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# COVERING CONFLICTS

**The coverage of Iraq War II by  
*The New Zealand Herald, The Dominion Post and The Press***

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
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by  
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To my dearest wife Shabana and daughter Afza

## ABSTRACT

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The New Zealand news media have covered Iraq War II extensively, and from different perspectives, shaped by reporting restrictions, public opinion and editorial policies of the media organisations. This thesis studies New Zealand's three largest daily newspapers' coverage during the invasion phase of the war exploring their reliance on global news agencies such as Reuters, AFP and AP and on elite British and US newspapers. The research also aims to explore the newspapers' dependence on global news agencies and other content providers and the extent of US and Coalition domination of the news agenda.

Global news media, including mainstream news agencies which mostly rely on government and military officials for information on military conflicts such as Iraq War II, become channels for propaganda and facilitate elite sources to set the agenda for national and global audiences. A content analysis of the three daily newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – reveals that the war coverage in New Zealand was framed by international news agencies, US and UK newspapers. And their reliance on US and Coalition official sources in the news construction meant that they became vehicles for propaganda. The mainstream New Zealand newspapers' coverage of Iraq War II is examined through the contexts of globalisation, news flows, media-source relations, news management and propaganda as these are the issues that have shaped the war journalism discourse in New Zealand.

As there have not been many studies in New Zealand of news media coverage of wars, this research is an opportunity for studying mainstream newspapers of a country that is not a direct participant in the war. It gives the opportunity to compare reporting by newspapers in a country not directly involved in Iraq War II with that of countries that are directly involved. What emerges from this study is that the level of involvement in a war is no longer the most important factor in determining the direction of news media coverage. News values, globalisation, economic interdependence, news flows and propaganda are all highly significant factors affecting coverage. This thesis shows that the US military and government sources dominated the news agenda through various media management strategies. The findings of this research also demonstrate the dominance of the global news agencies and US and UK publications as main content providers in the war coverage. The implication of this is that the few Western media outlets are able to set the news agenda for news retailers such as New Zealand newspapers, and their readers.

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I dedicate this thesis to the Maldivian journalists who are fighting for greater press freedom and media pluralism; and hope that in their journalistic works they will be conscious of the propaganda and news management strategies of contesting sources who will attempt to manipulate professional media discourse to achieve favourable coverage and to manufacture consent.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Australian Associated Press
ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulation (New Zealand)
AFP	Agence France-Presse
ANC	Audited newspaper circulation
ANM	APN News & Media
AP	Associated Press
APTN	Associated Press Television News
BSA	Broadcasting Standards Authority
CENTCOM	Central Command (Coalition)
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IMF	The International Monetary Fund
INL	Independent Newspapers Limited
KRT	Knight-Ridder Tribune
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NWICO	New World Information Communication Order
NZPA	New Zealand Press Association
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
TVNZ	Television New Zealand
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UPI	United Press International
WAN	World Association of Newspapers
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background to the research

Despite the geographic distance from the conflict zone, New Zealand print media have given Iraq War II a high news value. At the outbreak of the war special sections were introduced by newspapers and more space was allocated for the war coverage, thus setting an agenda for public discussion and debate. In the construction of the conflict for local audiences, the mainstream New Zealand newspapers mainly relied on news sources such as Reuters, AFP and AP, also known as the 'Big Three' news agencies (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007), which are "responsible for the image of the world presented to the world's public" (Horvit, 2004, p 3). Content was also sourced from major US and UK newspapers.

The global news media covered Iraq War II, which began on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003, from different perspectives, shaped by reporting restrictions, news management, public opinion and editorial policies of media organisations. Reporting restrictions from the US and UK military were placed on the 'embedded' journalists and even those working independently (unilaterals) to report the war to a world audience. These unprecedented media policies and editorial leanings of major news media in the US and UK, as well as political and cultural factors, shaped the direction and orientation of the coverage. For

example, in the Middle East the way the Arab news media constructed the conflict differed from the approach of the news media in the US and UK, reflecting the significance of ideological orientation in covering Iraq War II (Rantanen, 2004). Coverage of military conflicts is challenging, given the pressures and constraints from military and government, in addition to public and market forces. These factors affect how conflicts are reported and covered in countries that are directly involved. Even in countries that are far removed from the conflicts, political, cultural and market factors influence the framing of the wars. According to Boyd-Barrett (2004), “War reporting is generally one sided. The media typically cover war from the point of view of the country in which they and their major owners and readers are based, reflecting the point of view of that country’s government and foreign policy elites” (p 29).

As a senior BBC executive said in November 2003, in reference to Iraq War II coverage, “news organisations should be in the business of balancing their coverage, not banging the drum for one side or the other” (Cited in Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p 10). The normative aspects of ‘objectivity’ and ‘fairness’ are far removed from war journalism discourse. To construct a ‘balanced account’, journalists and editors should try to get both sides of the story (Knight, 1982). In war journalism, however, organisational, logistical and political factors compromise reaching the ideals of objective journalism. In Iraq War II a balanced and objective coverage has been difficult to achieve given the constraints both embedded and unilateral journalists have faced in covering the conflict.

The heavy dependence on major news agencies for war coverage makes the news media vulnerable to propaganda and spin. As Boyd-Barrett (1997) contends, during major military conflicts “news agencies were vehicles for dissemination of state information and propaganda to national and international audiences” (p 132). However, through rigorous news selection, editing and framing processes, newspapers can orient the coverage in different ways (Entman, 1991; Zaman, 2004). In the case of the war in Iraq, a newspaper could emphasise the humanitarian impact or frame the war as a ‘war on terror’.

This study explores how the three main daily newspapers of New Zealand – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – covered the military conflict

between March 21 and May 22, 2003, examining the news flows, media management, media-source relations, themes, direction and orientation of news sources, and the extent to which international news agencies were part of Iraq War II journalism discourse.

The New Zealand news media “relied heavily on international news providers” for the coverage of the war in Iraq (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005, p 245). The heavy reliance on news agencies and other content providers for war coverage is a reflection of, amongst other things, the globalisation of news.

Using globalisation as a theoretical framework, this thesis also focuses on the changing nature of news flows. The study seeks to understand the changing nature of news values among New Zealand print media as well as the global-local dynamics in news dissemination. In the process of globalisation, news agencies have become major players (Boyd-Barrett & Rantanen, 1998), providing content to a diverse mix of global newspapers and contributing towards large-scale homogenisation through media and other cultural products.

Regarding the New Zealand print media, owned by foreign media corporations, the reliance on international news agencies and affiliated newspapers also reflects the growing dynamics of the globalisation of news. The mainstream New Zealand newspapers’ coverage of Iraq War II is examined through the theoretical dimensions of globalisation, news flow, media-state relations, news management and propaganda.

## 1.2 Theoretical dimensions: An overview

International news has become a significant component in the global news media output, which reflects several variables that are at play: the globalisation of media and cultural products; information and communications technology that is accelerating the ‘globalisation of media’, and the interconnectedness of the nation state and global economy that creates a demand for global news and information about major news events such as wars and natural disasters. The globalisation of media and cultural



products is readily visible in the network of global news agencies and content providers for the world news media. These global news agencies are able not only to commodify news and information but also to set a common global news agenda and thus influence public opinion. Having commanded a larger market of news retailers around the world, a few elite global news agencies are able to shape how a military conflict is constructed in the wider global news media (Thussu, 2002). In the context of Iraq War II coverage in the world media, the news ‘wholesalers’ have the editorial advantage of constructing the conflict and setting the news agenda for media consumers, particularly if gatekeepers do not apply frames in order to make the news more relevant to the local audiences.

When the world news media rely on news agencies and other third-party content providers for the coverage of military conflicts, the propaganda and public diplomacy practices of the key news actors also come into the equation. As news retailers in a periphery nation, New Zealand newspaper editors do not have the editorial influence to ask a news agency journalist in the conflict zone to pursue a story from a specific angle that may be relevant to New Zealand audiences, instead relying on what flows out from the wires. News retailers do not have an organisational set up or even time, in the fast-paced news rooms, to verify the facts and check on the credibility of the primary sources. Thus not only news agencies become powerful agenda setters for news media in many nations (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985; Stevenson & Cole, 1984; Whitney & Becker, 1982) but also, especially in times of military conflicts such as Iraq War II, official sources are given the opportunity to convey messages to the global news media, and consumers.

After the failure of the Vietnam War (1965-1975), partly blamed on the extensive negative media coverage of the “carnage and destruction” (Williams, 1993) in Vietnam, the US developed information and news management strategies to avert a ‘Vietnam Syndrome’. Since then, the US military and government have managed coverage of major conflicts, such as the 1983 invasion of Grenada (Taylor, 1997; Venable, 2002), conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and Iraq War I and II (Knightley, 2000; Kellner, 1992; Norris, 1994; Katovsky & Carlson, 2003). Journalists working within this environment of news management are likely to be influenced by the orientation given

by military and government officials. In the conflict zones, official sources set the agenda for journalists constructing news events. When copy filed from the battlefields is fed into the global news cycle, the opportunities are maximised for military and government officials to manufacture consent, especially when there is high dependence by world news media on news agencies and other syndicated news services.

### *1.2.1 Globalisation and news flow*

In defining globalisation, early theorists took a holistic approach encompassing media and communication within the cultural theories of economic and political globalisation (Rantanen, 2005). This is partly because early globalisation theorists were not media and communication scholars. Roland Robertson (1992), who has reviewed globalisation from a sociological perspective, sees the interconnectedness of societies around the world, whereby global events have a bearing on the local. For him “globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of the consciousness of the world as a whole” (p 8). In this process of compression and intensification, the communication media are principal agents.

Anthony Giddens (1997) defined globalisation “as the intensification of world-wide social relations, which link distant localities in such a way as that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p 19). This linking of distant localities has been made possible by the media and communications technology that has gradually transformed the world into a ‘global village’, as theorised by McLuhan in the 1960s (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967). The impact of the news media on political and economic decision making has become great, with instant global coverage of events by print and broadcast media, as well as web-based news media.

As Herbert (2001) argues, the “globalisation of news is having far reaching effects on the news gatherers and the news disseminators” (p vii), with communications technology advancing the news gathering and dissemination process, and the commercialisation and globalisation of media impacting the content and directions of coverage. Held et al (Cited in Beynon & Dunkerly, 2000), who identified four periods

of globalisation – pre-modern, early modern, modern globalisation and contemporary globalisation – see new media technologies, global media infrastructure and media products as having been the key agents of cultural globalisation.

The globalisation process has been accelerated by socio-economic and technological developments, and in this “intensification of world-wide social relations” (Giddens, 1991, p 64) the news media, most notably the global news agencies have been key players. As gatherers and sellers of news, the news agencies have supplied news to clients around the world, meeting the growing demand for global news information. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the few news agencies concentrated in the developed nations have expanded their markets through business arrangements with local and national news agencies. Even today the “balance of news power” (Boyd-Barrett, 1998) remains the same, with three large news agencies – Reuters, AFP and AP – the key market players in the global news wholesale business. Boyd-Barrett (1997) contends that “[news] agencies contribute both to processes of national consolidation and to globalization, simultaneously” (p 132).

News media, as retail outlets of the continuous news feed supplied by news agencies, are completely dependent on the news wholesalers for international news coverage. In the 1970s, debate about the imbalance this dependence created in the periphery nations has led to a UNESCO-sponsored research document, the MacBride Commission report, which outlined the main points of the New World Information Communication Order (NWICO). It recommended that “the utmost importance should be given to eliminating imbalances and disparities in communication and its structures, and particularly in information flows”, and that “developing countries need to reduce their dependence” on international news content flowing from the major news agencies (The MacBride Report, 1980).

More than 30 years later, the imbalance remains. Although flow from periphery nations to the centre has increased, the relative change is marginal. There exists a major international ‘news cartel’ comprising the ‘Big Three’ news agencies and elite US and UK newspapers, which dominates global news space through the commodification and export of news products ranging from news text, photos, graphics, multimedia, video,

and online-ready content (Boyd-Barrett, 1997). The heavy dependence on a handful of news suppliers results in agencies dominating the foreign news agenda in world news media (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985). According to Stevenson and Cole (1984), there is evidence to suggest that Western news agencies influence what parts of the world and what kinds of news the national media should focus on in covering international news. In 2002, Reuters, AP, AAP and AFP accounted for nearly 70 percent of the international news in a study of five New Zealand metropolitan newspapers. News content from Reuters, which is one of the largest news agencies, accounted for 35.7 percent (Taira, 2003). For the coverage of Iraq War II, the major New Zealand newspapers depended heavily on international news agencies and other content providers (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

Most newspapers rely on news agency copy to fill the daily foreign newshole, although larger newspapers such as *The New York Times* can also use their foreign correspondents for coverage of global events and thus can choose what they print (Skurnik, 1981). However, smaller newspapers with fewer resources have to depend on news agencies and few can afford to subscribe to several news agencies, let alone send reporters on foreign assignments such as to cover the war in Iraq (Shoemaker, 1987).

### *1.2.2 Source-media relations*

News sources are essential to the process of news production as they have access to and often own the necessary raw material. During military conflicts, military and government sources are in a position to be able to influence the news product through their relationship with news media. The media and military sources work closely together and the dependence of journalists upon the sources affects how a story is covered (Palmer, 2000). Noting how the news media are so often subject to the influence of their sources, Shoemaker (1987) wrote that “news comes to journalists primarily from institutional sources who exert pressure of various kinds on journalists

and the news process” (p 14). By analysing the extent of usage of official sources it is possible to determine how military and government sources are able to set the news agenda. According to Kern et al (cited in Horvit, 2004), “the best available measure of influence on news coverage” is the use of sources in the news items, as the preference given by journalists to their “choice of sources allows one to quantify news content and to make inferences about who was the most successful in setting the media’s agenda” (Horvit, 2004, p 2). Measuring the number of stories attributed to official sources gives an indication of the levels of news control by the government (Bennett, 1988) or other official sources.

Herman & Chomsky (1988) describe the existence of a “symbiotic relationship” between the sources and media, as it is in the economic interests of the news media to establish a good relationship with sources. According to Goldman (1999), “sources also exploit this dependency relationship by ‘managing’ the media, by suggesting the sort of ‘spin’ on events that favours their own interests though it may be at odds with the truth” (p 186).

Allen (1996) notes that the media dependency on institutional sources has undermined objective reporting of events and minimised the room for context and issue-oriented reporting in the coverage of US-led wars. There is a relationship between the military and the media that can be characterised as interdependency (Allen, 1996). According to Reese and Buckalew (1995), who studied the news framing of Iraq War I, “the news media and corporate needs work together to further a culture supportive of military adventures such as those in the Gulf” (p 41).

### *1.2.3 News management and propaganda*

During military conflicts, political and military actors attempt to influence the news production through various strategic communication practices. Robust public relations and news management plans are laid out even before military campaigns are launched, and this has been very evident in Iraq War II with the embedding of journalists with troops. Although the Pentagon claimed that embedding has “revolutionized media

coverage of war” (Murray, 2003, p A 4), the practice has undermined the professional integrity of journalism, as embeds become potential tools for the military to communicate propaganda messages to the global audience. According to Anthony Lloyd (2003) of the *Times* of London, ‘embedded’ reporters “are potential propaganda tools, subject to limitations dictated by the military, including censorship and very little freedom of movement” (p 7). A study by Pfau et al (2004) showed that embedded print coverage of ‘Operation Iraqi Freedom’ was more favourable in overall tone towards the military and in depiction of individual troops.

Long before the war in Iraq, warring nations have managed the media to obtain favourable coverage and undermine the enemies. During World War II the US managed the news media so as to achieve the military and political objectives of the war. According to Halliday (1999), “news management, that is control by states of coverage of wars, has been an element of media work in such conflicts for more than a century: the Gulf War was the occasion to put certain well-tried practices into operation” (p 131). Through news management and propaganda, official sources attempt to influence news gathering and reporting. During the Yugoslav crisis, a news management technique used by the US and UK to counter oppositional views was to saturate the news space. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea noted that the alliance “deliberately saturated the airwaves with successive briefings from Brussels, London, and Washington, timed to keep the 24-hour media pack running breathlessly in circles” (Kitfield, 1999, p 2552).

During military conflicts official sources are able to obtain favourable coverage through media management, which has become highly sophisticated and institutionalised in the US. According to Bennett, (1994) “the growing sophistication of press management techniques holds the constant possibility that some officials will be more successful engineering favourable media framings for their positions than others” (p 29). One of the successes of news management during Iraq War II was the story on the rescue of Jessica Lynch. As Compton remarked, “spectacular narrative forms” such as “Saving of Pvt. Jessica Lynch,” were “fully integrated into military and corporate public relations campaigns along with the daily production regimes of 24-hour cable news channels” (Compton, 2004).

In the process of news management and public diplomacy, propaganda is used to engineer opinion. As noted by Lasswell (1927), “Propaganda is concerned with the management of opinions and attitudes to ... mobilize hatred against the enemy; preserve the friendship of allies; preserve the friendship and, if possible, to procure the co-operation of neutrals and demoralise the enemy” (p 195). Thus, in the news management that has taken place during Iraq War II, the government and military have engaged in opinion engineering to achieve their objectives.

Public Relations firms are used by governments in the information war. During the 1990s, the CIA hired the Rendon Group to wage a PR war against Saddam Hussein, spending a reported \$23 million (Meyers, 2004; Rampton & Stauber, 2003a). The Rendon Group also got a multimillion dollar contract from the Kuwaiti government for a PR campaign against Iraq’s 1990 invasion and mobilising public support for Operation Desert Storm (Miller, Stauber, & Rampton, 2004). In this way PR firms, employing both covert and overt methods, deluge the global media market with messages to promote ideas and interests and discredit opponents.

### 1.3 Iraq War II and the New Zealand press

Due to the time difference, The New Zealand newspapers could only carry the news of the start of the US-led attack on Iraq a day later, on March 21, 2003. US President George Bush gave orders to strike Iraq at about 6.30pm on Wednesday ET (11.30 am NZT, Thursday 20 March). As expected, the entire front pages of the three leading daily newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – were splashed with banner headlines about the war, with large photos across the page. With coverage sourced from leading world newspapers and news agencies, the editors placed very high emphasis on content and form in presenting the Iraq conflict. Content refers to writing and reporting, while form is associated with visual appeal (Gladney, 1997), such as the use of photos and news graphics. The international news agencies and other sources that dominated the war discourse in the New Zealand press were Reuters, AP, AFP, AAP, *The Times* of London, *The Independent* and *The New York Times*.

*The New Zealand Herald* ran a bold headline, “Iraq strikes back” on the front page of the March 21 issue. A picture of Baghdad in flames was splashed across the page, with the newspaper’s masthead superimposed on the photo (“Iraq strikes back,” 2003). There was also a three-column photo showing crew loading bombs onto an F14 jet aboard aircraft carrier *USS Abraham Lincoln*. The story, which was the only one on the front page, was sourced from Reuters, KRT, AAP, *The Independent* and *The New York Times*.

Unlike *The New Zealand Herald*, the Wellington-based newspaper *The Dominion Post* highlighted the question whether Iraqi leader was dead or alive, as the initial attack on Baghdad was aimed at what Pentagon called “leadership targets”. The banner headline on the page read “Is Saddam dead?” on top of a full-width photo of Baghdad being bombarded by cruise missiles (“Is Saddam dead?,” 2003). The news item was credited to *The Washington Post* and was also sourced from other agencies.

As was the case with *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post*, the Christchurch-based newspaper *The Press* carried a page-width photo of explosions in Baghdad. Besides the lead story about the attack under the headline “First strike by air” (“First strike by air,” 2003), there was a single-column piece on US attacks on Taliban targets in Afghanistan. There was also a single-column photo of tomahawk missiles being launched from a US military vessel in the Gulf. The main story was credited to AP.

*The Dominion Post* ran an editorial note on the front page of the March 21, 2003 issue, pledging to readers that the newspaper would bring an “outstanding variety of news sources” in the coverage of the war Iraq and vowing that “Anywhere the news is breaking – from remote northern Iraq to the White House – *The Dominion Post* readers will have up-to-date coverage, backed by expert analysis”. *The New Zealand Herald* promised its readers on March 20, 2003 that they would be given the “most comprehensive coverage available in New Zealand” and said “our aim is not merely to relate what happens but to explain events and give their context, as only a good newspaper can”. In the main section several pages were devoted to the war, with information graphics and maps. Each newspaper used special logos to refer to the conflict, calling it “Attack on Iraq” (*The New Zealand Herald*), “War in Iraq” (*The*



*Dominion Post*) and “War on Iraq” (*The Press*). There were 81 items related to Iraq War II in the three newspapers on March 21, with most of the items being carried in Section A.

Coverage of the war was concentrated on the fighting, leaving behind the real debate about whether the war was justified. According to Michael Wolf, who covered the war, the coverage was “90 percent Pentagon story. No context, just blow-by-blow” (Gamble, 2003, p B4).

The mainstream news media – broadcast and print – were not the only sources of news on Iraq War II that people relied on. There was a large increase in the use of alternative news sources such as the internet. According to Xtra, which is New Zealand’s biggest Internet Service Provider (ISP), internet use in New Zealand soared with the start of the war (“War Traffic Runs Hot On The Internet,” 2003).

Similar trends were seen in some other countries at the beginning of Iraq War II. According to Nielsen//NetRatings, American surfers accessed foreign news sites in March 2003 for additional and alternative coverage of the war in Iraq. Aljazeera.net, the website of Qatar-based satellite TV channel Al Jazeera, experienced a 1,208 percent increase in traffic, while in March the BBC World Service website surged 158 percent to 5.3 million surfers, 3.2 million more visitors than in February 2003 (PR Newswire., 2003).

The development of mainstream and alternative news websites on the internet has created diverse media choices for consumers around the world. In the early stages of Iraq War II, those who were not satisfied with national media coverage of the war also sought gratification from the internet, where an enormous range of information and perspectives was available (Rantanen, 2004). However, the mainstream news media’s relevance did not recede, as mainstream news media usually cover conflicts “within a national framework” and “offer complementary news, locating the global news, which often comes from a distance, by the addition of the national actors” (Rantanen, 2004, p 301).

## 1.4 The impact of Iraq War II on New Zealand

With the onset of the war, New Zealanders were concerned about the impact the conflict might have on them. An opinion poll showed that confidence in the economy was possibly the first New Zealand casualty of war in Iraq. According to a One News-Colmar Brunton poll conducted a week before the war began, optimism in the economic outlook had dropped 11 percentage points from early February, and 45 percent of those polled were pessimistic ("War casts shadow over economy - poll," 2003).

Iraq War II affected the global economy, and, as noted by New Zealand Trade Minister Jim Sutton, the result was "a lost opportunity for global economic development" ("Sutton laments cost of war, lost global economic opportunities," 2003). With a weakened market, New Zealand economists warned of a slowing in economic growth for 2003, and Sutton observed that although a few might profit from war, "the world as a whole never does much good" out of major military conflicts ("Sutton laments cost of war, lost global economic opportunities," 2003).

In early 2003 Business and Economic Research Ltd predicted that "worldwide economic uncertainty, escalated by the war with Iraq, could also take its toll" on New Zealand. With the conflict in the Middle East, and the rising dollar, employment was forecast in March 2003 to grow at about 1.5 percent, or 25,000 to 30,000 new jobs, per annum, which was half the rate predicted in Business and Economic Research Ltd's December forecast (NZPA, 2003a).

Just before Iraq War II began, New Zealand's Dubai-based senior trade commissioner Gavin Young said that the country's NZ\$783 million Middle East market could be affected, with the risk of slow payment during the war (Fox, 2003). The Middle East was a major market for both meat and dairy exports. With total exports to the region reaching just under NZ\$800 million in 2002, this was New Zealand's fastest growing export market, up 16 percent on the previous year. Two thirds of these exports were dairy and meat products. For meat industry giant Richmond, 15 percent of its NZ\$1.1bn annual revenue came from exports of chilled lamb and beef to the Gulf region (Stock, 2003).

War II also affected the New Zealand tourism industry, with a drop in arrivals, and Tourism Industry Association chief executive John Moriarty predicted just before the war broke out that “a downturn following a war could last at least two years” (MacDonald, 2003).

The economic impact of the war was felt by timber workers at a Wanganui timber mill, NDG Pine where all its hourly-rate workers were asked to voluntarily stand down for three weeks. With the decline in demand in the United States’ timber market with the onset of war, NDG Pine experienced a higher stock accumulation. The company took similar action after the September 11 attacks in the US in 2001 (NZPA, 2003c). The impact of war was also felt on NZ Post, with revenue expected to decline in the 2003 financial year (Bergh, 2003).

### 1.5 Iraq War II and New Zealand foreign policy

Although New Zealand’s neighbour, Australia, joined the ‘Coalition of the Willing’ to disarm and overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, New Zealand took a position according to which it preferred diplomacy over force, and the use of force only through the United Nations. The New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark expressed a strong belief that “multilateralism is the appropriate way to resolve international disputes” such as the Iraq conflict (Parliamentary Debates, 2003).

However, the opposition, the National Party, favoured supporting the United States. These differences over Iraq crisis reflected the distinct ideological orientation of the two parties. The ruling Labour Party’s foreign policy was shaped by a “liberal internationalist paradigm”, which has influenced its defence policy over the past 20 years, while the National Party adopted a realist model (McCraw, 2006, p 23). In the liberal internationalist worldview, a peaceful world can be secured by promoting democracy, human rights, social justice, disarmament, end of military alliances and supporting international institutions (McCraw, 2006).

New Zealand maintained that Security Council Resolution 1441, which was passed in November 2002, should be the mechanism for the disarmament of Iraq. The UN weapons inspection team, headed by Dr Hans Blix, noted in their report to the Security Council at the end of January the lack of co-operation from Iraq, however following a later visit to Baghdad by Dr Blix and Mr El Baradei, Iraq “moved to accommodate more of the weapons inspectors’ requests” (Clark, 2003b).

