement. It is true that Aljazeera had provided airtime to Jihadists, social activists and facilitators of social change, but this was simply a reflection of

²⁰⁶ Al-Chazli belonged to the Nasser Era. He became an Egyptian war hero during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War when he successfully led the Egyptian Forces’ breaching of the Bar Lev Line and crossing of the Suez Canal. This constituted at that time a major military breakthrough.

Arab politics. For me, the Arab network did not intentionally set out an alternative news source during the Iraq War. They simply sought to outmanoeuvre the competition and provide good footage and credible information (so as to not lose viewership to their competitors). Consequently, when the war started they simply acted on professional premises, corroborated incoming pieces of information, and tried to put stories together. The Arab network had a large number of crew on location (unlike CNN whose news crew was expelled from Baghdad after the “decapitation strike”). Aljazeera correspondents understood the language and the culture, and thus provided a constant flow of valuable information and imagery to the control room in Doha. The negative reactions of the Bush administration and the barrage of criticism to which Aljazeera was subjected, simply reinforced scepticism of American foreign policy objectives. The targeting of Aljazeera’s bureau became a major international media story. Such profile shaped Aljazeera’s image as a conduit of anti-war discourse. For media scholars, the Qatar based channel became identified as a major challenge to the dominant Western media discourse, and exemplified the contra-flow phenomenon, whereby international newsrooms imparted local and / or regional perspectives on major international events.

But being critical of the American side did not mean that the Arab network was reproducing messages crafted by the Iraqi information ministry. It is true that Aljazeera anchors and correspondents generally showed some consideration to the Iraqi side, but they also criticised, at times, Iraqi military planning and operations. It should be noted that Saddam's regime twice shut Aljazeera’s offices in Baghdad during the war, and expelled one of its most renowned reporters, namely Tayseer Allouni on 2 April 2003.²⁰⁷ As a result, Aljazeera decided to suspend the work of all its correspondents in Baghdad, Basra and Mosul, while maintaining the broadcasting of live and recorded images received from its office in Baghdad.

In broad terms, this research has sought to analyse news frames in relation to the coverage of military conflicts in the Middle East. News frames influence worldviews and attitudes by emphasising specific beliefs, values, and facts, and endowing them with particular relevance in relation to given issues. In the context of the 2003 Iraq War, this study has uncovered the workings of U.S. military propaganda. It has also shown how military propaganda practices worked in duo with framing processes adopted by American news media generally, and CNN in particular. These practices were imbued with the deep frames of Orientalism and anti-

²⁰⁷ According to Sa’eda Kilani, ‘One of Al-Jazeera reporters in Iraq had been physically assaulted by former Information minister Mohamed Saeed As-Sahhaf for daring to broadcast events which cast the regime in an unfavorable light’ (Kilani 2004: 144-145)

terrorism. Here, it was noticeable that Arab news media, and particularly Aljazeera, employed counter frames emanating from pan-Arabism which undermined the legitimacy of U.S. military-media warfare on the global stage. The originality of this study derives from the cross-cultural examination of how rival satellite television networks covered the same world event. The findings will, I hope, provide a platform for future studies concerning the mobilisation of media bias, and its contestation with regard to U.S. interventions in the Middle East.

In this context, the phenomenon of frame formation is crucially important in explaining how conflicting news perspectives arise. As described in earlier chapters, frame formation depends on numerous factors, such as culture, ideology, professional values, bureaucratic norms, and economic interests, which combine to frame events within ideological, political and cultural contexts. In certain cases, this produces politically controversial representations of “us” and “them”. Such constructions align with hegemony theory, which considers the media as a terrain of struggle in which recurrent contests of representations take place. This contest happens between hegemonic discourses and their challengers from groups that lie outside dominant institutions (Kellner 2005: xv). In the case described here, Aljazeera provided a powerful normative counter to the hegemonic, militaristic orientation of CNN.

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