However the US argued that diplomacy had been exhausted and Iraq’s non-compliance with resolution 1441 should be dealt with by military action. In an effort to build a case for war, US Secretary of State Collin Powell in February 2003 presented to the Security Council evidence of Iraq’s weapons programme (Schroeder & Robbins, 2003; Parkinson, 2003; Watson, 2003). Without a consensus in the Security Council on the use of military force to enforce Resolution 1441, the US, UK and Australia declared war on Iraq.

Regarding the Iraq issue, in the context of Security Council Resolution 1441 and the findings of Dr Hans Blix, the Labour government made policy statements in New York and Wellington, calling for diplomacy to be used to solve the impending crisis.

New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark also raised doubt as to the credibility of the US findings, in her speech in the parliament on 11 February, when she said that Powell “did not present further concrete evidence of Iraq’s weapons programmes, but did present a case based on intelligence which strongly suggested a pattern of deception and concealment of such programmes” (Clark, 2003a). She made it clear that the New Zealand government favoured diplomacy and was against unilateral military action against Iraq:

The New Zealand Government, like most governments, has sought to uphold the principles of multilateralism, the international rule of law, and the authority of the Security Council throughout this crisis. We do not support unilateral action against Iraq. We place considerable weight on the inspection and disarmament process which has been established. We have a strong preference for a diplomatic solution to the crisis (Clark, 2003a).

Like Helen Clark, Green MP Keith Locke said the revelations by Powell did not prove anything and were nothing but “unsubstantiated claims, vague linkages and unauthenticated pictures and audio” of Iraq’s activities. However, main opposition National Party foreign affairs spokesman Wayne Mapp said the evidence suggested New Zealand needed to get involved further and back US and British efforts to get a second Security Council resolution (“Politicians Differ In Opinions On Powell's Revelations,” 2003).

In support of the US, ACT leader Richard Prebble tabled a motion in parliament that called parliament to dissociate itself from the government’s position and instead offer support to the United States and its allies. The motion was defeated by 84 to 35. With reference to the request from the US for assistance from New Zealand, he told parliament: “shamefully – for the first time in our history – we are not standing up against fascism, against this terrorist, this threat to world peace. ... We should be there ... I don’t think New Zealand has ever been more irrelevant at a time when foreign policy is impacting on our daily lives ... old alliances are being torn up” (Young & Mold, 2003, p 2).

Two days before the start of the war Clark made another statement in parliament presenting the same arguments and reasoning, and regretting the breakdown of the diplomatic process over the Iraq crisis (Clark, 2003b).

In explaining the position of the New Zealand government with regard to the impasse on weapons inspection in Iraq and the impending threat of a US-led attack on that country, Foreign Affairs Minister Phil Goff told the Security Council, on 6th March, that the New Zealand government’s position remained as it stood a month earlier:

We do not support military action against Iraq without a mandate from the Security Council, and we do not believe that the Council would be justified in giving that mandate at this time. As Dr Blix has stated, the inspection process needs months rather than days.

... But now, when the inspection and disarmament process is finally gaining traction, is not, in our view, the time to abandon it in favour of the use of force.

The use of force can be authorised by the Security Council as a last resort to uphold its resolutions. But in view of the recent reports this Council has received from both UNMOVIC and IAEA, this is not a time of last resort (Goff, 2003b).

Nonetheless, New Zealand did send a platoon of army engineers once the formal conflict ended after 1 May. An engineering detachment of 61 New Zealand Defence Force personnel was deployed in September at an estimated cost of NZ\$12 million, to work alongside the British forces under Security Council Resolution 1483, which called for member countries to assist in the reconstruction and restoration of stability in Iraq (*NZDF deployment to Iraq* 2003; Goff, 2006).

New Zealand was also concerned about the impact of an invasion of Iraq on the geopolitical situation in the Middle East, which included Iraq's coherence as a state within its current borders, stability in the Middle East, and the future of the West's relations with the Islamic world (Goff, 2003a).

While the New Zealand government took an 'isolationist' policy, declining to join the US-led coalition, public opinion showed that New Zealanders preferred the Iraq issue to be dealt with through the UN. A *National Business Review* opinion poll in 2003 showed that opposition to unilateral action in Iraq without UN approval grew from 67 percent in October 2002 to 86 percent in February 2003 (Cone, 2003b). Another poll conducted by UMR Research in April 2003, showed that 56 percent of those polled said that it was wrong for the US to invade Iraq without UN approval, while 31 percent said they favoured the US decision, and 13 percent were unsure (Cone, 2003a).

Another poll regarding New Zealand public opinion on the Iraq issue, showed that only eight percent favoured unilateral military attacks by the US-led Coalition against Iraq, while 52 percent supported a UN-sanctioned military intervention. The poll, conducted in the last week of January 2003 by Roy Morgan Research, also showed that 32 percent of New Zealanders said that they would not support military action under any circumstances. When people were asked: "If military action does go ahead, should your country support this action?", 51 percent said New Zealand should not offer support, while 37 percent favoured the country's engagement in the conflict (Roy Morgan Research Polls, 2003).

A One News/Colmar Brunton Poll conducted a month later in February revealed that 78 percent believed that New Zealand should not support the US in a war against Iraq, while 19 percent favoured New Zealand involvement. Furthermore, 71 percent believed that there was no sufficient evidence to justify military action against Iraq (Phipps, 2004).

All the polls showed that public opinion in New Zealand did not favour a unilateral war against Iraq and that the majority of the people were opposed to any New Zealand support for the US in a unilateral war against Iraq.

## 1.6 State and the media in New Zealand

The following provides the opportunity to revisit and re-examine the relationship between the state and the media in a period of crisis such as Iraq War II.

Whereas the news media are generally regarded as the fourth estate in a liberal democracy, the war situation is always a challenge for the news media, but also for the state, to meet the expectations placed on them. If, typically, the fourth estate requirement places responsibility on the press to provide a neutrally detached account of reality, certain fundamental factors must exist for this to be realised. Such factors could be both institutional and structural, ranging from professional journalistic values (Golding & Elliott, 1979; Tuchman, 1980) to ownership of the media and the emerging pressures and environment that accompany such ownership structures (Golding & Murdock, 1997; Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

As discussed in Chapter 6, the professional values of journalism have placed a requirement on the news media to seek and rely on authoritative sources or 'primary definers' for daily news (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 1978; Williams, 2003). By virtue of their position, elected state representatives in New Zealand, such as the Prime Minister, Opposition spokespersons and parliamentarians, are important news sources who are sought by the media and who will seek to speak to the media. To the

extent that they seek each other, one can argue that a relationship of mutual support exists between the two. The mutuality, however, ends there, as friction between them often arises when journalists insist on investigating a line of story, as was seen in the TV3/Clark saga of 2002. Prime Minister Helen Clark was displeased by the way John Campbell of TV3 interviewed her regarding an alleged government cover-up over commercial corn crops contaminated with genetically engineered seed. The matter was taken to the Broadcasting Standards Authority, which ruled in July 2003 that TV3 has been unfair to the prime minister, breaching the balance requirement in the Free-to-Air television code, and was not impartial. TV3 appealed to the High Court unsuccessfully (Campbell, 2003; Cheer, 2004). The private broadcaster was ordered by the BSA to pay NZ\$11,000 in costs to Clark's defence and NZ\$14,000 in costs to the Crown ("TV3's Corngate costs fall due," 2004).

Generally friction between state officials and news media is considered 'normal' in times of peace and the relationship between the two can be seen as 'mutual suspicion', even though each needs the other. As noted by Herman and Chomsky (1988), news sources, such as politicians, and the press have a 'symbiotic relationship', as each needs the other.

Mutual support between state and the media is more noticeable in times of war (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005; Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Allen, 1996; Lawrenson & Barber, 1986). Where a country is directly involved in a war, state and the media cultivate an understanding bordering on patriotism and a sense of allegiance to the nation. This was evident in the media-state relationships in Britain during the Falklands War (Carruthers, 2000) and the US during Iraq War II (Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Lee, 2004).

Given that New Zealand is not directly involved in Iraq War II, a careful understanding of the state-media relationship in times of war is required. As discussed in Chapter 3, increasing media concentration and ownership in New Zealand has had implications on the diversity of views (Abel, 2004). The neo-liberal policies of de-regulation and privatisation in New Zealand the 1980s have influenced the media environment today (Norris, 2002; McGregor, 1992). First, those policies broadened the scope for involvement of foreign enterprises in the media environment in this country. Second,



they also introduced the prospect of linkages, through merges and acquisitions, between the media in New Zealand and the media off-shore. Third, they highlighted the role of the state in the contemporary media landscape.

Because the state has no ownership of the press, one can only infer its position concerning the latter by a close look at its stand regarding broadcasting. In this regard, the charter governing the state broadcaster TVNZ and which was approved by the government in May 2001 (*Public TV charter released*, 2001), demonstrates the state inviting TVNZ to provide diversity in programming and to remain relevant to minority interests as well. The charter, which was formally implemented in March 2003, states that in fulfilling the objectives of the Charter, TVNZ aims to “provide independent, comprehensive, impartial, and in-depth coverage and analysis of news and current affairs in New Zealand and throughout the world and of the activities of public and private institutions” (*TVNZ Charter*, 2007).

To this extent one can speculate that the state in New Zealand expects the news media to be relevant to the wider society. Even though the charter was directed at TVNZ, newspaper editors in the country are not unaware of it.

In Max Weber’s (1968) notion of ‘legal-rational’, state officials govern with the assumed consent of the public who elected them. State policies such as the one on the Iraq War will be seen as being in the interests of wider society, and by implication, deserving of media support rather than opposition. As Hardt (1992) noted, in the production and distribution of knowledge (news) society needs to seek guidance from the state:

Accordingly, modern society shaped by the forces of technology and industrialization must turn to government and education for guidance in the production and distribution of knowledge and the protection of individuals against arbitrary rule and disregard of civil liberties (Hardt, 1992, p 57).

What follows from this interpretation, is, therefore, that New Zealand newspaper editors are under no obligation to lend editorial support to the Iraq conflict for two dialectically related reasons. First, utterances from the Prime Minister Helen Clark and ruling Labour Party parliamentarians indicate opposition to the military intervention in Iraq and

second, opinion polls consistently indicate public opposition to the war. A third reason is the tendency of the press to lean towards a plurality of voices rather than just one.

Even as we try to gain insight into the state-media relationship in New Zealand during the period of Iraq War II, it is important to comment on the role of non-governmental actors because of the pressure they put on the state. Church and pressure groups have been seen to be active voices in the condemnation of the attack on Iraq. In February 2003, several leading NGOs, which included Combined Trade Unions (CTU), ECO (representing 65 environmental organisations), Greenpeace, the Peace Foundation, The Body Shop NZ and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Aotearoa) sent a joint letter to New Zealand Prime Minister Ms. Helen Clark, urging her to support a peaceful resolution of the crisis over Iraq (Greenpeace New Zealand, 2003). The letter said:

We urge that the New Zealand Government now declare its support for the proposal being put to the UN Security Council on Friday 14 February by the Governments of France, Germany and Russia for extended inspection and disarmament teams in Iraq. Avoiding war and peacefully disarming Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction is possible. It now requires international leaders such as yourself to strongly advocate it. ... As a Prime Minister with a history of peace activism, and from a country and political party known for standing internationally for justice your voice is now needed (Greenpeace New Zealand, 2003).

The anti-war protests in New Zealand in the run-up to the start of the war in March 2003, and during the conflict, reflected the mood of the public. Several NGOs such as Greenpeace, Peace Action Network, Global Peace and Justice Auckland, Coalition Against War, and many civil society organisations were active in organising protest rallies throughout New Zealand. At a protest rally in Christchurch the Anglican Dean of Christchurch, Peter Beck, said that from "What we hear and are told about the Iraqi situation in the context of other policies of American President George Bush's administration, I am left with deep concerns as to the primary motives of the United States leadership" ("Peace rallies oppose war on Iraq," 2003, p 2). In Hamilton, a peace rally was organised by Waikato Catholic Bishop Denis Browne and Anglican Bishop David Moxon, which was attended by Christians and Muslims ("Marches have faith in peace," 2003).

While public opinion was stronger in favour of the government's stand on Iraq the main opposition party, The National Party, believed that New Zealand should lend military support to its traditional allies. National Party's Defence spokesperson Simon Power (2003) argued in an article published in *The New Zealand International Review*, that New Zealand should have joined the 'Coalition of the Willing' to support her traditional allies, the US, UK and Australia, in pursuing "defence and foreign policy strategies that are bilateral, regional and increasingly global" (p 29). And in this direction, he added, New Zealand "must be both responsible and responsive if it is to remain a First World country, and be prepared to adapt its defence and foreign policies to accommodate the new world order" (p 29).

In response to the arguments that New Zealand should have joined the US-led 'Coalition of the Willing', Matt Robson, a senior Labour government official, said on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2003 at the New Zealand Political Studies Association Conference:

It is no longer a case of 'Where England (or the United States) goes we go' automatically. The world is no longer made up of the imperial world and the colonialist. ... The 'junior partner of traditional allies' approach has seen New Zealand committing the foreign policy blunders of making war against Vietnam, supporting apartheid South Africa to almost the bitter end, and turning a blind eye to President Suharto's crimes against his own people and the torture of a nation in East Timor. ... These were blunders committed when we ignored international conventions in favour of unilaterally imposed solutions (Cited in O'Brien, 2003).

New Zealand's foreign policy is also partly based on its belief in rules-based international behaviour, maintaining a balance of interests as the foundation for equitable world order (O'Brien, 2003).

In a special debate in parliament on the question of Iraq, the political parties were divided as to the best way to deal with the Iraq crisis, with Act and National calling for joining the US-led coalition, while Labour, NZ First, United Future, and the Progressive Coalition maintained that force should only be used as a last resort. The Green Party wanted peace at all costs ("The unilateral action that spawned the gamut of factions," 2003). National leader Bill English said that as diplomacy was over, "it is only honest to back the coalition of the willing". Green MP Keith Locke, describing the US-led

coalition as the “coalition of the killing”, told parliament that war on Iraq would be a criminal assault and “in no way a just war”(Young & Mold, 2003, p 2).

With the Labour government and main opposition, the National Party, opposed to each other’s foreign policy vis-à-vis Iraq, and with strong anti-war public opinion, it was likely that war journalism discourse in New Zealand would be influenced by these factors.

As a developed country, with a liberal democratic tradition, New Zealand enjoys greater press freedom. Freedom of expression is guaranteed by the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (The New Zealand Press Council, 2006). In interpreting the Bill of Rights, the New Zealand High Court states that freedom of expression guarantees “everyone [the right] to express their thoughts, opinions and beliefs however unpopular, distasteful or contrary to the general opinion or to the particular opinion of others in the community” (Human Rights Commission, 2007).

Within the above legal framework, the New Zealand news media enjoys great freedom. According to Reporters Without Borders, New Zealand is “flourishing at the head of Asian countries in the World Press Freedom Index”, and is ranked 12th in the 2006 index (Reporters Without Borders, 2006).

However the New Zealand government indirectly tried to influence the coverage of Iraq War I, by expressing concern about the ‘propaganda’ originating from Iraq, while ignoring the media management and propaganda strategies of the US. When Iraq War I started, Minister of Communications Maurice Williamson issued a press release in which he called on the media to exercise responsibility and restraint in their reporting of the Gulf crisis.

The statement was apparently issued to counter extensive reporting from Baghdad and Iraqi sources. The statement said: “The Minister also says he does not want the New Zealand media, television in particular, to buy into the Iraqi propaganda machine...

Saddam is deliberately using television and the rest of the news media for his own ends”.<sup>1</sup>

In the early stages of Iraq War II, the New Zealand government and the opposition directed flak at the news media for publishing photos of US Prisoners of War (POW) captured by the Iraqis in the first week of the conflict. Both the Labour and National parties censured the newspapers for carrying the photos, which were released by Al Jazeera television.

As stated by Herman and Chomsky (1988), use of flak is an attempt by the state or political elites to influence or ‘discipline’ the media (p 2). During the two conflicts – Iraq War I and II – the New Zealand government became critical of the media, when coverage affected their foreign policy objectives or angered close allies such as the US.

Apart from the protest by the government concerning POW photos, there were no incidents in the period under investigation where the state directly interfered with the news media and tried to influence the direction of coverage.

In the end therefore, unlike in countries such as Australia and the US for instance, New Zealand newspaper editors are not under the same pressure to editorialise in favour of the war. Majority of the public as well as NGOs do not impose pro-war pressure on the editors wither.

## 1.7 The New Zealand news media – an overview

The history of print media in New Zealand dates back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, when newspapers were established in various colonies, mainly aimed at promoting the vested interests of their owners. However, with the launch of New Zealand’s first daily newspaper, *The Otago Daily Times*, in 1861, the commercialisation of print media

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<sup>1</sup> Press Release issued by Minister of Communications Maurice Williamson, 25 January 1991. Wellington.

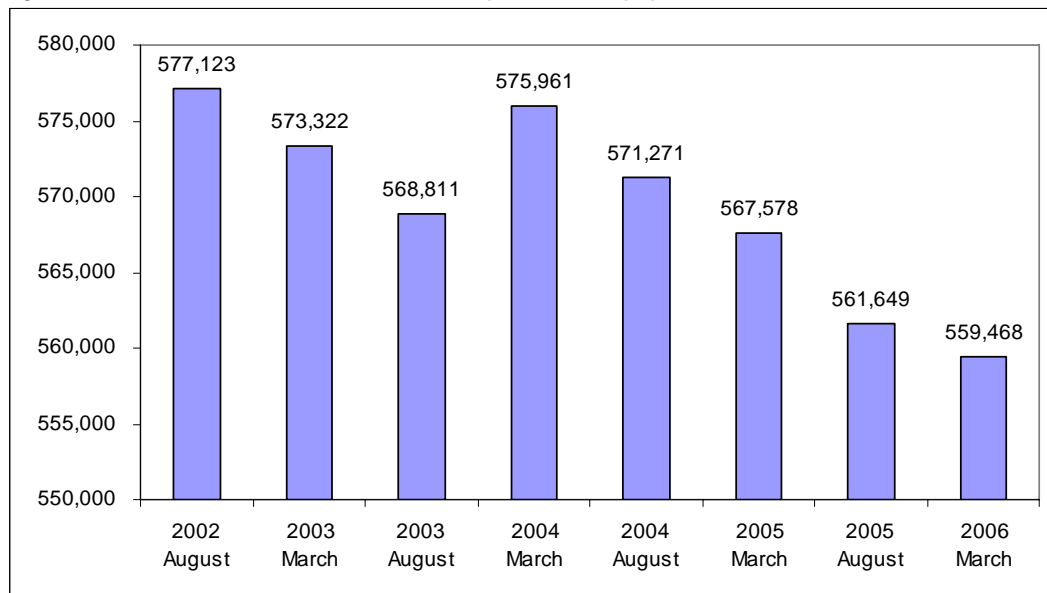
began (Tucker, 1992). The other daily newspapers, which were launched in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were *The New Zealand Herald* (1863), *The Evening Star* of Dunedin (1863), *The Evening Post* (1865) and *The Evening Star* of Auckland (1870), which later became the *Auckland Star* (Bradley, 1973).

Due to economies of scale, newspapers in the early days of print journalism saw the need for mergers and amalgamations, and as Bradley (1973) observed: "... newspaper publishers found it increasingly necessary to co-operate in the construction and use of overseas telegraphic services and news agencies. Consolidation has occurred, as the large publishers in the main centres have amalgamated" (p 5).

One of the major factors that restrained the growth of newspapers during the 1960s was transportation, and the decline in the number of weeklies and illustrated magazines has been blamed on the speedy and regular delivery of overseas periodicals. Cleveland (1970) pointed out that none of the major newspapers were able to achieve national circulation, and concentrated on their cities of publication, although "to some extent they continue to compete with each other and with a larger number of provincial dailies" (p 55). According to figures issued by the Newspaper Proprietors Association in March 1968, there were 39 daily newspapers, eight of which were metropolitans published in four main cities and which accounted for more than 70 percent of the gross daily circulation of 1,035,000 (Cleveland, 1970).

The more recent figures show that there are eight daily newspapers with a circulation of over 25,000 and 13 newspapers with a circulation below that figure. The weekly press consists of seven newspapers, all published from Auckland, which is the main financial centre of New Zealand. There are also four non-daily newspapers. According to Audit Bureau of Circulation figures released in March 2006, the dailies had a combined daily circulation of 701,502 (ABC, 2006). The metropolitan newspapers accounted for more than 80 percent of the circulation at 559,468. The ABC statistics (Figure 1.1) show that among metropolitan newspapers there was a gradual decline in newspaper circulation, from 577,123 in August 2002 to 568,811 in August 2003. A year later in March 2004 circulation had increased to 575,961, but after that there was a gradual decline in aggregate circulation to 559,468 in March 2006 (ABC, 2006).

Figure 1.1 Circulations of New Zealand metropolitan newspapers



Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation

According to a study by Fast Forward Future Marketing in 2002 (NPA, 2006b), in New Zealand readership of the print media is high, with nearly NZ\$4.8 million being spent each week on the purchasing of newspapers. A Nielsen Media Research National Readership Survey for the period Jan-Dec 2004 shows that on an average day daily newspapers are read by 52 percent or 1.6 million New Zealanders over 15 years of age (NPA, 2006a). The decline in newspaper circulation, since August 2004 may be due to the increase in the use of alternative news sources such as the internet or broadcast media by media consumers. A media consumption habit study exploring newspaper and alternative media use by New Zealanders would determine the reasons for the trends in newspaper circulation and readership.

With the constitutional guarantees of press freedom – through the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Official Information Act 1982 – and the capitalist market economy, the media business had by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century become a major industry, transcending national boundaries. Most of the major daily newspapers are now owned by foreign companies, *The Otago Daily Times* being the exception. The nature of media ownership in New Zealand is discussed in Chapter 3.

### 1.7.1 *The New Zealand Herald*

*The New Zealand Herald*, which is owned by APN News & Media (ANM), is the largest daily newspaper in New Zealand. According to ABC circulation figures released in May 2006, in the six months to March 31 the newspaper sold an average of 200,309 copies a day ("Herald maintains title as biggest selling daily " 2006). In 2004 the newspaper was estimated to have a daily readership of 547,000 (*Industry Overview*, 2004). In August 2002 the newspaper's circulation stood at 211,246, and gradually declined from 210,910 in March 2003 to 207,299 in August 2003 (ABC, 2003). APN News & Media, which operates a broad portfolio of businesses across five countries, is one of the largest media companies in Australasia. APN was listed on the Australian Stock Exchange in 1992 and listed on the New Zealand Exchange in June 2004 (*About APN News & Media*, 2004). APN publishes 24 dailies and more than 90 non-daily newspapers across Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand, APN operates *The New Zealand Herald*, as well as a number of top-ranking regional and community newspapers and mass market magazines (*About APN News & Media*, 2004).

### 1.7.2 *The Dominion Post*

Published from the capital of New Zealand, Wellington, *The Dominion Post* is the second largest newspaper in New Zealand, with a net daily circulation of 98,251 in the six months to March 31, 2006 ("Dompost numbers increase," 2006). In August 2002 the newspaper's circulation stood at 101,511, and gradually declined from 99,089 in March 2003 to 98,107 in August 2003 (ABC, 2003). Its readership in 2004, according to a Nielsen survey, was 272,000 (*Industry Overview*, 2004).

*The Dominion Post* was established after a merger, on 8 July 2002, between *The Evening Post* and *The Dominion* (*The Dominion Post*, 2004). During the period of Iraq War II under study, the newspaper was owned by INL, 45 percent of which was controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd.



According to Nielsen *The Dominion Post* is a stand-out performer, gaining more new readers per average issue than any other daily newspaper in New Zealand. Readership is up by 10,000, taking it to 254,000, an increase of 4.1 percent. The newspaper has also increased penetration in Wellington, with half (50.7 percent) of all the city's residents reading the paper each day, and over three quarters (75.9 percent) reading it each week (Fairfax Media, 2006).

### 1.7.3 *The Press*

*The Press* is the largest newspaper in the South Island of New Zealand, with a daily readership estimated in 2004 in excess of 233,000 (*Industry Overview*, 2004). In August 2002 the newspaper's circulation was at 90,759, and there was a small gain to 91,111 in March 2003, followed by a decline to 90,394 in August 2003 (ABC, 2003).

According to Nielsen research, *The Press* gained in readership with an extra 6,000 daily readers (2.6%), taking it to 233,000, and continues to perform strongly, recording continual readership gains year on year since 2003. In Christchurch well over half of the population reads the paper each day (55.3 percent), while 82 percent read it each week (Fairfax Media, 2006). Before Fairfax took control of *The Press*, the newspaper was owned by INL, whose 45 percent was controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd.

The paper, established more than 140 years ago, is distributed throughout Canterbury, Nelson, Marlborough, Central Otago and the West Coast. *The Press* provides local, regional, national, and international news and caters to special interest groups such as farmers and business people, and every publishing day provides pages of features covering such varied subjects as health, opinion, food, real estate, wine, entertainment, computers and technology, gardening and more (*The Press*, 2004).

## 1.8 Research objectives

How news media cover military conflicts such as Iraq War II is likely to vary among countries, influenced as they are by several factors such as cultural or geographic proximity, economic implication, ideological orientation and public opinion. News media coverage in a country that is involved militarily in the war may be different from that in a country that remained neutral or where public opinion was against the war. In the case of Iraq War II, the US media ‘rallied around the flag’, thus supporting the invasion, while in a country such as Egypt or New Zealand the orientation of coverage was different.

This research focuses only on the news media content, not on the impact of content on audiences. Thus this thesis will analyse the media content from the sampled newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – to determine the direction of coverage, and the topics and issues focused on the newspapers. Furthermore, the dependence on news agencies and other content providers, and how the US and Coalition dominated as primary definers of news, will also be analysed through relevant theoretical issues, which have already been outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

The research is focused on the nature of war journalism content, news flows and news values and not on the effect of war coverage on audiences. An evaluation of the impact of Iraq War II coverage on public opinion, is another area of research, not within the purview of this analysis.

The objectives of this research, which is focused on the invasion phase of Iraq War II are:

1. To analyse the direction and orientation of military conflict news coverage and how the New Zealand newspapers constructed the war:

The research examines the topics and themes of coverage and the direction of the content. In terms of direction, the items will be analysed to ascertain if they were favourable, unfavourable or neutral towards the main actors in the conflict, such as the US and Iraq. The thematic analysis will look at topics such as the process of combat, impact of war, debate about the war, casualties of war,

military build-up and the technologies of war. As New Zealand did not endorse the US-led invasion of Iraq and public opinion was also firmly against the war, a thematic analysis and examination of the direction of coverage will show how the newspapers framed the war in such a context.

Newspapers orient their coverage according to their news values, news selection and editing processes, thus making some aspects of a story more salient. Hence, this study will find out how the newspapers framed the war through selection and placement of content.

2. To study the dependence on international news agencies and other content providers during military conflicts:

As wholesalers of news to world news media, a few news agencies dominate the global news market and through their coverage of events set the media agenda. In this process of internationalisation and setting news agendas they also act as agents of globalisation (Boyd-Barrett, 1997). This thesis will analyse the extent of dependence on news agencies, and how they oriented the war journalism discourse in New Zealand during the invasion phase of Iraq War II. The study will also analyse the direction of news agencies and editorial content from newspaper staff to determine how various content providers framed Iraq War II discourse.

3. To analyse the extent to which the US and Coalition military and governments dominated the war journalism discourse during the study period:

Media management and propaganda are extensively used by institutional news sources during military conflicts. In Iraq War II, the US and Coalition dominated the global war journalism discourse as they were primary definers of news and thus used PR strategies and public diplomacy to gain positive coverage. This research aims to ascertain the extent of US and Coalition dominance in Iraq War II coverage. The study will also analyse how sources from key countries involved in the conflict, including Iraq, are used in the media.

The following research into these aspects of the Iraq War related media content in New Zealand newspapers will help to answer the research questions discussed in Chapter 7. The thesis will eventually show how the three largest daily newspapers in New Zealand covered the war, the extent of their dependence on foreign news agencies and news services, and how such dependence exposes the news ‘retailers’ to propaganda and persuasion. The thesis will also highlight the globalised nature of international news and the homogenisation of global media discourse by elite news wholesalers.

### 1.9 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into 11 chapters, with an overview of the research, including the theoretical issues, given in the introductory chapter. The introductory chapter also looks briefly at how the New Zealand newspapers covered the war, the conflict’s impact on the economy, and political debates in New Zealand over the invasion of Iraq. A brief outline of the three metropolitan newspapers selected for the study is also given in this chapter.

The historical context of coverage of some of the major global conflicts since World War II, and issues pertaining to war journalism are discussed in Chapter 2 as part of a review of literature. These conflicts were World War II, the Vietnam War, Iraq War I (Gulf War of 1990-91), the Kosovo conflict and Iraq War II. These wars have been selected to reflect historical developments in war coverage, and the role of world powers such as the US and UK in media management and propaganda. The coverage of military conflicts by the New Zealand news media is also explored in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, globalisation is evaluated and discussed from a wider perspective, looking at factors affecting globalisation, the flow of news products, the political economy of news media, and media ownership in New Zealand.

International news agencies and the direction of their content are an important focus of this research and are discussed in Chapter 4. The role of news agencies in the globalisation of news and media content and as agenda setters is discussed.

The news values framework, which is an important guideline for reporters and journalists in their selection of news, for coverage and in news production, is discussed in Chapter 5. This chapter also looks at how news values and other editorial guidelines contribute to news framing.

Another key issue that resonates during military conflicts in particular, concerns the often cosy relations that exist between the sources and the news media. The source-media relationship is discussed in Chapter 6 in the context of media hegemony and the indexing hypothesis.

The research questions and the research methods are discussed in Chapter 7. The primary method employed in this research is content analysis, while interviews were also conducted to ascertain the editorial policies of the newspapers studied. The findings of the interviews are outlined in Chapter 8. Editors from *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*, as well as the New Zealand Press Association, were interviewed.

Chapters 9 and 10 present in detail the empirical findings of the content analysis. Among other things, the direction and main themes of coverage, and the direction of news agencies and news sources are given in these chapters. Furthermore, the findings are discussed in relations to theory and previous research.

The conclusion of the study is given in Chapter 11, with findings put into context within the theoretical frameworks and the literature on aspects of war coverage, media management, news flows and globalisation. The coverage of Iraq War II by the local daily newspapers, who relied on material furnished by international news agencies and other content providers is discussed in the context of theory and the empirical findings.

### 1.10 Limitations of the study

If we take the classical definition of the verbal model of communication: “who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect”, as enunciated by Lasswell (Cited in Severin & Tankard, 1997), this research focuses on “who says what, in which channel”. In this research, the ‘who’ element is attributed to news sources and content providers such as news agencies, while the ‘says what’ refers to the direction of sources, themes and direction of items, and the ‘channel’ is the print media. This is a media content study, not a study of the effects of media content on audiences.

Thus, the focus of this research is on how Iraq War II was covered, and who dominated the news agenda and what aspects of the conflict were emphasised in the war journalism discourse. This study does not look at how public opinion was affected by the war coverage, if at all, nor who relied on which news sources for the social construction of Iraq War II.

Study of all the communication processes was not within the purview of this research, as the focus of this analysis is on the manufacturing and packaging stages, not on the consumption phase of the war content. This limitation was necessitated by the need to focus on the relevant research questions and to make the research project manageable.

The impact of war coverage on audiences is also an important area for future research in New Zealand, given the lack of academic inquiry in this field and the dramatic shift in audience media consumption habits with the rise of alternative sources such as the internet. Given the high use of the internet, which facilitates alternative news sources, a uses and gratification study in relation to Iraq War II or any other major military conflict would be extremely useful to gauge how the global public constructs conflicts from various media sources.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on war coverage, news gathering and issues such as news management and propaganda that journalists and editors have faced in covering some of the major military conflicts since World War II. The focus of this research is how newspapers in New Zealand covered Iraq War II, looking more specifically at the news flows, news agencies and how the official sources, through news management, attempted to set the media agenda and influence direction of coverage during military conflicts such as Iraq War II. To analyse these aspects of war journalism and media discourse, it is important to examine major international conflicts to identify the dominant issues pertaining to the media coverage of wars. In this chapter, those aspects of media discourse are examined by looking at major military conflicts that involved the US and other major powers such as Britain, as they are the major Western military powers in the world, and led the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The military conflicts are World War II, the Vietnam War, Iraq War I, the Kosovo conflict and Iraq War II.

Media coverage of military conflicts increased towards the end of the twentieth century, and this can be attributed to developments in telecommunications, transportation and globalisation. Technological advancement has “transformed the media’s newsgathering capabilities” and has allowed “the media to bring us news live and in colour from anywhere on the globe, including frontline, sharpening fears of negative and horrible war coverage” (Thrall, 2000, p 65).

Globalisation is also changing the way military conflicts are covered (Seib, 2004), and nation states that wage wars are devising new strategies to win the global public opinion in favour of wars they conduct. Military success alone does not give victory – national and global consent is integral to the complete success of a war. As Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during World War II said, “public opinion wins war” (Cited in Knightley, 2000, p 344).

Before military operations are waged, the news media are utilised by the military and governments – on both sides of the conflict – to win national and international public opinion to achieve political and military goals. Winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of their own citizens is necessary before wars can be waged, and, as Hiebert (1993) argues, news media have become an integral “part of modern warfare and ... public relations is a primary weapon of war” (p 30). No longer is national support sufficient but global backing has become essential given the nature of the modern international system. Justifications for wars are made through the news media and certainly propaganda is launched to demoralise the enemy and arouse the passion of others through the media. Taylor (1995) notes that news media are not simple observers of wars, “they have become participants and sometimes their coverage can even provide a catalyst which produces dramatic shifts in political and military decision-making”.

But these dramatic shifts are often caused by a set of events to which governments and military are privy, thus as official and exclusive sources for such events they are able to influence the way the events are covered and reported by the news media. News media which mostly rely on government and military officials for information on political and military events become vehicles of propaganda and facilitate ‘primary definers’ to set the agenda for national and global audiences. In Iraq War II, the US and Coalition



forces managed the media, and attempted to attract positive coverage by embedding journalists with them. Through extensive coverage and putting the crisis in perspective, “the media can shape the ways in which war itself is waged” (Jeffords & Rabinovitz, 1994, p 11).

The increase in media attention to wars and military conflicts means that more journalists are travelling to the fronts, along with the military as ‘embeds’ or independently as ‘unilaterals’. In the D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, on 6 June 1944, fewer than 30 reporters accompanied the military (Hess & Kalb, 2003). Nearly 47 years later at the beginning of Iraq War I (Operation Desert Storm) in 1991, more than 1,600 news media and support personnel were present. And more than 1,700 media representatives covered the initial phases of peacekeeping operations in the American sector of Bosnia in 1996 (Venable, 2002). With more than 1,000 journalists embedded with US and British forces during the invasion phase of Iraq War II, it was “the most covered war in history” (Katovsky & Carlson, 2003, p xi).

## 2.2 Coverage of military conflicts

In a ‘symbiotic relationship’, the military and the media are dependent on each other for their success. As Jeffords and Rabinovitz (1994) observe, these two institutions do not function in isolation:

The mass media ... do not function separately from the government or the military in their coverage of wars. In fact, they often reproduce or interpret the government’s and military’s war reports as well as their own first and second-hand accounts. Conversely the military and the government may censor media reports and repress or reshape what is said. During the Persian Gulf War, the government prevented journalists from travelling alone in the war zone and denied journalists access to certain areas, thereby ensuring a different kind of censorship by restricting visibility of military events transpiring and their consequences (Jeffords & Rabinovitz, 1994, p 11).

Hundreds of reporters go along with soldiers, sometimes risking their lives to cover the death and destruction and the triumph and tragedy of war. Numerous studies have been done on how news media have covered military conflicts around the world.

Following a study of news reports and editorials in nine US newspapers for the pre-World War I period of 1912-1914, Brown (1937) concluded that the press did not explain events that would contribute to a better understanding of what was actually taking place in Europe. The war coverage was controlled by respective countries and content emerging from the fronts was often biased and laced with propaganda. During World War I, “News was highly censored and provided mostly favourable coverage of Allied efforts” and the coverage was “highly patriotic and supportive” and criticism of official policy was rare (Tuyl, 2002, p 232).

Canham (1943) critically examined wartime reportage by US newspapers in the Second World War (1939-1945) and found that sources were the primary problem in restricting information. He said, “I was extremely interested to learn that the decision to hold back and play down American casualties, subsequently altered, was not an army or navy decision but a political or propagandist decision”. The same appears to be true in the case of recent wars including Iraq War II, in which the Coalition casualty details were delayed or withheld. And journalists were restricted and discouraged from taking photos of flag-draped coffins returning to the US from Iraq.

Another study, which shows the passive attitudes of the media, was done by Otsuki (1995), who contends that during the invasion of Grenada and Iraq War of 1991, the media acted as what he termed ‘cheerleaders’. The danger of newspapers depending on military spokesmen and government officials is that objectivity, fairness and professionalism in the reporting are compromised. In a content analysis of *The New York Times* coverage of Iraq War I, Morlan (1992) found that the elite US newspaper used government administration sources significantly more often during the Desert Storm than during Dessert Shield.

Many newspapers rely on international news agencies for news, photos and graphics. A research by Al-Kahtani (1999) found that in the coverage of the Gulf War (1990-1991), the Saudi Arabian press depended on foreign news sources such as Reuters, AFP, AP and UPI. Given the proximity of Saudi Arabia to Iraq, reliance on international news agencies for war coverage shows the high level of dependence on the ‘Big Four’ news agencies by the Saudi press.

### 2.2.1 *Orientation of war journalism*

In military conflicts both the government and military exert pressure on the news media so that people at home and the world in general hear a story that is favourable to the military and political objectives. To reach such goals, attempts are made to control or even suppress oppositional and alternative media, as in the case of Al Jazeera. As Stephen Jukes (2004) observed in *Under Fire: Untold Stories from the Front Line of the Iraq War*, “Throughout the history of warfare, generals and political leaders have sought to influence and win over public opinion, trying to control the flow of information and ensure that their version of events is written in history” ( p vii).

Thussu and Freedman (2003) propose three models of communicating conflict: they see the media firstly as critical observer; secondly as publicist, and thirdly the surface upon which war is imagined and executed.

As critical observers of military conflicts, news media play an ‘adversarial role’. The premise of this narrative is that as “impartial and independent monitors of military conduct”, “journalists are prepared to confront the arguments of powerful voices in government and the military who are responsible for both strategic and tactical decisions” (Thussu & Freedman, 2003, p 4).

History has shown that the news media and the military have cohabited in a cosy relationship (Knightley, 2000), although at different stages friendship have become acrimonious, most notably witnessed in the Vietnam conflict (Hallin, 1986) and Iraq War I and II (Thussu & Freedman, 2003). Thus before becoming critical observers, the media often act as publicists for the military and government. According to Thussu and Freedman (2003) “Mainstream media reproduce the frameworks of political and military leaders and in so doing provide propaganda rather than ‘disinterested’ journalism” (p 4).

The third narrative assumes that the media have become the platform or ‘theatre’ where the information war is conducted. The instantaneity of broadcast journalism, with live coverage of global events, has strengthened this model of conflict journalism. Thussu

and Freedman (2003) argue that “the media constitute the spaces in which wars are fought and are the main ways through which populations (or audiences) experience war” (p 7).

In war coverage, journalists are faced with distinct issues in their pursuit for news, most notably news management and propaganda; organisational matters and national and audience interests. According to Seib (2002, p 94), in covering military conflicts journalists have to confront and consider the following issues:

1. Journalists have to deal with news management and propaganda strategies from various parties including the military, the government, and the political elite
2. Logistical obstacles and safety concerns limit access to news events and sources
3. Governments use patriotism and national interests to ensure that media criticism of policies and war strategies is minimal

Covering military conflicts is a challenging task given the organisational and ideological factors pulling and pushing journalists into various spheres. Thus, maintaining professional integrity in the face of ‘conflicts’ is demanding and challenging, as noted by Boyd-Barrett:

Journalists may unthinkingly subscribe to or knowingly comply with the objectives, ideologies, and perspectives of one or another side to a conflict. Alternatively, they must struggle to make sense of the “big picture” in resistance to information monopolies imposed by state and military. Such challenges and difficulties are the essence of war reporting, and these attributes figure into the genre of war reporting that results (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 25).

More than 85 years ago, at the end of World War I (1914-1918), a British observer commented: “War not only creates a supply of news but a demand for it. So deep-rooted is the fascination in war and all things appertaining to it that ... a paper has only to be able to put up on its placard “A Great Battle” for its sales to mount up” (Lasswell cited in Carruthers, 2000, p 3).

Later military conflicts such as World War II, the Vietnam War and more recently the conflict in Iraq prove this view. Media attention given to military conflicts and disasters has increased and demand for such content is driven by the appetite of the public for sensational content. Media coverage of news events is to a great extent driven by market forces. In the Iraq War of 1991, nearly 75 percent of the 25 major newspapers in the United States enjoyed an increase in circulation, while CNN recorded a ten-fold increase of its audience (Hallin and Gitlin cited in Carruthers, 2000). News media's coverage of wars is also driven by commercial imperatives. Taylor (1995) noted that "Despite the excessive costs of sending foreign correspondents to distant lands based in expensive hotels using up expensive satellite equipment and air time, armed conflict between two or more warring partners is precisely the type of event on which the media thrives".

Another important factor, besides the selective process of reporters and editors, is the corporate and commercial interest of news organisations. The political economy approach to the issue puts the interests and needs of the commercial sponsors or broader economic systems to the forefront of the media organisations (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Market forces also drive newspapers to cover issues familiar and relevant to the audiences and during military conflicts, war journalism discourse is shaped by national interests and political and public consensus on the issues (Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986).

Studies have also shown that the media consciously remove material which may displease corporate advertisers and sponsors in "a process of filtration which is perhaps most noticeable in wartime, when profound disturbance looms" (Kellner cited in Carruthers, 2000, p 19). How NBC reacted to Peter Arnett's interview to Iraq TV in March 2003 is an interesting example of how a media organisation reacted to protect its interests. The New Zealand-born Arnett, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his Vietnam War coverage for the Associated Press, was dismissed by NBC and MSNBC for giving an interview to Iraqi TV in which he said the initial US war plan had failed (Morlan, 1992).

Cho and Lacy (1989) contend that international coverage by Western media is heavily oriented toward conflicts and disasters. A 1984 study of 114 US daily newspapers shows that more than 26 percent of the international stories concerned conflict or

disaster compared to 13 percent of the domestic news stories. A study of Norwegian newspapers (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) also showed a similar pattern in foreign news coverage, with emphasis on conflict-oriented news, while in South Korea (Nam, 1970), of the total international news, 72 percent was hard news such as armed conflicts and catastrophes.

The increase in war coverage can also be attributed to speedier information dissemination, competition among media organisations, and developments in communication and printing technologies. Jon Swartz observes in an article in *USA Today* the leaps made by telecommunications technology in the coverage of wars:

Radio had World War II, Television had Vietnam. Cable TV had the Gulf. Now the Internet may have the US war with Iraq. ... This time, reporters and producers with wireless laptops and handheld digital cameras will file reports from the battlefields and military installations. Cameras are at key locations for live feeds 24 hours a day (Swartz, 2003).

Journalists work in an environment of diverse and conflicting messages – official reports and public relation spins from governments and anti-war movements, as well as public reactions. They are always bombarded with conflicting information and writing reports that are ‘objective’ is not an easy task. Reporters may also have to take into consideration the corporate interests and editorial policies of the media organisations for which they work. Hence, the concept of objective reporting is often difficult for them to adhere to. When objectivity fails, it leads to bias. In the news editing process of selecting which stories become news, and how they are reported, news editors and journalists inevitably bring their dispositions, beliefs, cultural norms and ethnocentric stereotypes to bear (Carruthers, 2000).

Often journalists covering conflicts are caught between the demands of governments to be patriotic and the need to be objective and uphold journalistic values. Ideally journalists have to report without fear or favour, as Jukes point out:

Journalists have a right to report, without fear of attack or intimidation, whether embedded or working independently as free agents. For only by covering all sides of a conflict do journalists have a hope of being able to distinguish truth from propaganda (2004, p xi).

There has been a lot of discussion and debate about the Iraq war coverage in the US media. While some commended the coverage, others expressed dissatisfaction on with the reporting. In a *USA Today* opinion poll of the news coverage of the war in Iraq by the US media, 52 percent rated the coverage as excellent, 32 percent good, 10 percent fair and five percent poor. On the other side, while some media executives and critics argued that television news achieved a spectacular success in Iraq, taking the war immediately into American living rooms, others questioned how clear and complete the coverage really was, suggesting that the public never received a totally comprehensible portrait of what was taking place (Rutenberg & Carter, 2003).

Iraq War I and Iraq War II have seen the military and government managing the media and the coverage being questioned by the public for objectivity and fairness. The media consumers have taken a critical view of the coverage. As Snyder (Cited in Greenberg & Gantz, c1999) points out, when readers or viewers “do not accept wholesale the content of the news to which they are exposed,” they may be said to be critical of the news. Woodall et al contend that prior knowledge helps media consumers remember and process the news and (Cited in Greenberg & Gantz, c1999) in their study conclude that prior contradictory knowledge can become the basis for critical comments.

### 2.2.2 *War coverage in New Zealand*

Although New Zealand has not engaged militarily in more recent global conflicts, it has played roles in World War I, World War II and in the Vietnam War. Research into media coverage of military conflicts in New Zealand is thin. The few studies include analysis of the coverage of the Vietnam War (Witte, 1990) and Iraq War (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005). Although not a direct examination of media coverage of conflicts, research by Ferguson (2004) looked into “the construction of September 11th and the New Zealand response” while Phipps (2004) analysed war and public opinion. Extensive researches of war coverage in New Zealand are few and scope study narrow.

The study by Witte (1990) shows that some newspapers have been vociferous in their opinions of the Vietnam War and New Zealand's involvement in the conflict. The *New Zealand Monthly Review*, which opposed US intervention in Vietnam, made a major issue out of the New Zealand government's decision to send troops in May 1965 (Witte, 1990). The newspaper exposed the war by publishing the findings of a group of prominent intellectuals known as the 'War Crimes Tribunal'. The report details the injuries suffered by civilians as a result of US bombings of Hanoi, and wounds inflicted on people by American anti-personnel bombs. The Tribunal concluded that the United States, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand were committing a "violent war of aggression against the people of Vietnam" (Witte, 1990). The New Zealand news media gave extensive coverage to the Mai Lai massacre and drew criticism from the government. Defence Minister Thompson claimed that the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation's coverage was distorted by the 'saturation' coverage (Rabel, 2005) of the 16<sup>th</sup> March 1968 incident when US soldiers killed unarmed Vietnamese civilians (*My Lai Massacre*, 2007).

Fewer than 4000 New Zealand military personnel served in Vietnam from 1964 to 1972, when the country was "reluctantly drawn into the Vietnam conflict for Cold War reasons relating to the perceived threat of communist expansionism in Southeast Asia" (Rabel, 2005, p viii). According to Rabel (2005) there was bipartisan support for New Zealand's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Vietnam conflict until 1965, then the ruling National government lost the support of Labour in the later stages of the war partly because of the growing anti-war movements in New Zealand. Rabel noted the shift in public opinion and the Opposition stance over the country's involvement in the Vietnam conflict:

... there was no doubt that the Vietnam conflict assumed a new prominence in domestic political debate as protests against combat involvement in the war multiplied in form and number. Differences of approach between National and Labour widened to the extent that the Opposition was prepared to dissent publicly, if moderately, from a decision to send New Zealand soldiers into combat (Rabel, 2005, p 124).



*The Otago Daily Times*, *The Tablet* and *The Truth* supported the war in Vietnam mainly because they leaned towards the National Government of Prime Minister Holyoake. Witte concludes that “the Vietnam conflict was the first foreign policy issue of the post-war era to be debated in New Zealand’s press in such great depth and for such an extended period” (Witte, 1990). The intense debate about the war was mainly due to the involvement of New Zealand. The war was of high news interest and had relevance to New Zealand thus coverage was extensive.

According to a study of media coverage of Vietnam-related issues, coverage leading up to the May 1965 decision to intervene militarily in the conflict, was ‘extensive and objective’. The study, conducted by the Tourist and Publicity Department, noted that “Of the 27 editorial opinions, just before and after the announcement that New Zealand would send a battery to Vietnam, 21 were in favour of the Government’s action, 3 were indeterminate and 3 were against” (Cited in Rabel, 2005, p 123). The three newspapers that opposed the decision were *The Taranaki Daily News*, *The Waikato Times* and *The Auckland Star* – the last commenting that it was not in New Zealand’s interest to get involved in “what is basically an Asian civil war” (Rabel, 2005, p 123). Newspapers that strongly supported the government included *The Dominion*, *The Otago Daily Times*, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Evening Post*.

New Zealand’s six-year military engagement in the Vietnam conflict, alongside the US and Australia, had cost the country \$13 million and 35 lives when in August 1972 Prime Minister Keith Holyoake announced that combat forces would be withdrawn by the end of the year (Rabel, 2005). New Zealand’s departure from the conflict was hastened in December immediately after the Labour government headed by Norman Kirk came to power. The New Zealand media were at the beginning divided in their opinions of the war – some favouring military engagement in the conflict and others advocating only humanitarian assistance. However, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, there appeared to be a consensus in the press on the de-merits of New Zealand military involvement. This change in direction of the press may be attributed to the increasing anti-war protests in New Zealand and America, as well as the human suffering the war was causing.

A study carried out in New Zealand in the early 1970s found that coverage of wars and the armed services was comparatively less prominent compared to focus on economic activity, sports, social issues and politics. Of the 23,200 items analysed in the research only 734 items (3.16%) were on war (Campbell & Cleveland, 1972).

The situation in New Zealand is very similar to that which Al-Kahtani (1999) found in his study of the Saudi Arabian press and their reliance on foreign news services. Both print and electronic media rely heavily on foreign media organisations to provide news content for international coverage. The heavy reliance on Reuters, AFP, AP and other foreign media organisations makes them the agenda setters for the local audiences. After a study of how New Zealand media covered the Iraq War of 1991, Mansfield noted that New Zealand's media were "undoubtedly affected by its (*sic*) reliance on foreign sources with unevenness in the reports which came through" (Mansfield, 1991). Mansfield further observed that "when a paper lifts articles from another media source it takes the risk of publishing an unbalanced story".

The issue of foreign news written by foreign news agencies creating a different perspective through local news media was observed by Tully in 1996, when he said "our view of the world is narrowed by the fact that we rely for our international news on three or four main news agencies. These three news agencies originate from two or three of the world's most powerful Western nations" (Pauling, 1996, p 6).

Gulf Watch, which was established by a group of working journalists concerned about the censorship and bias in the New Zealand media during the Gulf War, also believed that heavy reliance on foreign news sources could be unhealthy and lowered the news media's credibility. In a letter to newspaper editors they said: "We feel more could be done by the news media to ensure the public is aware of the censorship faced in this war – a war widely acknowledged as one of the most censored in history" (Mansfield, 1991).

In the case of Iraq War I coverage in 1991, there were few New Zealand journalists in the conflict zone. Hence, media organisations had to rely heavily on foreign agencies for editorial content. There were only four New Zealand journalists – Tim Donoghue (*The New Zealand Herald*), Paul Bensemman (NZPA), Roy Newsman (Radio New

Zealand), and Ewart Barnseley – covering the Iraq War (Mansfield, 1991). Donoghue (1991) observed the sentiments of many Gulf War journalists when he commented in the *New Zealand Journalism Review* that “journalists arriving in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War were reluctantly resigned to the fact the United States military had already won the battle of the right to know versus the right to win”.

As with the earlier Iraq war, academics and commentators were equally concerned about the coverage of Iraq War II, mainly because of the complete reliance on the elite news sources by New Zealand news media. As there was embedding and other media management strategies by US and UK governments, correspondents in the Gulf region were vulnerable to propaganda.

Research by Comrie and Fountaine (2005) has shown that editorials and commentaries originating from New Zealand were unfavourable towards the US and “overwhelmingly critical” of US President George W. Bush (p 248). Comrie and Fountaine (2005) noted that the New Zealand news media depended on international news services and like most Western countries the news content was sourced from mainstream news agencies thus coverage showed the bias of different media sources:

The resultant coverage reflected the reports of embedded journalists, various biases of some media outlets, and mixed attempts to be objective and balanced. This was fed through a New Zealand perspective that generally opposed the war but still supported its prosecutors (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005, p 260).

Comrie and Fountaine (2005) argued that despite the opposition to the war from the government and the public the war coverage in New Zealand did not “clearly portray what opponents believe was the true story of the war and its causes” because of “the country’s willing consumption of mainstream Western media and values they espouse” (p 260).

Although content from news agencies and other information providers was strongly influenced by elite sources, notably military and government officials, the New Zealand media attempted to put the conflict into perspective by firstly opposing the mainstream views of the US and conforming to New Zealand public opinion that did not support the war on Iraq. Iraq War II coverage in the New Zealand news media was extensive and

the viewpoints diverse. Jim Tully, head of Mass Communications and Journalism at the University of Canterbury noted in an interview with the New Zealand Press Association:

I have been impressed by the way in which some newspapers have given not just extensive coverage but coverage with a variety of perspectives.

Some have made a serious attempt to recognise that we're usually heavily reliant on the western news agencies and have sought to widen the lens a bit ... I think people have taken to heart some really strong criticism that arose last time about the limited range of view points.

I think the public is much more media savvy and sophisticated than they were 10 years ago, and more inclined to read and consume critically the news they get. They know the coverage is managed and they know propaganda is common, so they have in-built cynicism or scepticism of the sort of information flowing out from approved sources ... People are less likely these days to quietly absorb what is being disseminated by the official sources and recognise that games are being played (Cited in Hill, 2003).

There have been strong criticisms of Iraq War II coverage by the press and the alleged bias linked to heavy reliance on international news agencies. David Robie (2003) pointed out that "the bias and editorialising of much of the NZ media coverage, relying heavily as it did on news sources, satellite feeds and wire agencies from Anglo-American protagonists, was quite significant" (p 4). Although there was dependence on news agencies, editorial decisions were made quite independently as shown by the publishing of photos of the US soldiers in Iraqi captivity. Despite objections from the US, the press in New Zealand carried photos of the US Prisoners of War (POW) captured by the Iraqis in the first week of the conflict. This drew criticism from both Labour and National parties.

Both the opposition and the government viewed the publication in the New Zealand press of POW photos as a violation of international law. The National Party leader Bill English urged media organisations not to publish pictures of prisoners of war and asked the government why it had allowed TVNZ to do that in its coverage of the Iraq conflict. Bill English also called on the Labour government to remind the New Zealand media about the rules of covering POWs. He said that "all media outlets, including state-owned television, should be abiding by those guidelines" (NZPA, 2003b).

In Iraq War II coverage the New Zealand media published photos of POWs, as they were “driven to show the images by New Zealand’s competitive media climate ... It’s indicative of the media’s desperation to find a local angle”, according to media academic Jim Tully (NZPA, 2003e). Former *New Zealand Herald* editor Gavin Ellis said it was questionable whether, under the Geneva Convention, captive powers should parade prisoners before the media:

But having paraded them, I don’t think there are any issues related to the convention that bind a news organisation. The Geneva Convention binds sovereign states who are signatories to it ... and their treatment of prisoners. It doesn’t relate to corporate entities, i.e. news organisations within those states” (NZPA, 2003e).

Prime Minister Helen Clark noted that the war coverage “does cast a new light on world journalism so I think there are a whole lot of issues about coverage”. When a New Zealand journalist asked her whether she believed journalists were effectively part of a propaganda machine, Ms. Clark, said: “Truth is always the first casualty of war ... I think we’re in a sort of breathless phase of reporting at the moment where we’ll just stand back and wait for the dust to settle and see what the real story on both of the sides actually is” (NZPA, 2003d).

War reporting in the newspapers was extensive, with emphasis on episodic rather than thematic coverage, with news graphics and photos used widely in the construction of Iraq War II coverage. With event-oriented coverage and lack of context, media consumers are much more exposed to media bias and propaganda from the primary sources. Thus as Tully contended it was important that the frontline reports were only part of the mix, and that they should be placed in a wider context (Gamble, 2003, p B4).

For the war coverage, none of the mainstream newspapers sent reporters to cover the conflict during the major combat period, instead relying heavily on news agencies and affiliated newspapers with whom they had clipping rights. As former editor of *The New Zealand Herald* Gavin Ellis said, “we would only send a journalist to Iraq if troops from New Zealand are directly involved” (Coates, 2003).

Given the changing nature of media systems, globalisation and intensification of news flows as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, a comprehensive analysis of media content in

terms of the coverage in New Zealand media of recent global conflicts is needed. In the post-Vietnam era of global conflicts, major powers that are taking military actions are also employing propaganda, media management and other strategic communication techniques to win national and global public opinion. Thus, the flow of information is often influenced by external factors while organisational and structural variables of media organisations also influence how and to what extent conflicts are covered. In the light of the changes in global media systems and news flows, it is important to analyse how a recent conflict such as Iraq War II was covered in New Zealand.

## 2.3 World War II

Even nearly 61 years after World War II, the jingoism and nationalistic fervour appear to linger in the hearts and minds of some people. For the US journalist Ambrose it was “the best reported war, ever ... The reporters told of what they saw and learned. They refused to glorify America or to repeat a propaganda line – here the contrast with German and Japanese reporters could not be greater” (Hynes, Matthews, Sorel, & Spiller, 2001, p xv-xvi).

This assertion can be contested with evidence of attempts at censorship by the military and to a large extent the conciliatory positions taken by some war correspondents in the face of excessive media management by the Allied countries.

### 2.3.1 *Media as instruments of war*

In the US, with the lessons learned in the control of public opinion at home and abroad, new initiatives in media management and propaganda were taken. The Committee on Public Information (CPI), which was set up in World War I was administered by the Office of War Information (OWI) set up in June 1942 headed by former *New York Times* staff member Elmer Davis. The OWI, jointly with the news media, engineered American public opinion to accommodate the war strategies. The OWI was successful in getting the media’s endorsement of the military’s decision to bomb Nagasaki and

Hiroshima in Japan in 1945 (Solan cited in Miller, 1995). The Office of Censorship, which was also set up in 1942, monitored postal and telegraph communications between the US and other countries. Another instrument that limited war journalism was the ‘Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press’ formulated in January 1942 and which was voluntarily adopted by the major media establishments. Among other things, the code stipulated rules on the “proper handling of news” and was considered “the bible on what and how to report war” (*War Stories*, 2006).

More than 1,600 journalists were accredited by the US military to cover the World War II, and through media management strategies, coverage was controlled in favour of the military:

This accreditation is used to control the press, since correspondents need a passport from the State Department and a press pass from the War Department. The government relies on reporters’ patriotism – asking for self-censorship as outlined by the Office of War Information. Reporters for the most part comply (*War Stories*, 2006).

This system of accreditation, which later was labelled ‘embedding’, was widely used in Iraq War II, often with positive results for the US military and government.

In Britain the House of Commons gave the government *carte-blanche* authority through the Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, to do what it wanted. Under this legal authority “every press, commercial, or private message leaving Britain, whether by mail, cable, wireless, or telephone, was censored. Newspaper editors were prohibited from ‘obtaining, recording, communicating to any other person or publishing information which might be useful to the enemy’” (Knightley, 2000, p 238). The British legislation shows the extent of information control during World War II.

All the warring countries mobilised their media to achieve military and national objectives. Both the Axis and Allied nations controlled the flow of information to support military objectives and to create confusion among enemies. The French imposed direct censorship in the early days of the war, requiring reporters to make four copies of each story.

According to Thompson (Cited in Knightley, 2000) the copy was “taken by a dispatch rider to army headquarters, which was censored, and then to French general headquarters, where it was censored again. From French GHQ it went to the Hotel Continental in Paris, where a representative of the British Ministry of Information took charge of it and passed it to the British officer responsible for communications, who arranged it to be telephoned to London” (p 239).

Unlike Britain and France, Germany took a different approach to media control and claimed that their level of censorship was low. What German chief propagandist Dr. Joseph Goebbels did was scout for neutral war correspondents through the Foreign Press Department of the Ministry of Propaganda. Correspondents were given special privileges such as extra rations and a petrol allowance, and the comparative ‘freedom’ they enjoyed made a big play with their *freie Berichterstattung*, or freedom of reporting (Knightley, 2000). Apparently, the large presence of about 100 neutral reporters in Berlin during September and early October 1939 is attributed to the relatively free environment for foreign correspondents.

The German approach appeared to be successful, as they were able to provide content to US media through the neutral correspondents. According to Knightley (2000) “in the early stages of the invasion of Poland neutral correspondents in Berlin were fed photographs, reports and newsreels developed by the Germans. These contents found their way into US newspapers and cinemas” (p 241).

With tight censorship guidelines, the British newspapers could be forgiven for foraying into falsehood. Britain’s *Glasgow Evening News*, for example, reported the military campaign as a triumph on May 29, just nine days before all the Allied forces in Norway were evacuated (Knightley, 2000). However, Leland Stowe of the US newspaper *Chicago Daily News*, who was a neutral correspondent, covered the war in Norway from Sweden to avoid censorship, thus his story was different. Stowe, in one of his dispatches wrote: “They (the British expeditionary force to Norway) were dumped into Norway’s deep snow and quagmires of April slush without a single anti-aircraft gun, without one squadron of supporting airplanes, without a single piece of field artillery”



(Knightley, 2000, p 248). In one of the biggest military bungles in history the British were forced to withdraw from Norway.

Correspondents from all sides of the conflict had close relationships with the military establishment. Most of them believed in the justification for the war, and were nationalistic in their behaviour and outlook. Reporters wore military uniforms, “flew on bombing raids over Berlin, dug in with Marines on Guadalcanal, hit the beach at Peleliu, waded ashore at Omaha Beach, parachuted into Germany, sailed on ships that fought on the great battles of Midway and Okinawa” (Hynes et al., 2001, p xix). German correspondents also flew in bombers, jumped with parachute troops, and marched with infantry through the abandoned towns of Belgium and northern France (Knightley, 2000).

As US journalist Daniel Shorr notes, the embedded correspondents were part of the war effort. “They would go and ask ‘Would it be harmful if I reported this? Would it be harmful if I reported that?’ ” (Cited in Hess & Kalb, 2003, p 18).

The military saw correspondents as members of the war machine. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme commander in Europe, told a meeting of American newspaper editors: “Public opinion wins war... I have always considered as quasi-staff officers, correspondents accredited to my headquarters” (Knightley, 2000, p 344). Eisenhower also said:

I regard war correspondents as quasi staff officers, and I want to emphasise that in my opinion, each newsman has a greater responsibility than that of a competitive newsman. I am not prepared to treat you as my enemies. If I thought you were, I tell you here and now, I would do nothing for you, I trust you... As staff officers however your first duty is a military duty, and the one fact which you must bear in mind is to disclose nothing which would help the enemy (McConnagh cited in Young & Jesser, 1997, p 40).

On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked the US naval base of Pearl Harbour (Pacific Fleet) sinking five battleships, damaging three, destroying 200 planes and killing 2344 men. The Japanese lost only 29 planes. The American military took steps to ensure that the public remained oblivious to the disaster in Hawaii. According to Morris (Cited in Knightley, 2000) “the cover-up began with an ‘iron curtain’ of censorship that cut off

the United Press office in Honolulu from San Francisco in the middle of its first excited telephone report. So drastic was the suppression of news that nothing further, except for official communiqués, came of Pearl Harbour for another four days” (p 297). With the attack American correspondents came under strict censorship (Young & Jesser, 1997) and for four days they had to rely on official communiqués that came out of Pearl Harbour claiming that only one old battleship and a destroyer had been sunk and other ships damaged, and that heavy casualties had been inflicted on the Japanese (Knightley, 2000).

Although Japanese newspapers accurately mentioned the losses the Americans suffered in Pearl Harbour, censorship prevented the American public from learning of the attack. Some British newspapers that relied on official American sources reported that the Pearl Harbour incident was an American victory. “Jap plane carrier and four U-boats sunk”, said the *Daily Express* headline on December 8. The story reads:

The main US Pacific Fleet is heavily engaged with a Japanese battle fleet, which includes several carriers, just off Pearl Harbour, its Hawaii base. Washington reports late tonight say that one Japanese aircraft carrier and four submarines have already been destroyed by the American forces off Hawaii (Knightley, 2000, p 297).

### 2.3.2 *Media-military relations*

There were occasions where correspondents, perhaps under the threat of censors, relinquished their professional integrity by colluding with the military. News of America’s killing in 1943 of Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the man who planned the Pearl Harbour attack, was suppressed until after the war. The Americans learned his itinerary and Secretary of the Navy Colonel Frank Cox ordered a fighter group at Guadalcanal to kill Yamamoto. American fighters shot down his plane near Bougainville, Papua New Guinea on April 18 (Knightley, 2000).

Knightley (2000) contends that several correspondents heard of the story, but each time a censor stepped in and nothing was published or broadcast until the war was over, American POWs had been freed, and censorship had ended, by which time the newness

of the event had receded. The military's justification for the gag was that Yamamoto was killed after the Japanese code was deciphered.

The United States army and navy applied 'censorship at source' – that is they tried to prevent correspondents from learning anything they did not want them to know. Correspondents were not allowed in the theatres of war unless they were accredited, and one of the conditions of accreditation was that the correspondent must sign an agreement to submit all his copy to military or naval censorship (Knightley, 2000).

The interests of the military and those of the war correspondents were diametrically opposed. According to Knightley (2000) "correspondents seek to tell as much as possible as soon as possible; the military seeks to tell as little as possible as late as possible" (p 300). It became an inherent trait of the correspondents to be accommodative and, as Knightley observes, nationalistic in their coverage of the war:

War correspondents went along with the official scheme for reporting the war because they were convinced that it was in the national interest to do so. They saw no sharp line of demarcation between the role of the press in war-time and that of the government, and they became so accustomed to censorship that when it finally ended, in 1945, one correspondent was heard to say in some bewilderment 'But where will we go now to get our stories cleared?' (Knightley, 2000, p 300-301).

As Young and Jesser (1997) observed, "bound by the patriotic demands and expectations of nations fighting for their survival, correspondents on each side had little choice other than to support the war aims of their government as they did during World War I". They presented "jingoistic material, for the emerging popular press catered directly to the nationalistic and patriotic expectations of the new literate urban classes brought into being by industrialisation" (p 41-43).

For the military, it was a strategic move to play down the impact on civilians in wars. In every war from World War II to Iraq War II, military authorities took measures to minimise coverage of bombing victims and sufferings of civilians due to deliberate or unintentional bombing or missile attacks. In World War II, one of the single greatest civilian casualties resulted when the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima on 6

August 1945, and two days later on Nagasaki. It was estimated that the number of people who were directly exposed to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima was between 340,000 and 350,000. More than 70,000 people were killed immediately (Grenville, 1997) and 140,000 people were estimated to have died by December. Expecting a high civilian death toll, the US discouraged and prevented media access to the ground zero for a month (Torries, 2002).

General MacArthur had placed all southern Japan ‘off-limits’ to the press and, instead of ending the censorship, tightened it. Even three weeks after Japan had surrendered and nearly a month after Hiroshima there still had been no account by a Western correspondent of the effects of the atom bomb on the two Japanese cities (Knightley, 2000).

A determined British journalist, however, waded through restrictions and evaded censors to reach Hiroshima, nearly a month after the tragedy. After arriving in Hiroshima on September 3 and surveying the situation Wilfred Burchett of the *London Daily Express* transmitted his copy through Morse code to Tokyo and London. His story, with some of the more horrifying details cut out apparently by his editors, appeared on September 5. As expected the American authorities reacted angrily to Burchett’s story, which was the first to describe radiation sickness (Knightley, 2000; *War Stories*, 2006).

When the British forces began to challenge the Germans in North Africa in late 1940, there was a handful of correspondents. But one and a half years later there were 92 correspondents covering the war in the North African desert (Knightley, 2000). At times the war correspondents appeared to be more than ‘quasi-staff’. According to Knightley (2000), “at a professional level, the correspondents were all absorbed into the military machine without much trouble and as what General Montgomery was later to describe as ‘an element of my staff’ ” (p 333).

Except for a handful of journalists, most war correspondents served their national interests, forced by the media management policies of the countries for which they worked. Allegiance was given to national interests, at the expense of journalistic principles and values. Literally they became an element of the military.

A distinction needs to be drawn between journalists who work for one particular publication and those who work for major news agencies. Although the former can write and orient stories according to specific editorial policies of the publication, news agency journalists, whose copy will be used by thousands of newspapers, have to take a very independent and 'objective' position in war reporting.

## 2.4 Vietnam War

The Vietnam War was fought between 1964 and 1975 on the ground in South Vietnam and bordering areas of Cambodia and Laos, and bombing runs were carried out over North Vietnam. Fighting on one side was a coalition of forces including the United States, the Republic of Vietnam, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea. Fighting on the other side was a coalition of forces including the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) and the National Liberation Front, a communist-led South Vietnamese guerrilla movement. When the US left Vietnam in 1975 more than 58,000 American soldiers had been killed. Australia lost almost 500 soldiers and New Zealand lost 38 (Greenhill, 2005). According to figures revealed by Vietnam in 1995, more than one million Vietnamese combatants and four million civilians were killed in the war.

American involvement in Vietnam was a gradual process with a few military advisors sent to South Vietnam in the early 1960s for covert operations and training. Media involvement was also gradual. In the early 1960s the press corps in Saigon was less than a dozen and the world media took most of their news from three wire services, AP, UPI and Reuters (Turner, 2003).

The low intensity media coverage at the beginning may be attributed to this low-profile involvement. There was no full-scale war, and the guerrilla tactics of the North Vietnamese and topography of the region prevented a conventional battle. Correspondents were free and they went about in the news gathering process without much obstruction. As Hallin (1986) argues "a good deal of the patriotism correspondents displayed in covering World War II spilled over into the Vietnam period". The American military

were helpful in providing correspondents with access to battle zones and information and logistics at the early stage of the conflict. According to Just, Vietnam was the beginning and end of unrestricted access to battlefield for journalists (Just, 2000).

Belknap (2001) argues that “the war in Vietnam was a seminal event in military-media relations. It marked the first television coverage of war and a monumental shift in relations between the media and the American military. It also marks the last time reporters enjoyed unfettered access and no censorship in an American war” (p 3).

There was no military censorship in Vietnam. For most part journalists in Vietnam were free to go where they pleased and report what they wished. Vietnam was in this sense genuinely an ‘uncensored war’ and the ground rules for journalists were unrestrictive (Hallin, 1986; Thrall, 2000). According to Turner, who was Reuters’ bureau chief in Saigon from 1962-64, there was no restriction on reporting in Vietnam in the early days of the conflict:

It was often suggested by opponents of the war that we were prevented by the US and Vietnamese authorities from reporting the truth about what was going on. This was not true at all. The American military were in fact incredibly helpful in getting us around the country aboard their planes and helicopters. We only had to ask. And there were no restrictions on where we went or who we talked to, or on our reporting. It was probably the first war in which the media had such freedom (Turner, 2003, p 23).

The policy of the military towards press coverage was relaxed in Vietnam in part because war had never been declared. As noted by Barber and Weir (2002) “After much debate by the military leaders, it was decided that without a declaration of war, media could not be restricted by the US military, and they would be free to move about the country at their own expenses” (p 89). According to Hallin, journalists were given a free-hand in the gathering and processing news:

The media had extra ordinary freedom to report the war in Vietnam without direct government control: it was the first war in which reporters were routinely accredited to accompany military forces yet not subjected to censorship, and it was a war in which journalists clearly did not think of themselves simply as ‘soldiers of the typewriter’ whose mission was to serve the war effort (Hallin, 1986, p 7).

Although there was no World War II-style censorship, indirect measures such as accreditation were used to control information flow. As journalists were first required to agree with a press guideline before accreditation was granted it was certainly a form of restriction on the news media. According to Hallin (1986) “correspondents accredited to the US forces agreed a set of rules outlining 15 categories of information which they were not allowed to report without authorisation. They were forbidden, for example, to report troop movements or casualty figures until these were officially announced in Saigon. Violation of these rules could result in revocation or suspension of reporters’ accreditation” (p 128).

As the 1965 build-up began, the American command tightened restrictions on the media, particularly on access to American air bases. This produced a wave of protests from news organisations, and the possibility of the old bargain of submitting to censorship in return for access was raised (Hallin, 1986). The military did consider the feasibility of a formal censorship, but decided that it was not practical.

In the early years of the Vietnam War, particularly before the Tet offensive of 1968, most news coverage was highly supportive of American intervention in Vietnam, and despite occasional crises, Kennedy and Johnson were usually able to ‘manage’ the news very effectively (Hallin, 1986). The coverage was also diverse among liberal ‘prestige papers’ like *The New York Times* and conservative papers like *The Chicago Tribune* or *The San Diego Union*, as well as small local papers which focused on the ‘local boys’ in action in Vietnam (Faulkner cited in Hallin, 1986). Someone who followed the war in *The New York Times* and *Newsweek* got a much more critical view than someone who followed it in *The Daily News* and *Reader’s Digest* (Hallin, 1986).

The United States officials tried to conceal the full extent of American participation in Vietnam in the war against Vietcong. Malcolm Browne of the AP sent a dispatch, which appeared in *The New York Times* on March 24, 1962, complaining that the United States officials had concealed from correspondents the extent to which American servicemen were performing combat duties (Knightley, 2000). In 1962 and 1963 the Kennedy administration “tried to discredit the young Saigon press corps, which was often at odds with the generals and ambassadors running the war” (Hallin, 1986, p 4).

Despite the appeal by US officials for correspondents' patriotism and not to damage national interest, American correspondents did their best during this period to inform their readers of the true nature of the situation in Vietnam. However they were not very successful, because "in the early years of the American involvement, the administration misled Washington correspondents to such an extent that many an editor, unable to reconcile what his man in Saigon was reporting with what his man in Washington told him preferred to use the official version" (Knightley, 2000, p 412).

The slow but steady flow of news to the world from Vietnam forced the US administrations to take measures to minimise the information impact on the public. President John F. Kennedy's administration did "everything in its power to ensure that the existence of a real war in Vietnam was kept from the people" (Knightley, 2000, p 412). The infamous Cable 1006, a directive from the State Department to the US Information Agency in Saigon, warned against providing transport for correspondents on military missions that might result in the correspondents producing undesirable and unfavourable stories (Knightley, 2000; Paul, 1996b; Thrall, 2000).

#### *2.4.1 Turning point in Vietnam War coverage*

Foreign correspondents wanted a major story that would knock them out of the passivity. The mundane reporting got a break with the Tet offensive, when the North Vietnamese Army made daring raids to Saigon, including the US Embassy. Fighting was brought to the proximity of correspondents and as Williams (1993) notes "Tet occurred in front of the reporters' own eyes" (p 311). Although the NVA was repulsed, the NVA claimed a psychological victory. On the eve of the Tet offensive, in January 1968, there were 179 American journalists accredited by the military command in Saigon and the number swelled further with the Tet offensive (Braestrup cited in Hallin, 1986). After Tet more attention was given to the civilians caught in the fighting, their suffering and predicament. Coverage of atrocities became more prominent. From Tet onwards the US media were more critical of the war, but not 'anti-war' (Williams, 1993).



Turner (2003) argues that “the battle of Ap Bac, the Buddhist crisis and the Tet offensive were landmark events in media coverage of Vietnam, which added to the perception that Vietnam was unwinnable and therefore a mistake” (p 24). The American soldiers setting village huts on fire “and a police general executing a Viet Cong on a Saigon street in particular helped to change the course of the war by contradicting the official news briefings held each afternoon in Saigon” (Bates, 2000, p xiii).

Following the Tet offensive media coverage of the conflict increased extensively and this naturally soured ties the media had with its elite informants. Many reporters felt that they had been deceived (Williams, 1993). But Turner contends that the Tet offensive was portrayed as a great victory for the Communists by the media. The brief success of the Communists was given immense media coverage and was misleading (Turner, 2003).

General Westmoreland, who took command in Vietnam in June 1964 replacing Gen. Paul Harkins, was critical of media coverage of the Tet offensive and its aftermath when he said that the “... voluminous, lurid and distorted newspaper and particularly television reporting of the Tet offensive had transformed a devastating Communist military defeat into a ‘psychological victory’ ” (cited in Young & Jesser, 1997, p 91). Military and government officials were angered by media coverage that depicted the savagery of the American soldiers and their destruction of civilian properties.

#### 2.4.2 *Mai Lai massacre coverage*

Until the Mai Lai massacre, which paradoxically was investigated and published by a reporter far away from the scene of the crime, in the US “American coverage was weak on the racist and brutalising nature of the war and the way Americans treated the Vietnamese” (Knightley, 2000, p 426).

Knightly argues that it was the racist nature of the fighting that inevitably led to the Mai Lai massacre, and “it was the reluctance of correspondents to report this racist and

atrocious nature of the war that caused the Mai Lai story to be revealed not by a war correspondent, but by an alert newspaper reporter back in the United States – a major indictment of the coverage of the war” (Knightley, 2000, p 428).

It is interesting to look at how the Mai Lai story developed and eventually reached the public, after the story had been declined by newspapers, and given little prominence in terms of coverage.

In the village of Mai Lai on March 16, 1968, US soldiers killed nearly 130 men, women and children, acting under the orders of the platoon commander Lieutenant William Calley. The incident came to light a year later, when a former door-gunner, who had heard about the massacre in Mai Lai, wrote some 30 letters to his mother detailing the incident. These letters were sent to President Nixon, various military authorities, senators and congressmen. Most of them never replied to these letters but a liberal from Arizona initiated the investigation which led to the conviction of Lieutenant Calley for the murder of 109 Vietnamese (Knightley, 2000).

The Associated Press filed a small item of less than about a 100 words on September 6, 1969, which did not say how many murders Calley had been charged with, and gave no indication of the circumstances of the incident. The item, according to Knightley, passed completely unnoticed. *The New York Times* carried the story at the bottom of page 38 (Knightley, 2000, p 429).

Freelance reporter Seymour Hersh, who covered the Pentagon in 1966-67 for the Associated Press, sensed that it could be a major story and started his own investigations. In November 11, 1969, he interviewed Calley and prepared the story. But the problem now was to get it published. *Life* magazine did not accept it. Then he approached a little-known news agency, Dispatch News Service in Washington. Dispatch News Service contacted 50 newspapers and offered the story for US\$100, and subsequently 36 newspapers, including *The Times* of London, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran the story on November 13 (Knightley, 2000).

The Mai Lai massacre got national coverage in the United States in December with *Time* and *Newsweek* publishing stories on the incident. The December 8<sup>th</sup> issue of *Time* called it an ‘American tragedy,’ while the December 5<sup>th</sup> issue of *Newsweek* headlined: “A Single Incident in a Brutal War Shocks the American Conscience” (Knightley, 2000).

### 2.4.3 *Publication of the Pentagon Papers*

As the intensity of the Vietnam coverage increased at the beginning of the 1970s, the relationship between the news media and the government deteriorated. A 1995 study of the military-media relationship conducted by Frank Aukofer and Vice Admiral (Retired) William P. Lawrence showed sharp differences between the media and the military – more than 64 percent of military officers agreed with the statement, “News media coverage of the events in Vietnam harmed the war effort” (Venable, 2002, p 66).

The publication of the so-called *Pentagon Papers* in 1971 by *The New York Times* further accelerated the decline in public confidence in the US government, and the justification for intervention in Vietnam. The 4000-page document has a 3,000-page analysis that covers the American involvement in Southeast Asia from World War II to mid-1968 (Sheehan, 1971). *Time* magazine described the publication of the classified document as the “most massive leak of secret documents in US history” which had “suddenly exposed the sensitive inner processes whereby the Johnson Administration had abruptly escalated the nation’s most unpopular – an unsuccessful – war” (“Pentagon Papers: The Secret War,” 1971). Solan, et al (1992) argue that “after the *Pentagon Papers* was published and the Mai Lai massacre became public, American disillusionment with the war was irreversible. The *Pentagon Papers* ... indicated that the government had not been frank with the American people about its intentions in Vietnam” (p 82).

#### 2.4.4 Vietnam – the first ‘living-room’ war

Vietnam was the testing ground for the powerful visual medium – the television. Developments in broadcasting technology in the late 1960s made it easier for journalists to move around with broadcasting equipment, and transmit to their offices footage for broadcast.

TV camera crews were limited in their mobility. They had to carry around more than 30 pounds of equipment. Technical advances in the late 1960s, in particular the introduction of new lightweight equipment, meant television was better able to film on-the-spot reports. However, the most significant technical development was the introduction of satellite stations in 1968. This made it possible to screen film [broadcast in the US] the same day it was shot in the field. Prior to 1968 film had to be flown back to the west coast for transmitting (Williams, 1993). This resulted in it ending up on the network news two or more days after the event. Some of the technological developments that facilitated better news coverage, especially for television, included lightweight sound cameras, jet air transportation and satellite communication (Hallin, 1986).

Overall the tone of TV coverage up to 1967 was optimistic and supportive; it appeared as “an appendage to the war effort or a channel of official reassurance in the face of growing frustration” (Entman and Paletz cited in Williams, 1993, p 311). The Broadcast organisations were also conciliatory towards the requests from the Pentagon and the White House. Williams notes that self-censorship was at work in newsrooms in the US:

The lack of blood and gore was due in part to self-censorship inside network newsrooms. There was a policy not to show graphic pictures of American casualties unless the families of those concerned had been notified by the Pentagon. Editors were instructed to delete excessively bloody bits and they were obliged to give warnings before pieces of film likely to cause offence (Williams, 1993, p 310).

In the 1960s television established itself as the main source of information for the American public (Williams, 1993) and by the early 1970s, television was the main source of news for the Americans. A Nielson rating shows that 35 million TV sets were

tuned to evening news shows each night according to a study of Vietnam War coverage in 1969 and 1970 (Russo, 1971).

Vietnam was America's first true televised war and the evidence most often cited for the pre-eminent power of television is a series of surveys conducted by the Roper Organisation for the Television Information Service. A 1964 survey showed people got most of their news from television (58 percent), newspapers (56 percent), radio (26 percent), and magazines (8 percent) (Hallin, 1986). Although TV presented a sanitized picture of combat (Williams, 1993) in the early 1960s, in 1965, CBS enraged President Lyndon B. Johnson by showing American marines setting fire to the thatched huts of the village of Cam Ne with Zippo lighters. In 1968, when the generals were claiming a major victory in the Tet offensive, broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite after a visit to Vietnam concluded that the situation in Vietnam had become a 'bloody stalemate' (Hallin, 1986).

Due to the nature and novelty of the medium, TV became popular in the US, with a large percentage of the people tuning to TV to get news on Vietnam. It was timely and relevant for Michael Arlen to coin the term 'living-room war' (Arlen cited in Williams, 1993, p 308). The 'living-room war' was made possible by technological advances, and reporting was immediate.

According to Carruthers (2000), "Vietnam was the first conflict to receive sustained, almost nightly, coverage on the US networks over a period of several years. It was the first war to benefit from certain technological advances – the use of satellites especially – which made reporting more immediate, and this at a time when American network news first assumed a half-hour format" (p 108).

After Vietnam became a 'living-room-war' print and broadcast media were made scapegoats for the failure of the American intervention. According to Schanberg (Cited in Patterson, 1995), "many politicians and senior military men cling tenaciously to the myth that the press, through pessimistic reporting, tipped public opinion and cost us the war in Vietnam" (p 20). Elegant (Cited in Carruthers, 2000) argues that the US military had been undermined by America's own media, who thwarted victory by 'graphic and

unremitting distortion' of the facts, pessimism, and exaggeration of both America's youthful casualties and American 'atrocities' inflicted on the Vietnamese.

The US government and military squarely blamed the debacle in Vietnam on the media for their 'out of context' coverage that harmed the war effort. President Richard Nixon accused the US news media of not putting the conflict in context, thus not conveying the underlying purpose of US involvement. Writing in his memoirs in 1978, Nixon said "the Vietnam War was complicated by factors that had never before occurred in America's conduct of war ... The American news media had come to dominate domestic opinion about its purpose and conduct" (Nixon cited in Hallin, 1986, p 3).

A Trilateral Commission report published in 1975 noted that in the 1960s and 1970s media was a strong force within the oppositional institutions in the US. Its author Samuel Huntington said in the report that there was "considerable evidence to suggest that the development of television journalism contributed to the undermining of the governmental authority" (Huntington et al cited in Hallin, 1986, p 4).

For the opponents of the Vietnam War, according to Williams (1993), "the media were decisive not because they misrepresented the war but because they reported war as it was. The advent of television and the lack of formal censorship allowed media to present a vivid and unfettered picture of the carnage and destruction" (p 305).

James Reston (Cited in Hallin, 1986) of *The New York Times*, writing on the day Saigon fell to the Communist forces, said that "maybe historians will agree that reporters and the cameras were decisive in the end. They brought the issue of war to the people, before the Congress or the courts, and forced the withdrawal of American power from Vietnam" (p 3).

The initial phase of the Vietnam conflict saw jingoism in the media, although with the Tet offensive in 1968, coverage in the United States took a different perspective. As military casualties began to rise, and the impact the war was having on civilians became clear with 'bloody images' and news footage, the public opinion tilted against the war, and so did the war coverage.

## 2.5 Iraq War I

The Gulf War, or Iraq War I, was a US-led response following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Three days later, the world was witnessing the beginning of the most extensive US military mobilisation since the end of World War II. By October more than 200,000 US troops were in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf region (Stork & Lesch, 1994). Eventually the US troop strength rose to 500,000 while the non-US coalition forces equalled about 160,000, which was 24 percent of all forces (*Gulf War Facts*, 2001). The US-led coalition included Britain, France, Italy and Arab countries making a total of 34 countries of which 27 provided troops (Watson, 1993). The UN ultimatum – Security Council Resolution 678 of November 29, 1990 – stipulated that if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein did not remove his troops from Kuwait by January 15, 1991 a US-led coalition was authorised to drive them out. On January 17, the US-led coalition launched air attacks, code-named Operation Desert Storm, against Iraqi targets and on February 24 ground forces began their attack. Ten days later Kuwait City was declared liberated, and with Allied forces having driven well into Iraq a ceasefire was declared (*Operation Desert Storm Ten Years After*, 2001).

As the US government and military planners went into action in preparation for the Operation Desert Storm, White House and Pentagon media coordinators were setting guidelines for news media to access and coverage of the developing conflict. As White (1994) notes, even before the air war was launched, reports were made about coordinated news briefings, pre-selected pools of reporters gaining access to military and government officials, and restricted access for the news media to soldiers at the front.

### 2.5.1 *Setting the ground rules for Iraq War I coverage*

The US, as the principal coalition partner, was at the outset determined to keep the media muzzled, and looked at the Vietnam War and the invasion of Grenada for 'lessons' to manage the media. During the invasion of Grenada in October 1983, in the first two days of the operation the US did not allow news media to the island. On the

third day, a 15-person press pool, out of approximately 600 reporters at Barbados, was allowed on the island (Venable, 2002) and micro-managed the news event. The news media relied on the footage provided by the Pentagon which showed a positive spin of the Grenada invasion, and without access to the battlefield by independent television the world did not see the events that killed 29 and wounded 152 US soldiers (Thrall, 2000).

Due to strong protests and criticism by the media about the news blackout in Grenada, retired Army Major General Winant Sidle was selected to head a project to find out how best the media and military could co-operate in future military conflicts. Sidle formed the Military-Media Relations Panel, also known as the Sidle Panel, which made eight recommendations, one of them introducing a standing media pool—the DOD National Media Pool (NMP)—and another suggesting voluntary media compliance with ground rules versus submission to censorship. According to Venable (2002) “the recommendations also pointed out the importance of incorporating public affairs considerations in operational planning. Interestingly, the final recommendation encouraged both the military and the media to improve their understanding of each other” (p 67-68).

What emerged out of the Grenada experience was that, through pools, media can be controlled. This was the belief with which media coverage of the Gulf War was managed:

The US government and military planning to control the media, many years in the making, and various of its techniques tested out in the invasions of Grenada and Panama, in skyjackings, and in Republican presidential campaigns were indeed impressive. On the ground in Saudi Arabia, layers of military control had been inserted between the journalists and the ‘action,’ as well as between journalist and his or her newspaper or newscast (Engelhardt, 1994, p 81).

Veteran journalist Malcolm Browne (Cited in Engelhardt, 1994) of *The New York Times* argued that “the pool system, developed by the military, essentially turned the journalists into an unpaid employee of the Department of Defense, on whose behalf he or she prepare the news of the war for the outer world” (p 81-82).



The media was managed through a press pool system, and journalists were at all times accompanied by military minders (Public Affairs Officers). Access to soldiers and the battlefields was restricted (Taylor, 2003). Boyd-Barrett (2004) notes that in the pool system “pool reporters were accompanied at all times by military escorts and warned pool members against violating guidelines ... and reviewed press stories before transmission back to press corps, if necessary passing them up to the military command for approval” (p 30).

The Vietnam War failure was to an extent blamed on the news media for their aggressive and often anti-US government and military reporting. This attitude created a ‘moral panic’ in the US administration ensuring that in the future attempts were made to control the news coverage of military conflicts involving the US. In Iraq War I, measures were taken well ahead to show a clean and bloodless war. Williams contended that the US administration sought to prevent Vietnam-type horrific images reaching the global audience:

The Gulf War was a deliberate attempt to wash away the stain of Vietnam. George Bush and his military commanders had learned the ‘lesson’ of Vietnam and were determined the conduct of the war would be affected by adverse public opinion. By careful management and control of the news media the Bush administration sought to prevent horrific pictures of death and carnage reaching the American public (Williams, 1993, p 306).

The Vietnam lesson was that unhindered media access to a conflict would cost a nation a war. Hence, the thinking among administration officials during the Gulf War was that news coverage should be regulated, as in World War II. According to former Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams the government looked back over its shoulder for formulating ground rules for covering the Gulf War.

In formulating the ground rules and guidelines for covering Operation Desert Storm, we looked at the rules developed in 1942 for World War II, at those handed down by Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower’s chief of staff for the reporters who covered the D-Day landings, and at the ground rules established by Gen. Douglas MacArthur for covering the Korean War. And we carefully studied the rules drawn up for covering the war in Vietnam (Williams cited in Morlan, 1992, p 117).

Although in World War II correspondents were subjected to direct censorship, whereby copy had to be cleared by the censors, in Iraq War I it was indirect censorship in the

form of limited access and managing pools. Williams (Cited in Morlan, 1992) says that of the 1,351 print pool reports that were written, “only five were submitted for our review in Washington. Four of them were cleared within a few hours” (p 119).

### 2.5.2 *War as media spectacle*

With more than 1,600 correspondents from all over the world in Saudi Arabia (Halliday, 1999), the carefully crafted public relations messages of the coalition spokesmen reached the global audience. The instantaneity of the war coverage meant that global public opinion had to be taken into consideration. As Halliday (1999) points out “the Gulf conflict was a media event in itself, dominating the TV screens and the press for months, and providing, in its final few weeks, a topic for intense coverage” (p 129). Of the broadcast media, the Atlanta-based Cable News Network reported live from Baghdad as the Allied Forces’ bombing of Baghdad began.

Iraq War I was widely considered the first war fought ‘live’ on television, differentiating it from the Vietnam War, which was fought on television but on news film rather than live. It was also widely known that the news reporting that brought the historic Persian Gulf War into American and other homes ‘live’ was highly managed and restricted by the US government (White, 1994).

Also distinct was the direct coverage from Iraq, something not seen before. In the period of the air war, and again in the final phase of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, CNN was able to carry live reporting of the progress of the war itself, lending immediacy, and a pressure for political judgement, unprecedented in international conflict (Halliday, 1999). Peter Arnett, who was one of three CNN reporters who broadcast continuous coverage of the first air raids, noted that “the Gulf War was the first to be live from both sides – a unique moment in communications history” as coverage was given simultaneously from American coalition press briefings and on-the-scene reports in the Gulf itself and from Baghdad (*Peter Arnett: A look back at Operation Desert Storm*, 2001).

Operation Desert Storm “was the most widely and most swiftly reported war in history” (Hudson and Stanier cited in Belknap, 2001, p 8) and it was also the most ‘censored’ war. As Arnett notes, “the media with the coalition forces felt censored because they were not given easy access to the troops on the ground and were not able to go with the jet bombers bombing Baghdad” (*Peter Arnett: A look back at Operation Desert Storm*, 2001). While most of the journalists who covered the war complained of media restrictions and deception by information officers, the view of the US government were different. Colonel Barry E. Willey, then a public affairs officer, concluded that “most military commanders would have to agree that the media coverage of Desert Shield/Desert Storm was balanced and generally favourable where cooperation, patience and tolerance were evident” (Willey cited in Belknap, 2001, p 9).

The success of media management in generating favourable coverage of the US in Iraq War I was noted by former Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams, who said that “the reporting has been largely a recitation of what administration people have said, or an extension of it” (Cited in Schechter, 2003, p 127).

## 2.6 The Kosovo conflict

The Western military intervention in the Balkans, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), “was to halt or disrupt a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing” by Serbs of Croats, ethnic Albanians in the crumbled former Yugoslavia (*The Crisis in Kosovo*, 2000). The extensive media attention to the Balkan crisis was partly due to NATO military actions, first by air then ground forces. Operation Allied Force was initiated on March 24, 1999, after more than a year of effort by the international community led by NATO to find a negotiated solution in Kosovo. Of the thirteen (out of nineteen) NATO nations that made aircraft available for the operation, aircrafts from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, and Spain conducted bombing against fixed and pre-selected Serbian targets. Long-range cruise missiles were fired by the United States and Britain (*The Crisis in Kosovo*, 2000).

Media attention to the crisis in the former Yugoslavia was not great, but from late 1995, when violence perpetrated by Serbs escalated against Albanian Muslims, coverage began to increase. As Kozol (2004) observes, “the moment of most intense interest in the region came during the NATO bombings, when the United States was directly involved in the conflict through its military presence” (p 7). When military are involved, news coverage gains momentum, and this trend can also be attributed to the efforts by the governments to manage media. Aggressive media management strategies were implemented by the US, while the Serbs also tried to “control coverage in ways that would influence international opinion” (Seib, 2002, p 96).

In the early 1999, once the decision had been made by NATO, which has headquarters in Brussels, to bomb and subdue the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, “a meticulously prepared system of propaganda and media control – especially in the United States and Britain – swung into action” (Knightley, 2000, p 502). As NATO spokesman, Jamie Shea, labelled by some war correspondents as ‘NATO’s propagandist-in-chief’ had the main duty of relaying “the pre-digested spin that had been chewed over at length by a committee of NATO ruminants” (Knightley, 2000, p 502). News-starved correspondents were “frustrated by daily official briefings that provided little information,” hence they tried to get out to the field to get the ‘real story’. The gag order slapped on the media created an opportunity for Slobodan Milosevic to tell his side of the story (Belknap, 2001).

The spokesmen from the British and the US governments liaised with NATO colleagues in Brussels to present a unified message to the world. The US government also hired private public relations firms to “spin and distort news stories” and set up the International Public Information Group to “squellch or limit uncomplimentary stories regarding the US activities and policies as reported in the foreign press” (Knightley, 2000, p 504). Information about NATO operations was so much controlled that Alistair Horne concluded that “Kosovo ... turned out to be the most secret campaign in living memory” (Cited in Knightley, 2000, p 504).

The Serb authorities in Belgrade were not oblivious to the fact that it was important to control and manage media. Sensing that the Western media might play an adversarial

role, when NATO launched air strikes, on March 24, government officials rounded up 29 Western journalists in Belgrade and expelled them from the country. Although some reporters were allowed back later, most reported from Montenegro, Albania, and Macedonia, where refugees from Kosovo were heading to flee the fighting (Noack, 1999). For some reporters the expulsion was in their favour, as they were able to cover the Serb atrocities without the restrictions of Serbs.

### *2.6.1 Excessive control of information flow*

Like Iraq War I, the Kosovo conflict was similar in terms of media control and information management. According to Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon, US Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Henry Shelton made the decision, “in the early days of the war to take a very conservative approach in releasing information. They felt we had gotten too lax in dealing with operational security” (Bacon cited in Kitfield, 1999, p 2547). Bacon said:

We’re living in an age of multiple 24-hour news networks, all competing for scoops, and that’s led to much less respect in the media for protecting operational information. I also don’t think the press understood the absolute necessity we felt in terms of holding the alliance together. So this was a new kind of war, and it offered new challenges, and I’m not sure either the press or the Pentagon is yet up to that challenge (Bacon cited in Kitfield, 1999, p 2547).

The excessive control of the information flow in the Balkans conflict led some analysts to believe that the Vietnam Syndrome had kicked in. With the military and the government blaming the failure in Vietnam mainly on the adversarial press coverage, the Balkan war planners and media managers were, it appears, determined to be more conservative in their daily rationing of information. Retired Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Bernard E. Trainor, an occasional columnist for *The New York Times*, said “I think this is payback time for what the military still believes the media did to it in Vietnam” (Kitfield, 1999, p 2546-2547).

There’s no question [the military’s] grip on essential information is tightening, and increasingly, the military’s attitude is, ‘we’ll tell you what you need to know.’ The media manipulation finally got so transparent that I didn’t believe anything [NATO spokesman] Jamie Shea and [Pentagon spokesman] Ken Bacon had to say. ... Because

they controlled all the cockpit video, however, we couldn't prove when they were wrong (Trainor cited in Kitfield, 1999, p 2546-2547 )

When there was military engagement, as in the case of NATO bombing of Serbian positions, the military were quick to control news flow. However, during the peace keeping operations in Bosnia during 1995, the military and media enjoyed a high degree of camaraderie. When the Kosovo air campaign was launched by NATO, Supreme Allied Commander General Wesley Clark issued a "gag order" (Belknap, 2001) and news management strategies were implemented so that popular support for the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo could be maintained (Seib, 2002). For the Bosnia operation, reporters travelled to Bosnia with military units and stayed with them for two to three weeks. By embedding about two dozen reporters with troops the military hoped that this "arrangement would produce positive stories for the Army, thus, generating support from the American people while bolstering soldiers' morale" (Newman cited in Belknap, 2001, p 10).

The military found a reason to justify a gag order, at the early stage of the bombing, when informal media-military protocol was violated by *The Washington Post*. The paper published a front-page article identifying two air targets in Belgrade that radar-evading F-117 stealth fighter-bombers failed to reach when they were shot down (Kitfield, 1999). Following *The Washington Post* case, the Pentagon moved without mercy to "clamp down, to an unprecedented degree, on the flow of even the most fundamental information about the war" (Kitfield, 1999, p 2548). Gen. Wesley Clark issued a gag order on virtually all of his commanders, and the NATO air bases involved in the attacks firmly excluded reporters.

Although *The Washington Post* case may have been the immediate reason for the gag order, NATO communication strategists were more concerned that the "changes in the nature of modern warfare as well as in the news business are altering some of the old rules and bonds governing interaction between the military and the press" (Kitfield, 1999, p 2547). The lack of news about NATO military operations led Richard J. Newman, defense reporter for *US News & World Report* to admit how some journalists covered the issue: "With no quantitative or qualitative information, a lot of us reporters bought the official line that this was the ever-intensifying war" (Kitfield, 1999, p 2549-

2550). This was what the NATO commanders and respective governments involved in the Balkan operations wanted – to provide what NATO had prepared for the media for public consumption.

## 2.7 Iraq War II

The media attention and coverage extended to Iraq War II, which was launched by a US-led Coalition on 19 March 2003, was extensive. Even before the war began, Jim Wilkinson, the US Central Command's director of strategic communications, observed that "this will be the most covered war in history" (Katovsky & Carlson, 2003, p xi).

According to an International Press Institute report the initial phase of the Iraq War was covered by more than 3,000 correspondents who were based in seven countries in the Gulf region (Leaper, Löwstedt, & Madhoun, 2003). More than 600 journalists were embedded with the US forces, and 150 with the British forces. The major TV channels, including the BBC, mobilised 200 staff in the region while CNN also used a similar number for war coverage. Staff strength of CBS, NBC and ABC amounted to 500 in Kuwait alone. Reuters news agency relied on more than 140 journalists, while 55 journalists including photographers from British national newspapers were embedded with UK forces. There were a further 120 'floating' journalists in northern Iraq, Kuwait and Jordan, while, the elite US newspaper *The New York Times* sent 30 journalists to the region (Leaper et al., 2003). There were 200 to 300 foreign journalists – from North America, Europe, Latin America, Asia and mainly the Middle East – in Baghdad when the war started (Kaplow, 2003; Johnson, 2003b). Although there was a large number of correspondents and support staff in the Gulf, they belonged to only a few media organisations and thus the large number cannot be seen as diversity of coverage. They only represented the major media corporations who are in a way wholesalers of news to clients around the world.

With an army of more than 3000 journalists posted in the Middle East and the Gulf during the invasion phase of the military engagement, the war was indeed the biggest ever covered. Until a larger and more devastating military conflict is planned and

executed, Iraq War II will lead the records. As Jukes observes (2004), “this was arguably the most reported war in history” (p viii). The visual medium turned the war into a reality show with almost uninterrupted live coverage from the war zones during the first days of the conflict, making Iraq War II the “most heavily televised war in history” (Rutenberg & Carter, 2003, B15).

The extensive coverage saturated the US audience with sanitised images of the war, disconnecting the public from the real world. Orientation of Iraq War II coverage differed greatly among countries, mainly owing to political, ideological and cultural factors (Bennett, 2003; Cheterian, 2003; Dimitrova, Lynda Lee Kaid, Williams, & Trammell, 2005; Ravi, 2005). While the print media in the Middle East and Europe showed the brutality of Iraq War II, the US journalists focussed on the hardships among the US troops. As noted by Bennett (2003), it was the same war the journalists were reporting but “vastly divergent perspectives emerged in the media’s presentation of events in Iraq, especially in countries where both populace and politicians vigorously opposed the war” (p 62). A study of elite newspapers in the US, UK, India and Pakistan shows that coverage of civilian deaths differed remarkably among them. The newspapers from India (*The Times of India*) and Pakistan (*Dawn*) “gave more prominence to accounts of civilian deaths, which fitted in with the image of a harsh and cruel war” (Ravi, 2005, p 59). On the other hand the American (*The New York Times*) and British newspapers (*The Times* of London and *The Guardian*) highlighted different aspects and viewpoints. According to Ravi, coverage in the US and UK was influenced by concern on public sensitivity and values over images of death:

To the American and the British public, inflicting civilian deaths would represent a callous disregard for innocents and seem out of character with their own notion of their countries and their values, and they were not quite prepared to see images of, or read about, such killings. This dissonance with popular sentiment—along with a general reluctance, on grounds of taste and sensitivity to reader reaction, to show too many images of death and injury (Ravi, 2005, p 59).

A study of Iraq War II coverage in 246 news websites, including websites of newspapers, TV and radio stations in 48 countries, showed that countries supporting the war were focused on more positive news compared to those who opposed the Operation Iraqi freedom. In countries that opposed the war, 33 percent of the coverage was



negative compared to 15 percent in countries that were officially supporting the war (Dimitrova et al., 2005).

The direction of Iraq War II coverage differed significantly between the two leading newspapers of the US and Sweden, *The New York Times* and *Dagens Nyheter*, with the latter focusing on negative reporting and anti-war stories, while the elite US newspaper “focused more on military, conflict issues, ‘scoreboard’ developments and war strategies designed to ensure ‘victory’ in Iraq” (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005, p 412).

Tom Patterson, a professor of government and press at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, noted that coverage in the US highlighted US military casualties while in Germany and France, who opposed the invasion of Iraq, the coverage was more on “the devastation of the bombing, and how Iraqi civilians were caught up in it” (Patterson cited in Bennett, 2003, p 62).

The mainstream news media in the US “uniformly banged the drums of the war long before the onset of the invasion” of Iraq in 2003, thus framing the conflict in line with the US government policy that “war was a necessary response to an immediate threat by Iraq, justifiable even without UN sanction”. The alternative frame – that Iraq did not pose a significant threat to US, the invasion had no UN approval and the resulting death and destruction amounted to war crimes – was not given prominence (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 29).

Research has shown that Iraq War II coverage in the US, by broadcast and print media has been sanitised, underplaying the negative and underpinning the ‘war on terror’. According to a George Washington University research study that analysed 1,820 stories on the five main US television networks and Qatar-based Al Jazeera, the US media played down visuals of US, Coalition, Iraqi military or civilian casualties (Rampton & Stauber, 2006). The coverage in the mainstream print media also appeared to be similar, but an investigation by *The Los Angeles Times*, in early 2005, put the reason for minimal photo coverage of US dead and wounded down due to access, logistics and ethics. A review of six leading US newspapers and the two most popular newsmagazines during a six-month period revealed that the publication did not carry

any photos from the war zone of Americans killed in action, although in that period nearly 560 Americans and Western allies died (Rainey, 2005). According to the newspaper “many photographers and editors believe they are delivering Americans an incomplete portrait of the” (Rainey, 2005).

### 2.7.1 *Mobilising public opinion*

A most comprehensive public relations campaign was launched by the United States and Britain in the run up to the war. It was aimed at garnering support on the home fronts and from the global community for an invasion of Iraq. Different propaganda techniques were used to create hatred of the enemy (Iraq and Saddam Hussein), to form a fear of the regime in Baghdad, and to mobilise the public against the impending dangers. In a speech in Cincinnati, Ohio on October 7, 2002, President George W. Bush said that “the Iraqi dictator must not be permitted to threaten America and the world with horrible poisons and diseases and gases and atomic weapons ... Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction are controlled by a murderous tyrant who has already used chemical weapons to kill thousands of people. ... Some ask how urgent this danger is to America and the world. The danger is already significant, and it only grows worse with time” (*President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat*, 2002). The online arm of Cable News Network, CNN.com, covered the Bush speech, highlighting the nuclear threat, headlining an article posted on October 8, 2002, with ‘Bush: Don’t wait for mushroom cloud.’ *The Boston Herald*’s headline was ‘Bush: Iraq poses nuke threat’ (Miga, 2002, p 1). Two days later the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to give President Bush “the authorization he sought to wage war if necessary to disarm Iraq, while the Senate was poised to pass the measure as well” (Allen, 2002).

In an attempt to justify the war the US and British governments made claims, through the news media, that Iraq’s Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) could be ‘ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them’. According to a British dossier dated September 2002 “Iraq’s military forces are able to use chemical and biological weapons, with command, control and logistical arrangements in place. The Iraqi military are able to deploy these weapons within 45 minutes of a decision to do so” (*Iraq’s Weapons Of*

*Mass Destruction: The Assessment Of The British Government*, 2002, p 17). In his foreword to the 53-page document British Prime Minister Tony Blair said:

... In light of the debate about Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), I wanted to share with the British public the reasons why I believe this issue to be a current and serious threat to the UK national interest.

Saddam has used chemical weapons, not only against an enemy state, but against his own people. Intelligence reports make clear that he sees the building up of his WMD capability, and the belief overseas that he would use these weapons, as vital to his strategic interests, and in particular his goal of regional domination. And the document discloses that his military planning allows for some of the WMD to be ready within 45 minutes of an order to use them. I am quite clear that Saddam will go to extreme lengths, indeed has already done so, to hide these weapons and avoid giving them up (*Iraq's Weapons Of Mass Destruction: The Assessment Of The British Government*, 2002, p 3-4).

Although these claims later turned out to be false (Rampton & Stauber, 2003b), the Western news media prominently covered them, thus strongly influencing and swaying public opinion in favour of the US and British governments. According to the BBC, “of the nine main conclusions in the British government document, not one has been shown to be conclusively true” (Reynolds, 2003).

### 2.7.2 *Information warfare*

In order to demoralise the enemy via psychological information warfare the US funnelled stories to the news media which were fed to media consumers around the world. At the outset of Iraq War II, for example, the US administration created the speculation that Saddam Hussein was dead and the Republican Guard was on the verge of surrender. These stories were deliberately leaked by US officials, and many of them anonymous. Nick Turner (2003) believes that “by questioning whether Mr. Hussein survived the early attacks targeting him, the US can both sow confusion among Iraqi soldiers and attempt to flush Mr. Hussein out of hiding, so US forces can get a second shot at him” (p 24). Writing in the *New Zealand International Review* in July 2003, Turner (2003) said that stories such as the speculation on the mass surrender of the Republican Guard “fit well into the Pentagon’s war plan, by creating the impression that Mr. Hussein’s most loyal troops are on the verge of collapse or surrender. So far, it

hasn't happened" (p 24).

According to *The New York Times*, intensive planning for the 'Iraq rollout' began in July 2002. To coordinate the US foreign policy messages and supervise its image abroad, the White House created the Office of Global Communication (OGC) on 21 January 2003, which launched a \$200 million 'PR blitz against Saddam Hussein' (Miller et al., 2004, p 45). The OGC published *Apparatus of Lies: Saddam's Disinformation and Propaganda 1990-2003*, which along with Secretary of State Collin Powell's speech at the United Nations in February 2003, was "designed to be the one-punch of the administration's justification for taking out Saddam Hussein's regime" (Snow, 1994, p 58). The report was done in consultation with the National Security Council, the Department of State and the Defense Department.

The news media were well-used by officials to communicate carefully constructed messages to the public. In fact the *Apparatus of Lies* implicated that the Bush administration deliberately deceived the public about the situation in Iraq in order to justify a military invasion of that country. News media in the United States, by drumming up the war tempo orchestrated by an administration with a political agenda, failed to be fair and objective. Attention to anti-war actions was minimal and hardly visible in the mainstream news media. As Harvard media analyst Alex Jones argues "the media also fell down in not paying closer attention to strong anti-war sentiment in Europe, which eventually came to a head at the United Nations". The editor of *Editor & Publisher* laments that "the press woefully underplayed the anti-war movement until recently"(Cited in Johnson, 2003c, p D4).

### 2.7.3 *Flaws in war coverage*

It was more than a year after the attack on Iraq by US-led coalition forces that the news media came to realise that their watchdog roles had not been objectively fulfilled. In May 2004, both the BBC and *The New York Times* admitted mistakes over the Iraq coverage (Skapinker, 2004, p 12). *The New York Times'* ombudsman admitted that "institutional failures ... allowed *The New York Times'* pre-Iraq war coverage to be

manipulated by people bent on pushing the United States into war”, while Public Editor Daniel Okrent said “Some of *The Times*’ coverage in the months leading up to the invasion of Iraq was credulous; much of it was inappropriately italicized by lavish front-page display and heavy-breathing headlines. ... *The Times*’ flawed journalism continued in the weeks after the war began, when writers might have broken free from the cloaked government sources who had insinuated themselves and their agendas into the pre-war coverage” (“NY Times ombudsman prints withering critique of Iraq coverage,” 2004).

The elite beltway newspaper, *The Washington Post* also admitted that it was fallible in the coverage of Iraq in the months leading up to the war. The newspaper’s editors acknowledged that ‘they underplayed stories questioning President Bush’s claims of the threat posed by Saddam Hussein in the months leading up to the US invasion of Iraq’. An Associated Press dispatch said:

In the year and a half since Saddam was toppled, US troops have yet to discover any weapons of mass destruction. In a study published in March by the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, researchers wrote, ‘Many stories stenographically reported the incumbent administration’s perspectives on WMD, giving too little critical examination of the way officials framed the events, issues, threats and policy options.’ In May, *The New York Times* criticized its own reporting on Iraq, saying it found ‘a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been’ and acknowledging it sometimes ‘fell for misinformation’ from exiled Iraqi sources (“Washington Post Admits Pre-Iraq War Coverage Flawed,” 2004).

*The Washington Post*’s senior journalist Bob Woodward, of Watergate fame, also expressed reservation about the lack of insight on the part of US news media, arguing that “the news media should have been more sceptical of President Bush’s ‘zeal’ to go to war with Iraq and the possibly ‘skimpy’ pre-war intelligence Bush used to justify the invasion (“Bob Woodward Critical Of US Media's Pre-Iraq War Coverage,” 2004). According to some critics the media “played lapdog instead of watch dog in covering Bush administration justifications for attacking Iraq” (Burress, 2004, p B5).

The situation across the Atlantic was not so different, with Britain also engaging itself on the media management front, creating flak on BBC. According to the BBC’s former

director-general Greg Dyke, Prime Minister Tony Blair's government "systematically bullied the BBC over its Iraq war coverage, bombarding it with complaints to try to push its own point of view" (Kelland, 2004). Dyke told leading broadcasters and media executives in New York in November 2003:

News organisations should be in the business of balancing their coverage, not banging the drum for one side or the other. This is something which seemed to get lost in American reporting during the war. ... For any news organisation to act as a cheerleader for government is to undermine your credibility (Burt, 2003, p 6).

The US broadcast media gave 'a standing ovation' of positive coverage during the first phase of the Iraq invasion. Before the war began, the media created a myth of a Saddam demon, a nuclear catastrophe, and chemical disaster that would result if the 'Free World' remained indifferent about the 'bully of Baghdad'. A study by the Washington DC-based Center for Media and Public Affairs found that while 34 percent of comments on ABC's World News Tonight were positive about the war, other networks fared much better in their positive outlook to the war. There was 53 percent positive news on NBC Nightly News, 60 percent on Fox News Channel's Special Report and 74 percent on The CBS Evening News (Johnson, 2003a).

The news media, particularly from the US and Britain, failed to be fair and objective, by avoiding the human costs of the war. As in the Gulf War of 1991, the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq War II, the US media were unconcerned about Iraqi and Afghan casualties (Snow, 2003). Instead the attention was on the touted 'precision' bombing, 'surgical strikes' which 'minimised' civilian casualties. At a press briefing in the Pentagon on 21 March 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said:

The weapons that are being used today [against Iraq] have a degree of precision that no one ever dreamt of in a prior conflict – they didn't exist. And it's not a handful of weapons; it's the overwhelming majority of the weapons that have that precision. 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' (*Defense Department Briefing Transcript - Operation/Iraqi Freedom*, 2003).

But the precision weapons that would take on the Iraqi leader also killed many civilians (Guarino, 2003). The myth created for the media was one thing, and the reality of indiscriminate killing another. Video footage of laser-guided bombs and missiles hitting

targets was good PR material, and by withholding information about the weapons that strayed, often onto civilian population, the Pentagon made sure the clean image of the war was visible. As Nelson (2003) notes, “clean, surgical videogame images of the conflict could convey a sense that the war will be quick and relatively bloodless. But everyone also remembers that images of the Vietnam War, the first to be broadcast into homes, stoked powerful antiwar sentiment” (p B1).

#### *2.7.4 Localising war coverage*

Not every newspaper that depended on news agencies for coverage of the Iraq War carried stories as written by the wires. Some newspapers, using information from agencies, alternative sources re-wrote content in the war coverage, thus limiting, but not eliminating entirely the information coming from military and government officials and other actors in the military conflict.

A comparative analysis of Iraq War II coverage among newspapers in five South Asian countries showed that of the 442 items analysed more than 71 percent was produced by local sources, while international news agencies and news services, which included Reuters, AFP, AP, CNN, BBC, *USA Today*, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* accounted for 28.3 items (Maslog, Lee, & Kim, 2006). More than 83 percent of the 317 locally produced stories were written by the newspapers’ correspondents. Perhaps this may be an indication of the reader’s demand for war discourse that was critical of the US and UK, and instead of using the wire copy, journalists developed and re-wrote news items to cater for the popular war news consumption habits. The study showed that locally produced stories were strongly anti-war (18.6%), moderately anti-war (64.7%), neutral (1.6%) and moderately pro-war (1.6%) (Maslog et al., 2006).

## 2.8 News management and propaganda

The enormity and instantaneity of media coverage of military conflicts in the last 20 years has forced warring states to change their media management policies, as how a

war is covered by the media affects victory or defeat on the military and political fronts. For example after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States by al-Qaeda, the US media were faced with government pressure. One of the most visible and successful news management strategies during Iraq War II was embedding, which allowed journalists to be placed within frontline troops. Public diplomacy and information warfare campaigns were also conducted to manage the direction and flow of information so that 'hearts and minds' could be won through manufacture of consent. Managing the direction and flow of news in wartime is important as "Information affects opinion; opinion affects politics; politics affects policy" (Seib, 2006, p 2). Given the instant global reach of news via broadcast, internet and print media, news management is vital for perception engineering, garnering support and various propaganda objectives.

News management also involves spin and propaganda and aims to generate positive coverage and minimise negative reporting. Jowett and O'Donnell (2006) defined news management as "a coordinated strategy to minimize negative information and present in a favourable light a story that could be damaging to self-interests" (p 3). According to Halliday (1999), "news management, that is control by states of coverage of wars, has been an element of media work in such conflicts for more than a century: the Gulf War was the occasion to put certain well-tried practices into operation" (p 131).

It was the immediacy of news dissemination, most notably the 'live' coverage of conflicts and more recently live coverage on network news and 24/7 global news networks, that pushed military and governments to manage news. During the American Revolutionary War as news dissemination was so slow there was no need for censorship "Because of the slowness with which news was transmitted during the Revolutionary War, censorship was not much an issue. News travelled too slowly from the front to be much threat to military security" (Tuyll, 2002, p 230). During World War II, when live radio broadcast of the war began, there was direct control of live coverage of events such as the Battle of Britain by Edward Murrow for CBS Radio. Torres notes how the British military managed the live broadcasts by placing a censor next to Murrow: "If the broadcaster started talking about sensitive military information, the censor tapped him and Murrow changed the subject" (Torres, 2002, p 243-44).



Through public diplomacy, news briefings, un-attributed leaks, and reporting guidelines at the war zone, governments manage media and hence slant information in their favour. From the World War I to Iraq War II, for example, the US government has very effectively managed the media to achieve military and political objectives of the wars. Through propaganda and media management the US government were in a position to influence public opinion and attract greater public support on the ‘war on terror’ in the aftermath of 9/11. As Kull et al (2003) have noted, “What is worrisome is that it appears that the [US] President has the capacity to lead members of the public to assume false beliefs in support of his position” (p 596).

Boyd-Barrett, noting the attempts by official sources to manage and manipulate the news media in their coverage of conflicts from Grenada to Iraq War II said:

The opening gambits of warfare occur when journalist are *most* vulnerable to manipulation by official sources. In contemporary warfare officialdom seeks to monopolize communication flow by limiting journalistic access to sanitized information from official sources, by rationing transportation and communications facilities, excluding non-approved journalists from military protection and facilities, keeping journalists out altogether – as in Grenada (1983) and Panama (1989), corralling select numbers into press “pools” – as in Falklands (1982), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Afghanistan (2001), and Gulf War I (1991-2) or “embedding” them with military units – as in Gulf War II (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 28).

As expected in a highly managed environment, the world media relied has on official press releases, well-orchestrated press conferences and handouts. Censorship has played a key role, as has denial of physical access to combat sites (Halliday, 1999). According to White (1994) “many of the stories from Riyadh, and other centers of military operation in the Middle East were identified as official government press releases, as having been cleared by the censor, or as derived from the official designated press pool reporter’s account. With all of this visible management of the media, a result of cooperation/ collusion between the news media and the US military, the Persian Gulf War was represented in carefully pre-selected and regulated terms” (p 123). During Iraq War I, the restrictions on news gathering through news management made “independent wartime reporting impossible and thus influence the shape of war news” (Thrall, 2000, p 196).

Besides the issues of censorship and pools, media scholars have been more concerned about the way the mainstream media were tamed by the Bush administration into compliance. Kellner (1992) contends that the White House and the Pentagon “managed a skilful public relations campaign and the compliant media produced a positive image of the US military troops, weapons systems and policy” (p 41). Commenting on the news spin and puffery, Kellner states:

Disinformation and dissembling was typical of the US military and has been the standard practice since Vietnam. The brilliance of the PR campaign of the Gulf War was that military lies, especially those of Schwarzkopf, were believed by (people) despite their often palpable contradiction by countervailing information. This was in part because people were so caught up in the war that they simply believed everything that General Schwarzkopf and the military told them and in part because the compliant media never criticised the duplicity and lies (Kellner, 1992, 202).

The censorship policies imposed were very effective in that the horrors of the war were conveyed in favour of the coalition. The true pictures of carnage in Kuwait and Iraq were not seen by viewers until the conflict was over. The Pentagon has achieved both a military and media success, and as Norris contends, military censorship was aimed at keeping the civilian death toll down:

The unprecedented Pentagon censorship of the press during the Persian Gulf War not only limited what North American viewers learned and saw of the conflict: it altered the sense of the ‘reality’ (or ‘unreality’) of the war itself. The military censorship was patently aimed both at concealing and at making the extent of the dead – both US and Iraqi, and particularly the numbers of dead Iraqi soldiers and civilian casualties – unknowable (Norris, 1994, p 285).

Through press conferences and official leaks, the Pentagon created an image in the public that with high-tech weapons, the war was clean and surgical and with the precision of high-precision laser surgery the malignant Iraqi invaders of Kuwait could be removed. According to *The Wall Street Journal* Pentagon officials at a press briefing showed pictures of a high-tech bomb destroying a mobile Scud launcher. But an official Air Force review found no evidence that any mobile Scuds were destroyed from the air (Murray, 2003, p A 4).

Interestingly the American public, who were aware of the media control and the sanitized nature of the media content in their newspapers and on TV screens, wanted increased military control of the media. A 57 percent majority believed that the military should increase its control over reporting of the war while 34 percent believed those editorial decisions should be left to the media themselves. Nearly eight in ten Americans (78 percent) said they believed the military was not hiding bad news from them and was telling as much as it could under the circumstances (*The People, The Press and The War In The Gulf*, January 31, 1991).

There were strong protests from media organisations and civil rights groups about the measures taken by the US government to control the flow of information. Some news organisations, including the *Nation*, *Village Voice*, and *Harper's*, even sued the Defense Department in the US District Court in New York for "imposing unconstitutional restriction during the Gulf conflict" (Norris, 1994, p 297-298).

In the process of news management, governments that wage wars also use propaganda and public relations strategies to boost morale at home and demoralise the enemy. Propaganda, a term that the United States government for the most part eschews, is defined by NATO (Cited in Snow, 1994, p 54) as "any information, ideas, or special appeals disseminated to influence the opinion, emotions, attitudes or behaviour of any specified group in order to benefit the sponsor, either directly or indirectly". Even during peacetime, propaganda is used to change attitudes of people or even countries. With the widespread use of different types of media of communication by people around the world to meet their information needs, broadcast, print media and the internet have been used directly by various countries to spread propaganda and in some cases to counter propaganda 'attacks'. According to Miller (2004b), since 11 September, 2001 "the propaganda machine of the US and UK has been cranked up to levels not seen outside the 1939-1945 war" (p 1). During war time propaganda and "persuasion would likely become to important as the final outcome as tanks, aircraft, ships and divisions" (Cole, 1990, p 3).

### 2.8.1 *From World War II to the Vietnam War*

During World War II, the Office of Facts and Figures and later the Office of War Information, headed by a former *New York Times* journalist, was the main establishment in publicising the American war effort at home and abroad while the Office of Censorship dealt with “censoring all civilian modes of communication: reading millions of letters, checking cables and telegrams, tapping telephone calls, vetting films and ensuring that newspapers and radio stations followed the Code of Wartime Practices. The stated task of the Office of Censorship was to keep from the enemy information that might endanger the Allied cause. Even they (Office of Censorship) pressured on film producers in Hollywood to introduce certain themes in films intended for the home market” (Knightley, 2000, p 299).

Even in the Vietnam War, where correspondents enjoyed a high degree of freedom, the US and South Vietnamese governments were able to manage news through official press conferences. Official US and Vietnamese spokesmen often gave misinformation to reporters at media briefings (Turner, 2003). The deliberate and overt spin by officials at briefings led journalists to label daily military briefings as the ‘Five O’ clock Follies’ and correspondents relied on the heavily managed news briefings (Thrall, 2000).

Writing on news management in Vietnam, Williams said:

News management through the daily briefings or the so-called ‘Five O’clock Follies’, is often characterised as cut and thrust affairs between military briefers who failed to convey the realities of battle, played up enemy losses and minimised United States setbacks and probing journalists who fought to report the truth in the face of official deception. And most journalists wrote straight news out of the briefings. ... News management is a product of the process of accommodation that occurs between the media and the environment within which they have to operate (Williams, 1993, p 313-314).

Although the news media were not very critical of the war during the first few years of the conflict, the US government and military subtly managed the news, through directives such as Cable 1006 and daily military briefings in Saigon. The media and the public began to lose confidence in the government and military after their revelations that their “reports were either inaccurate or misleading”. A 1965 CBS poll showed that

67 percent of the public felt that the statements coming from the government were not always truthful (Thrall, 2000, p 19).

Hallin (1986) argued that the “Gulf of Tonkin incident in Vietnam was a classic of Cold War news management. Through its public statements, its management of information, and its action, the administration was able to define or ‘frame’ the situation in such a way that its action appeared beyond the scope of political controversy” (p 19).

In the first days of 1964, a crisis in the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of North Vietnam brought the first direct use of American naval power against North Vietnam. In the first week two US destroyers reported attacks. In response one of the destroyers, the *Maddox*, opened fire damaging two patrol boats and sinking a third. The President also ordered air strikes against selected North Vietnamese patrol boat bases and oil depot (Logevall, 2001). The incidents eventually led to the long-prepared Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which authorised the president to “take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to aid any South East Asian state” (*US Department of State Bulletin 51, 1313*, 1964, p 268). The resolution was passed in the Congress – by a vote of 416-0 and in the House and 88-2 in the Senate.

US Under Secretary of State, George Ball, described the missions in the Gulf of Tonkin as “serving primarily for provocation” (Young & Jesser, 1997, p 83). This provocation led to the exchange of heavy arms fire, which the Johnson administration capitalised through the media to mobilise public opinion in favour of military action. Young and Jesser (1997) argue that the government was able to “manipulate the media into accepting the patently manufactured Gulf of Tonkin incident – the incident which was used as the pretext for the first round of US military escalation” (p 82). As Hallin notes, keeping journalists at bay, the US government was able to control and fashion information as it wanted:

In the Gulf of Tonkin incident, control of information was clearly an important factor. Journalists had no direct access to any of the details of the incident. They could not talk with the crew or see the cables. They also had relatively little information about what was happening behind the scenes in the administration itself – no way of knowing, for instance, that the text of the joint resolution had been written in the spring, as part of a scenario for a step-by-step escalation of the war (Hallin, 1986, p 20).

The news media, in the early days of the Vietnam War, relied heavily on public officials and the military for information (Williams, 1993). This reliance gave the White House and the Pentagon the opportunity to manage news agenda until 1968, when the Tet offensive pushed the media, the military, the government and the public into loggerheads. Observes Williams:

The dependence of the US news media on the executive branch – as well as the faith placed on the authority of the White House – enabled the Johnson administration to manage the news agenda on the war up until 1968. Tet saw Johnson lose ability; it destroyed credibility as a source of information (Williams, 1993, p 321).

Comprehensive research by Leon Sigal on Vietnam news sources found that the government dominated the flow of information. He found that of the 2,850 stories that appeared on the front pages of *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post* in a period between 1949 and 1973, public officials were the sources for 78 percent of them and the executive branch dominated the news (Sigal cited in Williams, 1993). Williams (1993) concludes that “this reflects the expansion of the news-making capacities of the presidency in the post war period. As a source the president is now without rival; whatever he says, significant or not, true or not, comprehensible or not, is reported” (p 316). The Sigal study also showed that “most of the information gathered by reporters came through routine channels – that is from the press releases, news conferences, daily briefings, and official proceedings.” (Williams, 1993, p 316).

### 2.8.2 *From Kosovo to Iraq*

In managing local and global public opinion it is important that governments occupy the print space and air time with the type of content they want. During the Yugoslav crisis, when NATO began bombing Serb positions, the US and the UK managed to a large extent to fill the air time with the kind of messages they wanted. NATO spokesman Jamie Shea, noting that the military alliance “deliberately saturated the airwaves with successive briefings” to occupy media space with official information, said:

One thing we did well during the Kosovo crisis was to occupy the media space. ... We created a situation in which nobody in the world who was a regular TV watcher could escape the NATO message. It was essential to keep the media permanently occupied and supplied with fresh information to report on. That way, they are less inclined to go in search of critical stories (Cited in Kitfield, 1999, p 2552)

In Iraq War I (the Persian Gulf War) the Bush administration's war proposal was marketed by the news media. As Jeffords & Rabinovitz (1994) point out "media participation in the promotion of the Persian Gulf War helped to create an atmosphere that discouraged questioning the Bush administration's claims about Iraq, Saddam Hussein, or the value of the war itself" (p 12). The daily televised press conferences and briefings during Iraq War I, according to spokesman Lieutenant General Thomas Kelly, were "the most significant part of the whole operation [because] for the first time ever ... the American people were getting their information from the government – not from the press" (Sharkey cited in Engelhardt, 1994, p 81). The US and Britain restricted war coverage through a pool system, which helped to achieve some of their propaganda objectives (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2006). There were 36 pool slots for between 700-1000 journalists at the beginning of Desert Storm, and when ground war started there were 192 pool slots for over 1,400 journalists. Although the slots rotated and there were permanent slots for major news organisations, many correspondents, especially those from smaller media, were not able to get access to the pools (Thrall, 2000). According to Thrall:

The pool system made it impossible for journalists to balance the access/ autonomy equation to their satisfaction. A journalist could remain independent, free from escorts and security review, simply by reporting the war from the hotel and rejecting the pool. To do so, of course, meant that a journalist had zero access to the military, to its high-tech weaponry, or to the battlefield where the biggest story in the world was taking place (Thrall, 2000, p 197).

In Iraq War II, the main venue for news management was the US Central Command's Coalition Media Center in Doha, Qatar, described by General Tommy Franks as 'a platform for truth'. The briefing stage designed by a Hollywood art director provided journalists "with more polished spin than genuine news" (Chalmers, 2004, p 105). London, Washington and Doha coordinated around the clock on the 'lines to take' and the message of the day, and there was a daily conference call which usually included Pentagon spokeswoman Victoria Clarke, the State Department, the White House,

Downing Street and the British Foreign Office (Chalmers, 2004). Attempts by the US government and military to manage the flow of news from the fronts in their favour were noted by Tumber, who contends that “The battle for information and the contest over the winning of public opinion” has become an integral feature of all conflicts:

Attempts by the US government and the military to control and manage news during the invasion phase of the 2003 Iraq conflict involved a number of different measures and procedures. Using familiar techniques of censorship, misinformation, obfuscation, psychological operations to varying degrees, the US was able to frustrate journalists and news organizations in their search for information (Tumber & Palmer, 2004, p 190).

CNN’s chief international correspondent, Christiane Amanpour speaking on CNBC in September 2003 on Iraq War II coverage, noted that the US government officials intimidated journalists and that “the press was muzzled”:

All of the entire body politic in my view, whether it’s the administration, the intelligence, the journalists, whoever, did not ask enough questions, for instance, about weapons of mass destruction. I mean, it looks like this was disinformation at the highest levels (Cited in Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p 9).

### 2.8.3 *Embedding*

The embedding concept conceived by the US government, brought some of the journalists from key media organisations under military oversight. On February 3, 2003, the Department of Defense issued the guidelines for embedding news media that gave “minimal restrictive access” to them during military operations, and set clearly the reason why media management and positive war coverage was essential for the US and international public opinion:

Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the US public; the public in Allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our Coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations whose perceptions of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement (Department of Defense., 2003).

The embedding tool was aimed to maximise perception engineering so that local and global public opinion could be mobilised for the war on Iraq. The embedding concept was developed to get maximum positive coverage and as Sydney Schanberg, a former



*New York Times* correspondent noted, “It’s hard for any reporter to be aggressively critical of someone you’re bonding with” (Cited in Mitchell, 2003, p 34).

For the Pentagon, embedding “revolutionized media coverage of war” (Murray, 2003, p A 4) because under their supervision the journalists were under their supervision. Embedding creates a dilemma for the media people. There are psychological and moral factors at play when journalists travel, eat, live and share the same lodging with soldiers. Journalists inevitably become part of the ‘team’ of soldiers. As Goldsmith (2003) argues, “embedding of journalists among ground troops, [is] seen as effective in boosting support in the conflict’s early days” and “some US embeds have clearly bonded with their military cohorts, using the personal pronoun ‘we’ when reporting about the troops’ progress, there is often more detachment from non-US embedded news organizations” (p A 12). Boyd-Barrett (2004) contends that in Iraq War II, news management through embedding was aimed “to stifle dissent, garner unquestioning support, and rally around a common symbol” (p 30).

As Livingston et al observe, by giving access through embedding, the military was able to impose their elite agenda on the media:

The embed programme gave the news organisations what they wanted: access to the war from a relatively manageable environment (surrounded by the might of the most powerful military in history). As with Cops and other reality television programming, access meant hearing and seeing the drama and action almost entirely from the perspective of the institutional actors. The gatekeeping hybrid was formed by elements of the economically driven and organisationally driven gatekeeping models (Livingston, Bennett, & Robinson, 2005, p 50).

The embedding worked well, in that the military and government sources were able to saturate media space through news agencies, major broadcasters and newspapers. A content analysis of ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN news during the invasion and occupation period of Iraq War II revealed that “embedded network television news stories were more favourable in overall tone towards the military, more favourable in depictions of military personnel, and featured greater use of episodic frames which, as a result, elicited somewhat more positive relational cues” ( Pfau, Haigh, Logsdon, & Perrine, 2005, p 468).

Correspondents who opted to work independently were also required to get accreditation from the US authorities, although they were not under the strict media guidelines set for the embeds. But ‘independent’ journalists, also known as ‘unilaterals’ were exposed to greater danger as they were not given protection or escorted by the military. According to one estimate, during the early stage of the war there were 2,100 unilaterals, most of them working for European news media (Katovsky & Carlson, 2003).

Few of the embedded journalists during Iraq War II suffered from overt censorship by the Americans or British. But on one occasion a journalist’s description of British soldiers ‘running for cover’ was changed to ‘dashing for cover’ because ‘running’ sounded cowardly to the military (Jukes, 2004).

Perhaps it was not the direct censorship, but the self censorship journalists imposed to comply with embedding rules that threatened the concept of objectivity and freedom of expression, as Katovsky & Carlson note:

In this new era of embedded media, however, a tension existed between freedom of expression and following the rules. For embeds, the latter was a slack leash, but it was a leash nonetheless, leading critics to question the critical distinction between propaganda and journalism. Once embedded, ease of movement was drastically curtailed and unfettered mobility denied. The trade-off existed between generous access and narrow-aperture coverage (Katovsky & Carlson, 2003, p xv-xvi).

The Pentagon and the White House touted embedding as a radical step to provide the public with the reality of the conflict, thus ending a “long-time distrust between the news media and the military” (Steinberg, 2003). Given the pre-war news management by the US to justify the war, it was not surprising that the American people accepted embedding as a good strategic move by the Pentagon. A public opinion poll by Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in April 2003, shows that Americans favour “the practice of having reporters travel with US troops in Iraq and file reports from the battlefield” and 80 percent think reports from embedded journalists are fair and objective while 58 percent believed that embedded reporters are a good thing (*War Coverage Praised, But Public Hungry for Other News*, April 9, 2003).

However some journalists felt that the embedding process undermined their professional integrity. As Anthony Lloyd of *The Times* of London contends, embeds become potential tools for the military to communicate propaganda messages to the global audience:

... There are the 'embedded' reporters, who work within a military unit. Because they are potential propaganda tools, subject to limitations dictated by the military, including censorship and very little freedom of movement, it was thought that these individuals would be of limited value in reporting the war, being denied access to the real fighting and hobbled by army authority. Until the end of the Second World War most war correspondents were in a similar situation. It was only the disparate nature of postcolonial conflicts that created opportunities for journalists to rove, unaligned, between opposing sets of fighters (Lloyd, 2003, p 7).

But, on the part of some US media organisations, the attitude towards embedding was conciliatory and complacent. Without many complaints or protests the media entered a marriage of convenience with the Pentagon, and as Murray observes "the Pentagon is happy because it has most reporters covering this war under its thumb, reporting stories that are largely sympathetic to the troops and their cause" and "the media are happy because they've been let inside the war machine, and are getting great images to send back home" (Murray, 2003, A 4). A study by Pfau et al (2004) showed that compared to non-embedded reporting, embedded print coverage of 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' was more favourable in overall tone towards the military and in depiction of individual troops.

The few journalists who ventured out of the embed perimeter were marched out of the war theatre. US journalist Geraldo Rivera was airlifted out of Iraq by a US Army helicopter for outlining troop movements and locations in the sand while "about two dozen journalists were disembedded, forcibly ordered to leave Iraq by their own means or escorted with military assistance" (Katovsky & Carlson, 2003, p xvi).

#### 2.8.4 *Saving Pvt. Jessica Lynch*

The rescue of Jessica Lynch came at a time when the coalition forces unexpectedly faced resistance from Iraqi troops in the South and adverse climatic conditions bogged

down the troop advances (Dwyer, 2003). US Army General John Abizaid said that 22<sup>nd</sup> March was the 'toughest day of resistance' so far encountered by US-led forces in four days of war against Iraq ("Sunday saw toughest Iraq resistance so far - U.S," 2003), while Iraqi soldiers offered "fierce resistance" to the British forces fighting for the port of Umm Qasr (Litvinenko, 2003).

In the first week of the war, on March 23, 2003, Iraqi soldiers ambushed the 507<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Maintenance Company which was supporting the advancing 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division. The division took a wrong turn near Nasiriyah. More than eight US soldiers were killed and Army supply clerk Jessica Lynch, 19, was taken prisoner by the Iraqis and held at the Nasiriyah hospital for medical treatment. Two weeks later, after the US forces got a tip-off from an Iraqi working at the hospital, Navy SEALs and Army Rangers rescued Lynch and also retrieved 11 bodies (LeDuc, 2003).

Iraqi TV broadcast footage of captured US soldiers to the world, thus sending a message that the Coalition forces were in trouble. To avert the negative publicity the US and Coalition were waiting for an image that could be turned to a good and emotionally involving human interest piece. The successful rescue of Jessica Lynch was, in public relations terms, an opportunity that could be used to the full extent, both for boosting the morale of the troops in the war theatre and the public at the home front. US government officials 'leaked' information about the rescue mission stating that Jessica Lynch was "fighting to the death" and that "she did not want to be taken alive" (Schmidt & Loeb, 2003, p A 1). Lynch's rescue footage, which was filmed with night-vision cameras by a Hollywood director (Pilger, 2003), was broadcast by the global media, projecting a positive image of the US military.

Government and military officials turned the story into a propaganda tool in favour of the US. The news media, quoting unnamed sources, played up the story creating a myth of a hero out of the Jessica Lynch incident. According to Reuters correspondent John Chalmers, who was based in Doha, Jessica Lynch was turned into a patriotic symbol, thus increasing support for the war:

Captured on black and green night-vision film, the Special Forces operation was billed as a daring and heroic act, and it turned 20-year-old Pfc. Jessica Lynch of West Virginia, into an instant symbol of patriotic pride. . . . Journalists were awakened in their Doha hotel beds that night and urged to get down to As Sayliya for some big news. Many of us were convinced that Saddam must have been captured. . . . The reality TV worked. Four days later a *Los Angeles Times* opinion poll, which had been conducted while news of the rescue filled the airwaves, showed an upsurge of support among Americans for the war and a steep rise in President Bush's approval rating (Chalmers, 2004, p 112).

*Washington Post* front-paged, 'She Was Fighting to the Death' on 3 April. The 1,104-word story by its embedded reporters Susan Schmidt and Vernon Loeb said, quoting officials, that Jessica Lynch "fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers after Iraqi forces ambushed the Army's 507<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Maintenance Company, firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition" (Schmidt & Loeb, 2003, p A 1). Jim Wilkinson, a Central Command spokesman in Qatar, said in an interview with CNN that "America is a nation that does not leave its heroes behind", which many news organisations used as their story lead in covering the rescue of Jessica Lynch ("Female PoW rescued by U.S. special forces," 2003). Footage of the rescue was aired repeatedly on television networks around the world, reporting how a Special Forces team bravely fought into and out of the hospital.

The rescue story was a PR victory for the US, as it projected that the US Special Forces could operate successfully inside Iraq; that America would never leave its soldiers behind enemy lines; that women are also contributing to achieve the US military objectives and that they will fight till they run out of ammunition.

The dramatic story later turned out to be a dramatised story. A 15-page military report in July 2003 dismissed that Lynch "fought fiercely as her supply convoy was ambushed". It also said she survived "principally because of the medical attention she received from the Iraqis" (Rennie, 2003). A BBC documentary on the 'daring' rescue said that the Lynch rescue was "a script made for Hollywood, made by the Pentagons" (Chalmers, 2004, p 113). *The Washington Post*, which gave extensive coverage to the rescue of Lynch, admitted on 23<sup>rd</sup> May that its coverage had erred. In an editorial, the newspaper said:

Pfc. Jessica Lynch's capture and rescue was certainly a dramatic affair – particularly in *The [Washington] Post*. This newspaper told its readers that she had been shot and

stabbed, that she had fought off her Iraqi attackers – her gun blazing – until she went down and was taken prisoner, hospitalized and then rescued eight days later. Trouble is, much of that may be false. ... Lynch apparently was not shot. Lynch was not stabbed. Lynch may not have put up much of a fight, maybe none at all (Cohen, 2003, p A 25).

A *New York Times* correspondent who visited the hospital in Nasiriyah in June 2003, said in a report he filed from there:

... the first accounts of the rescue were embellished, like the imminent threat from W.M.D., and like wartime pronouncements about an uprising in Basra and imminent defections of generals. There's a pattern: we were misled. ... As a citizen, I deeply resent my government trying to spin me like a Ping-Pong ball.

... My guess is that 'Saving Private Lynch' was a complex tale vastly oversimplified by officials, partly because of genuine ambiguities and partly because they wanted a good story to build political support for the war – a repetition of the exaggerations over W.M.D. We weren't quite lied to, but facts were subordinated to politics, and truth was treated as an endlessly stretchable fabric. The Iraqis misused our prisoners for their propaganda purposes, and it hurts to find out that some American officials were misusing Private Lynch the same way (Kristof, 2003, p 23).

Lynch also admitted in her authorised biography, in November 2003, contrary to early Pentagon reports which suggested that she heroically resisted capture, that she never fired a shot, because her M-16 jammed and she did not kill anyone (Colford & Siemaszki, 2003). She also accused the Bush administration of “manipulating her story for propaganda” (“America's reluctant hero exposes the Pentagon's spin,” 2003). The Lynch case illustrates how real-life events from the war zones were manipulated to create the images the Pentagon or the White House wanted to convey to the American people and the world. The case also demonstrates the vulnerability of the news media, as they are easily used as a vehicle to convey messages by the authorities. And given the media routines and news production structures, embedded journalists choose to churn out information from primary definers into publishable copy. As had been the case in the New Zealand press, the rescue of Lynch was utilised by the US to create positive spin for the war to oust Saddam Hussein.

Compton argues that “spectacular narrative forms” such as “Shock and Awe,” and the “Saving of Pvt. Jessica Lynch,” were “fully integrated into military and corporate public relations campaigns along with the daily production regimes of 24-hour cable news

channels” (Compton, 2004). Indeed as a BBC documentary declares, the Lynch strategy was “one of the most stunning pieces of news management ever conceived.”

Noting that the Jessica Lynch story originated from official sources, British Broadcasting Corporation’s John Simpson remarked that “it was all the invention of the US Army spinners, and a credulous press desperate for some genuine heroics in a war which seemed disturbingly short of gallantry” (Cited in Allan & Zelizer, 2004, p 8).

### *2.8.5 Propaganda and public relations*

The way US officials managed the Lynch story shows that the event was used to a great extent to shape the public perception of the conflict and to garner political support for the war (Kristof, 2003). Thus the story was used for propaganda purposes to strengthen the US and Coalition war policies.

The systematic use of propaganda techniques is nothing new. Both covert and overt propaganda campaigns have been carried out by countries in war and peace, but always more extensively at times of military conflicts. Propaganda has been defined by Jowett and O’Donnell (2006) as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (p 7).

A more classical definition was given by Lasswell (1927), who argued that “propaganda refers solely to the control of opinions by significant symbols, or, to speak more concretely and less accurately, by stories, rumours, reports, pictures and other forms of social communication. Propaganda is concerned with the management of opinions and attitudes by the direct manipulation of social suggestion rather than by altering other conditions in the environment or in the organism” (p 9). He noted that the use of propaganda becomes important during war time and to rally the nation behind the war the minds of the people had to be controlled:

During war much reliance must be placed on propaganda to promote economy of food, textiles, fuel, and other commodities, and to stimulate recruiting, employment in war

industries, service in relief work, and the purchase of bonds. But by far the most potent role of propaganda is to mobilize the animosity of the community against the enemy, to maintain friendly relations with neutrals and allies, to arouse neutrals against the enemy, and to break up the solid wall of enemy antagonism.

International war propaganda rose to such amazing dimensions in the last war (World War I), because the communization of warfare necessitated the mobilization of the civilian mind. No government could hope to win without a united nation behind it, and no government could have a united nation behind it unless it controlled the minds of its people. The civilians had to be depended upon to supply recruits for the front and for the war industries. The sacrifices of war had to be borne without complaints that spread dissension at home and discouragement in the trenches (Lasswell, 1927, p 9-10).

Lasswell (1927, p 195) identified four major objectives of propaganda:

1. To mobilize hatred against the enemy
2. To preserve the friendship of allies
3. To preserve the friendship and, if possible, to procure the co-operation of neutrals
4. To demoralise the enemy

When the US, then following a strictly isolationist policy, entered World War I in 1917, the government resorted to propaganda to change public opinion. After hiring journalist George Creel, President Woodrow Wilson “wanted to generate support from the isolationist camp to intervene in the war in Europe”. The Committee on Public Information (later known as the Creel Commission) was tasked to do propaganda work to spread anti-German sentiment (*Covert Propaganda, War, Journalists, Etc.*, 2005). The CPI had two sections – the Foreign Section which handled propaganda matters overseas, and the Domestic Section which worked on mobilising public opinion in the United States (Solan et al cited in Miller, 1995, p 18). The Creel Commission was also the chief government censor in World War I and “it originated news favourable to the war effort and blacked out that which was not” (Knightley, 2000, p 299).

According to Chomsky, the Creel Commission was successful in creating a hysterical Red Scare and changing the public opinion of the war:

The Creel Commission succeeded within six months, in turning a pacifist population into a hysterical, war-mongering population which wanted to destroy everything



German, tear the Germans limb from limb, go to war and save the world. That was a major achievement, and it led to a further achievement. Right at that time and after the war the same techniques were used to whip up a hysterical Red Scare, as it was called, which succeeded pretty much in destroying unions and eliminating such dangerous problems as freedom of the press and freedom of political thought. There was very strong support from the media, from the business establishment, which in fact organized, pushed much of this work, and it was in general a great success (Chomsky, 1991).

The same technique of propaganda was used in justifying the US involvement in Vietnam, Iraq, and the Balkans. Every military action was preceded by extensive propaganda or public relations. The public's inhibitions against military interventions were removed through opinion engineering. As Chomsky observes, "it is also necessary to whip up the population in support of foreign adventures. Usually the population is pacifist, just like they were during World War I. The public sees no reason to get involved in foreign adventures, killing, and torture. So you have to whip them up. And to whip them up you have to frighten them" (Chomsky, 1991). The whip the US and British governments used comprised propaganda arms such as the BBG (Broadcasting Board of Governors) and the mainstream media.

Since 11 September 2001 both the US and UK governments have comprehensively overhauled their internal and external propaganda apparatus. These have been globally co-ordinated as never before to justify the 'war on terror', including attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq (Miller, 2004a).

Another propaganda technique or device was the use of psychological operations (psyops), which, according to NATO's (Cited in Snow, 1994, p 54) definition are "planned psychological activities in peace and war directed at enemy, friendly and neutral audiences in order to influence attitudes and behaviour affecting the achievement of political and military objectives". News is one of the vital elements in psychological warfare (Mathews, 1957).

Examples of psyops include US military aircraft Commando Solo dropping leaflets over Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Middle East Radio Project that included Radio Sawa broadcasting to the Middle East and Radio Farda targeting Iran (Snow, 1994). These two radio stations were part of the much larger broadcasting entity of the US government – the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which on October 1, 1999

became the independent, autonomous entity responsible for all US government and government sponsored, non-military, international broadcasting. As part of a psyops in Iraq War II, coalition aircraft dropped 439,000 ‘capitulation leaflets’ on Iraqi troops at more than 10 locations in southern Iraq, detailing instructions on what they should do to avoid attack (Mannion, 2003).

According to the BBG website, the BBG is “a Federal entity encompassing all US international broadcasting services”, and “the day-to-day broadcasting activities are carried out by the individual BBG international broadcasters: the Voice of America (VOA), Alhurra, Radio Sawa, Radio Farda, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and Radio and TV Martí, with the assistance of the International Broadcasting Bureau” (BBG, 2005).

The BBG claims that it has “advanced the cause of freedom and democracy by broadcasting uncensored, accurate and objective news and information to millions of people around the world in their own languages” and in this process of public diplomacy has “expanded audiences in key target areas, including the Middle East, Central and Southeast Asia, Iraq, Iran, North Korea and Cuba, as well as in major markets such as China, Russia and Africa ... The Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), Radio Free Asia (RFA), Radio/TV Martí, Radio Sawa and Radio Farda were at the center of the world’s news events—from the war in Iraq and the capture of Saddam Hussein to the SARS epidemic in China and the Columbia Space Shuttle disaster” (BBG, 2003).

The BBG also established the Middle East Television Network, which on 14 February 2004 launched Alhurra, “a full-service satellite television channel with newscasts, current affairs talk shows, news updates and other information programming” (BBG, 2003). The Virginia-based channel is geared to counter anti-American media content in the region, improve America’s image and win the Arab hearts and minds. The reception to Alhurra has been poor in the target audience, with some saying that “the station could not improve America’s image until Washington changed its policies – which Arabs regard as biased toward Israel” (Karam, 2004). As a propaganda tool of the US government Alhurra’s selective broadcast to the Middle East was biased against the

Arabs. When most of the main Arab TV channels were covering Israel's assassination of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Alhurra broadcast a cooking show, and when violence erupted in Fallujah, Iraq, the channel neglected to cover the conflict, instead showing a documentary on monkeys (Al-Arian, 2004).

By way of marketing the 'positive image' of America abroad and winning the hearts and minds of the young people, the US government in July 2003 launched *Hi*, an Arabic-language glossy news magazine to be sold in the Middle East. Published by the State Department, the monthly magazine – targeting young people with a mix of features, celebrity profiles and music – was available for the equivalent of about US\$2 in Lebanon, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza, Israel, Algeria, Egypt, Cyprus and several Gulf states. While it had an annual budget of \$4.2 million the magazine was just part of a broader media attack on the Middle East (Buncomb, 2003).

During Iraq War I, the propaganda and public relations arms of the US government and military fully exploited the Lasswellian view of propaganda as being to “mobilise the hatred of the people against the enemy; represent the opposing nation as a menacing, murderous aggressor; represent the enemy as an obstacle to the realisation of the cherished ideals and dreams of the nation as a whole, and of each constituent unit” (Lasswell, 1927, p 195). In the public opinion engineering process, even institutions such as the Congress were duped and manipulated, a good example of which was the exaggeration of Iraqi atrocities in Kuwait in September 1990.

In October 1990, testimony before the US House of Representatives Human Rights Caucus told of Iraqi atrocities, particularly how Iraqi soldiers had removed babies from incubators in a Kuwaiti hospital and taken the incubators back to Iraq, leaving infants to die on the hospital floor. California Democrat Tom Lantos and Illinois Republican John Porter introduced a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl named Nayirah, who described a horrifying scene in Kuwait City. “I volunteered at the al-Addan hospital. ... While I was there I saw the Iraqi soldiers come into the hospital with guns and go into the room where babies were in incubators. They took the babies out of the incubators, took the incubators, and left the babies on the cold floor to die.” Seven pro-war senators brought

up the baby-incubator allegations to argue for an invasion of Iraq, leading to a narrow five-vote win (Chatterjee, 2004).

The story about the alleged Iraqi atrocities was disseminated by the mainstream media and circulated quickly around the country. It became a justification cited by many people for going to war against Iraq. The story was eventually revealed as a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign engineered by the public relations firm of Hill and Knowlton, then the world's largest PR firm (Jeffords & Rabinovitz, 1994). The 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl, who was coached by Hill & Knowlton's vice president Lauri Fitz-Pgado, was a member of the Kuwait Royal Family. Her father was Saud Nasir al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the US. Hill & Knowlton produced dozens of video news releases (VNRs) at a cost of well over half a million dollars and world "TV stations and networks simply fed the carefully-crafted propaganda to unwitting viewers, who assumed they were watching 'real' journalism" (Stauber & Rampton, 1995).

The incubators were found in Kuwaiti hospitals after the war and medical personnel there denied that the Iraqis had killed the premature babies as claimed by the Hill & Knowlton-coached 'eyewitness'. Kellner illustrates this incident as a classic case of propaganda:

This baby atrocity story was, therefore, a classic propaganda campaign to manufacture consent for the Bush administration policies. It was part of an elaborate web of deception, disinformation, and Big Lies to sell the war to the public. It revealed the US president and vice-president and the top US military leaders to be propagandists who did not hesitate to repeat Big Lies over and over in order to win support for the war effort. The media which repeated these lies without scepticism or inquiry also revealed itself to be a naïve instrument of US propaganda (Kellner, 1992, p 71).

Although journalists eventually revealed that the incubator incident was propaganda, their articles did not appear until long after the war was over (Jeffords & Rabinovitz, 1994). Carl Nolte, who covered the Persian Gulf War for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, commented: "The Pentagon in my opinion played the news organisations, particularly television and to a lesser extent newspapers, like a violin" (Nolte cited in Engelhardt, 1994, p 93-94).

There were other cases of outright lies and deception by the US military, the government, and the PR and propaganda firms entrusted to manufacture consent to promote and justify the war. The myth of the precision Patriot missile was exaggerated, with footage of the missile hitting targets in the air. Claims about Patriot anti-missiles, footage of which was shown allegedly shooting down incoming Scud missiles over Saudi Arabia or Israel, were exaggerated; of the 86 Scuds fired in the war, only 10 were destroyed by Patriots (Halliday, 1999). In Iraq War I, false information was deliberately injected into the news cycle, as noted by Halliday:

A different form of distortion, again one common to all modern war, was that of disinformation, or the provision of information known at the time to be false. On their side, the Iraqis were not slow to put out their own side of the case, beginning with the claim, made immediately after the invasion of 2 August, their forces had been 'invited' into Kuwait by a friendly, popular uprising (Halliday, 1999, p 134).

When Iraqi soldiers withdrew from Kuwait they set fire to many oil wells, causing an environmental catastrophe in the Gulf. But Western bombing of oil storage tankers in the Gulf also caused an ecological disaster, the news of which was deliberately minimised while the Iraqi actions were extensively covered (Kellner cited in Halliday, 1999). The deliberate disinformation on military matters was also evident in the way in which, prior to the launching of ground war, TV crews were allowed to film preparations for seaborne landings along the Kuwait coast (Halliday, 1999). Such landings were not to be part of the land assault on Kuwait, but suggestion that they were formed part of an attempt to deceive the Iraqis about where the main brunt of the final attack was to come.

The Freedom Promotion Act 2002 in the US instructs the secretary of state "to make public diplomacy an integral component in the planning and execution of foreign policy" (Rampton & Stauber, 2003b, p 10). Given this legitimacy the US government in recent times has embarked on more aggressive PR campaigns, as a means of 'public diplomacy.' A Washington DC-based PR firm, the Rendon Group, was hired by the Pentagon to "win over the hearts and minds of Arabs and Muslims worldwide" (Miller et al., 2004, p 42). The firm, which has a successful track record of running overseas propaganda operations, claims in its website that it has worked in 80 countries 'and has more than 20 years' experience assisting governments, organizations and

corporations in the development of overall communications and public relations policies utilizing state of the art technological tools as well as traditional public relations tools” (*The Rendon Group Website*, 2001).

During the 1990s, the CIA hired the Rendon Group, whose motto is ‘information as an element of power,’ to wage a PR war against Saddam Hussein, spending a reported \$23 million. According to Meyers, “some of the disinformation efforts, such as fake radio newscasts making fun of Hussein and beamed into Iraq, were produced in Boston. John Rendon helped create and promote the Iraqi National Congress, the exile group headed by Ahmed Chalabi, a one-time Bush administration darling who now faces criminal charges in Iraq” (Meyers, 2004, p 2). In 1991, a few months after the end of Operation Desert Storm, then-president George H.W. Bush signed a presidential directive ordering a CIA covert operation to unseat Saddam Hussein, for which the CIA turned to Rendon to do the PR work (Rampton & Stauber, 2003a). The Rendon Group also got a multimillion dollar contract from the Kuwaiti government for a PR campaign against Iraq’s 1990 invasion and to mobilise public support for Operation Desert Storm (Miller et al., 2004).

In preparation for Iraq War II, public diplomacy was given an additional boost with huge funding by the White House. In 2002 the White House created an Office of Global Communications (OGC) to coordinate the administration’s foreign policy message and supervise America’s image abroad. In September *The Times* of London reported that the OGC would spend US\$200 million on a “PR blitz against Saddam Hussain” aimed “at American and foreign audiences, particularly in Arab nations sceptical of US policy in the region” (Miller et al., 2004, p 45).

In Iraq War II, disinformation was spread through the media to achieve military and political objectives. According to an analysis by *The Daily Mirror*, in the first week of the 20 March 2003 attack there were 13 separate cases of deception, including the alleged firing of Scud missiles, the ‘discovery’ of a chemical warfare factory, the liberation of Umm Qasr, the uprising in Basra and others (Smith cited in Miller, 2004b).

In Iraq War II coverage, in the rush to break the story first, some rolling networks sidestepped from the professional norms of verification and objectivity and thus sacrificed accuracy. According to Allan and Zelizer (2004) notable examples of such stories that were not grounded on facts but rather on claims include the alleged discovery of WMD; claims that Iraq planned to dispatch drones with biological agents in the US; claims that the Republican Guard was planning to use chemical weapons in the defence of Baghdad; the fall of Umm Qasr; the discovery of biological weapons and weapons-grade plutonium and the defection of Iraq's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz. All these claims were later proven to be false.

The US military played down the human cost of the war to Iraq by deliberately keeping the enemy death toll low. During Iraq War I, General Norman Schwarzkopf, the American field commander, informed the Congress that at least 100,000 Iraqi soldiers had been killed but gave no estimate of civilian deaths. But a study by the Medical Education Trust in London found out nearly a year later that up to a quarter of a million men, women and children were killed or died in the aftermath of the American-led attack (Pilger, 2004). The deliberate attempt by the US to minimise civilian deaths in Iraq led veteran war correspondent John Pilger (2004) to conclude that "the Gulf War [of 1991] was the most 'covered' war in history; it was also the most covered-up. With honourable exceptions, the massacre of so many human beings was not considered news" (p 19).

Propagandists strongly believe that manipulated messages are no less integral to subduing the enemy than military hardware. According to Lasswell (1927) "it is possible to employ propaganda as a weapon of direct attack against the morale of the enemy by seeking to break up or divert the hatred of the enemy from belligerent" (p 161). He said:

In World War I, Americans spent most of their energy advertising America's strength. Little leaflets with a row of soldiers, whose size varied with the monthly increase in the number of American soldiers, were distributed over the German lines. The card said that more than one million Americans are now in France and more than 10 times as many stands ready in America. The extent of German casualties and tonnage losses were also emphasised (Lasswell, 1927, p 165).

Similar methods were used by the Allied coalition in Iraq War II. In the run up to the conflict, information about military strength and the technology was publicised.

Even embedded reporters were intimidated by soldiers when they tried to cover stories that may have shown US troops in a negative light. As Rozen (2004 ) observes, “when US Central Command has good news to report in Iraq, as it did after troops from the Fourth Infantry Division captured Saddam Hussein on December 13, it adores the media. But formalists say that when there’s bad news — a helicopter crash, a mortar, attack they are increasingly being blocked from covering the story by US soldiers, who frequently confiscate and destroy their film disks and videotapes” (p A4).

#### *2.8.6 A propaganda model*

Within war journalism discourse, where the key three players are the military, government and the media, the propaganda model framework can be used to study source-media relations and the news product that is filtered out to media consumers. Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model thesis was built on the premise that the powerful institutions such as the government, military, and the corporate sector “are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p 2). The set of five news filters that make up the propaganda model are:

1. The size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms
2. Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media
3. Reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power
4. ‘Flak’ as a means of disciplining the media
5. ‘Anticommunism’ as a national religion and control mechanism (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p 2)



These filters enter the news gathering and processing stages, and exert varying levels of influence in the US and Western news media institutions. The raw news resources are filtered through “leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p 2). However, the degree of influence and the mesh size of the filters varies depending on the news events. The third and fourth and fifth filters are important within the larger US foreign policy dimension, as government and military become the primary news sources. When some media outlets have generated content that has undermined US foreign policy and national interest, quite often direct and indirect methods of ‘disciplining the media’ have been employed. The vacuum created by the demise of communism has been filled by an equivalent ‘Red’ scare in the form of Islamic terror. Especially after 9/11, Islam and Muslims are seen as perilous to the US and Western democracies.

The recent US foreign policy drives against Afghanistan and Iraq, supported by military actions, can be seen as equivalent to anticommunist actions taken by the West during the cold war in Korea and Vietnam. The threat of communism has been replaced by ‘extreme Islam’, ‘jihadists’ and ‘Al Qaida cells’ both active and sleeping. These are largely cultural constructs that have been used to justify offensive actions, both military and political by the US and Western allies.

With the end of the bi-polar world after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1984, the fifth filter can be replaced with larger ideological and cultural conflicts (Huntington, 1996) such as the threat of terrorism from Muslim extremists and Islam’s alleged dominance (Wagner, 2004; Tibi, 2002). In post 9/11 media-military-government relations the ‘war on terror’ can be equated with the fifth filter and, given the fear generated by the September 11 attacks, Al Qaeda and other extremist groups have become symbols of militant Islam. According to Israeli (2003) “a new type of terrorism has emerged over the past two decades, triggered and nurtured by a certain interpretation of the creed of Islam, usually dubbed ‘fundamentalist’, which has lent new twists to the entire idea of terrorism” (p 4).

The tripartite relations between media, military and government during military conflicts create a web of interrelatedness and connections, and as articulated by Herman and Chomsky (1988) “the mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest” (p 18). Furthermore, the corporate sector and other influential institutions generate ‘raw material for news’, which media practitioners use to fill the daily newshole. In the US, the White House, Pentagon and State Department are key news beats, and by extension during Iraq War II, the Coalition Media Centre in Qatar, as well as Downing Street was part of the news beats.

Flak, which is the fourth filter in the propaganda model, has not gone out of fashion. Governments, military and the power elite have used flak to counter and challenge media content that may undermine their interests. According to Herman and Chomsky (1988) flak is “negative responses to a media statement or program” which may come from “letters, telegrams, phone calls, petitions, lawsuits, speeches and bills before Congress, and other modes of complaint, threat, and punitive action” (p 26). Illustrating how flak is constructed to undermine and subjugate the media, Herman and Chomsky write:

If flak is produced on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources, it can be both uncomfortable and costly to the media. Positions have to be defended within the organization and without, sometimes before legislatures and possibly even in courts. Advertisers may withdraw patronage. Television advertising is mainly of consumer goods that are readily subject to organized boycott. During the McCarthy years, many advertisers and radio and television stations were effectively coerced into quiescence and blacklisting of employees by the threats of determined Red hunters to boycott products. Advertisers are still concerned to avoid offending constituencies that might produce flak, and their demand for suitable programming is a continuing feature of the media environment. If certain kinds of fact, position, or program are thought likely to elicit flak, this prospect can be a deterrent (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p 26).

During the Vietnam War, US presidents Kennedy and Johnson tried to minimise negative and damaging coverage from Saigon and gave flak when administration officials made “angry calls to newspapers to complain about biased coverage” (Thrall, 2000, p 18).

Perhaps one of the most contemporary examples of flak was that produced against the Qatar-based Al Jazeera television network. During the US-led attack on Afghanistan to destabilise Taliban and Al Qaeda in 2001, Al Jazeera refused to concede to US demands to sanitise the war footage. Instead the network focussed on the impact on civilians with footage of villages flattened by US carpet bombing. According to Kikhia (2003) “presenting these images for the world to see did not sit well with the Bush administration” (p 128) and thus preventive measures were taken to neutralise the Al Jazeera coverage and its office was bombed by the US for broadcasting the humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan (Miladi, 2003; Jaspersen & Kikhia, 2003). For taking a similar editorial stance in Iraq War II coverage, and for broadcasting footage of US prisoners of war, two of Al Jazeera’s correspondents were barred from covering the New York Stock Exchange. Then US Secretary of State Collin Powell made clear the US anger over Al Jazeera coverage when he met with Qatar’s monarch when he visited Washington (Salhani, 2003).

Boyd-Barrett (2004) believes that the propaganda model “fits well with the sociology of mediated communication” (p 30) where the key elements are corporate ownership; advertisers’ influence on media content; dependence on official sources, media reporting routines; fear of ‘flak’ by elite sources and the common ideological orientation of journalists.

## 2.9 Discussion

This chapter has shown that media coverage of global conflicts has increased and when major powers such as the US and UK are involved the media attention is greater. In the past 61 years since the end of World War II, two major issues in conflict coverage have emerged. Firstly, developments in telecommunications, transportation and globalisation are changing the way wars are covered. Gone are the days when it took several days for news copy or footage to be sent to the newsroom for publication or broadcast. Since Iraq War I, war coverage has become almost instantaneous with live coverage on multiple media channels, from broadcast to web cast and blogs. As noted by Thrall

(2000) communications technology has enhanced the news gathering capabilities of the news media and thus they are able to provide live coverage from anywhere.

With these dynamics of instant coverage and reach to audiences, governments and military authorities are concerned about the impact the flow of news might have on public opinion and thus the conduct of wars. Public relations and media management have become integral (Hiebert, 1993) strategies to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the people during conflicts. Tactical success on the battlefields is not sufficient to guarantee victory as national and global public opinion also needs to be considered given the dynamics of globalisation and international relations. As one senior military commander said during World War II, “public opinion wins war” (Cited in Knightley, 2000, p 344).

Military conflict coverage has become an important feature of mainstream newspapers around the world. Coverage is also driven by commercial imperatives (Taylor, 1995). Dramatic stories of human tragedies and triumphs relating to the home country or culturally affiliated peoples make good stories. During major military conflicts such as the Iraq War, newspapers bring out special sections, allocate more pages and source exclusive contents for coverage. When Iraq War II started on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003, the *New Zealand Herald* advertised on its front page that readers would be rewarded with comprehensive coverage and insight into the actions in Iraq: “As war unfolds in Iraq *The Herald* will bring readers the most comprehensive coverage available in New Zealand. Our aim is not merely to relate what happens but to explain events and give their context, as only a good newspaper can.”

Coverage of military conflicts has a direct impact on national and international public opinion and countries that wage wars resort to various public relations and propaganda techniques to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the people. Media management of wars by the military and government has often returned premium results, with messages being mediated to a global audience, thus affecting global public opinion. As Halliday (1999) notes, control by states of news coverage of wars has a century-long history. From World War I to the recent Iraq war, countries involved in conflict have managed news coverage and information dissemination and used various propaganda techniques to

affect public opinion. Since the adverse coverage of the Vietnam War, which has been blamed for the failure of the conflict, the US has taken measures to control media coverage of conflicts, from Grenada to Iraq. Based on the experiences of the US in Vietnam, embedding and other media management strategies have been planned and implemented. Given the constraints journalists face, covering military conflicts is a challenging task as they also have to contend with professional integrity and journalistic ethics and values.

When journalists rely on official sources during military conflicts they become vulnerable to manipulation, resulting in unverifiable and embellished information. Disinformation at source means that those journalists who report, quoting military and government officials, mediate the spin to the public. In the first week of Iraq War II there were 13 separate cases of disinformation often made up of more than one deception, which included the alleged firing of Scud missiles, the ‘discovery’ of a chemical warfare factory, the liberation of Umm Qasr, the uprising in Basra and others (Smith cited in Miller, 2004b, p 2). Another major story that made global headlines was that of Jessica Lynch, which later turned out to be laced with propaganda (Rennie, 2003; Chalmers, 2004). Most of these stories made headlines in the global media, thus serving the objectives of those officials to manufacture consent.

The direction of war coverage is dependent upon factors such as the political, ideological and economic interests of the countries and their standings on the conflicts (Bennett, 2003; Cheterian, 2003; Dimitrova et al., 2005). The way Iraq War II, for example, was covered in the US and Middle East during the initial phase of the conflict differed greatly from country to country. For example a review of six leading US newspapers and two popular newsmagazines during a six-month period revealed that they did not carry any photos from the war zone of Americans killed in action, although in that period nearly 560 Americans and Western allies died (Rainey, 2005). This shows that the mainstream US media were in a way sanitising the war. The US media were highlighting that “war was a necessary response to an immediate threat by Iraq” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 29), while ignoring alternative frames such as the humanitarian impact and the fact that the invasion had no UN approval. In contrast, newspapers in India and Pakistan highlighted the humanitarian impact of the war (Ravi, 2005).

As the military and governments control the information flow they are able to cultivate and propagate media messages to affect public opinion. Through embedding of journalists and pool systems, access to military actions and battle fronts is controlled. In such an environment, news reports filed by journalists are likely to be limited in their 'objective' analysis and reporting of the events. Heavy reliance on news sourced from military and government officials would make news media vulnerable to propaganda.

This chapter has shown how war journalism has changed over the years – from World War II to the invasion phase of Iraq War II. The literature clearly shows that in more recent wars, especially since the Vietnam War, journalists have become more critical of official sources, as propaganda and media management strategies are being extensively used by countries waging wars. There is also an increase in global media attention to conflicts, although not all major conflicts are covered proportionately. Several factors, such as news values, discussed in Chapter 4, determine the intensity and depth of coverage. What is apparent from this chapter is that in conflicts where major military powers such as the US and UK are involved media attention increases, as shown by the extensive coverage given to the war in Iraq.

The increasingly important role of news agencies in the globalisation of news, added to the wider globalisation process, has increased the demand for news; and war journalism is a key component of the news hole. Globalisation is changing the way military conflicts are covered (Seib, 2004). Globalisation has intertwined global economies, nation states, resources, financial markets and cultures so that much news and information is now of relevance to the whole world. The high demand for conflict news is shown in the increase in number of journalists covering major wars such as the Iraq war.

However the large number of media personnel mobilised for coverage of the invasion phase of the Iraq conflict came from only a few major media establishments. This is an indication of the powerful role these establishments have in the commodification of war news, as content from them is sold to news retailers as well as used by media consumers around the world. There are also significant implications when global news media

completely rely on news agencies and other content providers for war coverage. From this chapter it emerges that globalisation has a bearing on international news coverage, thus relevant aspects of globalisation will be examined in Chapter 3, while the role of international news agencies is dealt with in Chapter 4.

From this chapter it is clear that research into media coverage of military conflicts in New Zealand is few (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005; Witte, 1990) compared to the US and the UK. Given the role of media and communication in the globalised world and the impact of conflicts on societies, research into the nature of war journalism discourse in New Zealand, the role of news agencies and news flows and how military and government sources attempt to dominate the news agenda is needed. This research into Iraq War II coverage aims to fill the gap that exists in New Zealand in military conflict coverage. The need for more recent analysis is warranted given the globalisation of media and the changing nature of media consumption, news flows and the role of global news providers.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORISING GLOBALISATION

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### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the process of globalisation, in particular the globalisation of media and cultural products. The institutional factors of globalisation, media ownership and how these dimensions push towards a globalised world are also dealt with in this chapter. One of the key institutions of globalisation is the news agencies, whose role as content providers and agenda setters is discussed in greater detail in the following Chapter 4. In the context of this thesis, news agencies and other content providers for global news media, including that of New Zealand, are seen as manufacturers of cultural products. The commodified news and information is sold to retailers, who in turn through press systems sell to media consumers.

The role of news agencies and other content providers has increased partly due to trade liberalisation and communications technology. International communication has significantly contributed to the rise of globalism in the economic, political and cultural arenas (Tehrani, 1999). In New Zealand the deregulation and liberalisation of the news media led to the dominance of broadcast and print media by major global firms – print media is now controlled by Dublin-based Independent News & Media and Fairfax Australia. Canada's CanWest Global Communications own several radio stations



including the commercial television channel TV3. Foreign ownership and the highly profit-oriented nature of these transnational companies are likely to influence the editorial content of the news media.

### 3.2 Defining globalisation

According to Tabb, globalisation is a process that reduces barriers between countries and encourages closer economic, political, and social interaction (Cited in Mittelman, 2000). For Waters (1995), globalisation is “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (p 2).

Giddens (1991) sees globalisation as the “intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (p 64). This intensification of social relations is attributed to modern telecommunication and transportation systems. While telecommunication and transportation are factors accelerating globalisation these factors also cause problems. Tehranian (1999) observes that global communication undermines traditional boundaries and sovereignties of nations. Furthermore, the flow of cultural products also impacts societies and cultures within the nation state system. In the context of this research, the larger issues of globalisation are the flow of news and information, and the media system that is dominating the global agenda.

McChesney argues that globalisation is misleading, and thus in lieu of that term neoliberalism would be a more ‘superior term’ (McChesney, 2002). For him the notion of globalisation is better understood and appreciated as the global emergence of neo-liberalism as a dominant system.

Defining neoliberalism he also noted that the world media system was mainly a result of that doctrine:

[Neoliberalism] refers to the set of national and international policies that call for business domination of all social affairs with minimal countervailing force.

Neoliberalism not only explains the rise of the global media systems, but it highlights the severe fault lines in the world media and political economy for any viable theory of participatory democracy (McChesney, 2002, p 149).

Attributing the development of global media systems mainly to neoliberalism, McChesney (2002) noted that communications technology made “global media empires feasible and lucrative” (p 152). However, he contends that “the real force has been a shift to neoliberalism which means the relaxation and elimination of barriers to commercial exploitation of media and concentrated media ownership” (p 152).

According to Hamelink (2002), a commercially oriented neoliberal agenda “proposes the liberalization of national markets, the deregulation of capital flows, the lifting of trade restrictions based on environmental or human rights concerns, and the strengthening of the rights of investors”.

McQuail (2005, p 252) notes that owing to media globalisation, the following issues can be identified:

- Media are increasingly owned by global media firms
- Media systems become increasingly similar across the world
- The same or very similar news and entertainment products are found globally
- Audiences can choose media from other countries
- Cultural homogenisation and westernisation
- Decontextualisation and reduction of time-space differences
- Reduction in national communication sovereignty and more free flow of information

Due to the globalisation and intensification of social relations, facilitated by modern communications, media attention to international issues and conflicts can be seen as consequences of the globalisation process. The extensive coverage of the Vietnam War by the US media changed public attitudes in the early 1970s. More recently, coverage of the Iraq War of 1990 and Iraq War II by media organisations such as CNN and BBC has illustrated how news agencies have shaped events across the world.

### 3.3 The processes of globalisation

The globalisation process has undergone several evolutionary stages, and according to Robertson, the global community is currently in the uncertainty phase which began in the late 1960s (Robertson, 1997). Of the five phases outlined by Robertson (1997), the uncertainty phase (from the late 1960s to the 1990s) saw the number of global institutions and movements increase and a sharp acceleration in the means of global communication.

In an interdependent world where resources are in various geographic and political locations, the advantages of global trade are many. This process of economic ‘globalisation’ is a historical process, the result of human innovation and technological progress, and refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows (IMF, 2002).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), which strongly believes that “globalisation offers extensive opportunities for truly worldwide development”, acknowledges that it is not progressing evenly. While countries that have been able to integrate with the global economy are seeing faster growth and reduced poverty (IMF, 2002), others are left with mounting social and economic problems, partly blamed on reluctance to welcome economic, political and social reforms.

The role of international institutions in the globalisation process has made them central actors. The WTO, IMF and the World Bank have been part and parcel of the political and economic process that has ushered in neoliberalism as a global order. To the extent that political and economic processes themselves thrive on functional informational and cultural components, the global media has become implicated in the globalisation process.

The development of the world economy and the gradual economic globalisation has been driven by economic, ideological and technological factors. The driving ideological dimension was, as described earlier, neoliberalism, which, according to McChesney (2004) “refers to the set of national and international policies that call for business

domination of all social affairs with minimal countervailing force” (p 7-8). To materialise these values, regional and global institutions were created to further the globalisation objectives. McChesney observes how two trade and economic institutions were tasked to consolidate regional and global markets:

Once the national deregulation of media took place in major nations like the United States and Britain, it was followed by transnational measures like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), all intent on establishing regional and global marketplaces. This has laid the foundation for the creation of the global media system, dominated by the ... conglomerates (McChesney, 2004, p 11).

Of these international institutions, the WTO commands “immense power on economic matters and impinges more and more on the media, as they become bigger business and more commercialised”, and, as McQuail (2005) notes, “free trade and protection, with implications for limits to national sovereignty in relation to media policy” (p 269) are key central issues.

In the consensus formation process by the “caretakers of the global economy”, guidelines are transmitted into the policy-making channels of national governments and big corporations (Cox, 1994). Such consensus formation goes through unofficial forums like the Trilateral Commission, the Bilderberg Conferences and through official bodies such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Bank for International Settlements, the IMF and the G-7 (Cox, 1994). Thus international agencies such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO play “catalytic roles in the globalization process” (Giffard, 1998, p 192) and are thus at the forefront of the globalisation drive.

Many nations opened up their markets in the early 1990s and began exploiting available resources through foreign direct investment and joint ventures. These changes were also in line with capitalist globalisation views. According to the WTO, capital flows, in particular foreign direct investment, increased sharply in the second half of the 1990s not only in absolute terms, but also relative to the global GDP. The ratio of gross capital flows to the GDP rose for the developed countries to more than 15 percent in 1999/2000, more than three times the level recorded at the beginning of the nineties (WTO, 2002).

Despite the world's diversity of political and economic systems, the differences have over time been narrowed to accommodate modern capitalist economic mechanisms. China, which was a communist country, has adapted capitalism, and as former leader Deng Xiaoping said it has followed a 'one country, two systems' approach (Whiting, 1995; Xinhua, 2004; Holliday & Wong, 2003 ).

The capital flows have been facilitated by government policies to attract foreign investment. Such measures have included creating a good legal system that would give guarantee to foreign investors. In industrialised countries governments have facilitated large Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows by privatising state-owned companies, thus sprouting private enterprises (Tussie & Woods, 2000). The inflow of investments has also strengthened economies in host countries. According to the United Nations Development Programme "International trade has been one of the most powerful motors driving globalization" (UNDP, 2005, p 9).

The globalisation process is indeed transforming societies across the globe. Social, economic and cultural differences are receding in the process, thus shifting globalisation to top gear for most countries. Advances in communication technology and affordability, and its diffusion across the world have made time and space less relevant. Economic integration across the globe and international trade have given people access to distinct and diverse consumer and cultural products.

### 3.4 Globalisation and nation states

The rise of international and non-governmental organisations and global capitalist economies has made the role of national governments less significant, not by choice but by the inevitable realities set in place by globalisation forces. The movements of capital, goods and services across national boundaries, further accelerated by telecommunications and transportation services, have to a large extent weakened state authority. As noted by Castells (1997), "state control over space and time is

increasingly bypassed by global flows of capital, goods, services, technology, communication and information” (p 243).

Globalisation of media, strengthened by communication technology, has impacted on state sovereignty such that states’ decisions are now influenced by foreign states or institutions. Thus in market economies, where the media industries are deregulated, the flow of media and cultural products is likely to affect what Waisbord and Morris (2001) call the communication sovereignty of states, referring to the “states’ exercise of authority over flow of ideas and information inside their territories” (p viii).

In New Zealand, as is the case in most countries today, the impact of globalisation on the sovereignty of the nation state has less extended to what used to be seen as national institutions. For all practical purposes commentators could talk of New Zealand media 15 or 20 years ago. In those days it only required a New Zealand governmental authority to regulate and provide directions to such media. In the era of neoliberal globalisation however, broadcasting in New Zealand is largely foreign owned and the entire broadcasting landscape is one operating on terms set by foreign or global broadcasters. With the exception of TVNZ and Radio New Zealand, much New Zealand broadcasting is private and foreign owned and it is this that leads the competition in the market.

The newspaper industry in New Zealand has associated its ownership with private interests for a long time. What has occurred in the era of neo-liberal globalisation is a further concentration of such ownership into fewer and bigger financial hands, thereby making competition difficult if not impossible. The power and independence of the New Zealand state to protect citizens by altering the current arrangement is limited in this era of neoliberal globalisation in which policies no longer operate or get formulated at the national level only. Regional and international bodies as well as multilateral institutions such as the WTO, the World Bank, IMF, and the UN all combine to limit or usurp state authority.

As Zolo (2004) argues, the “sovereignty of nation states is being suffocated by the power of supranational authorities,” (p 30-31) and as a result nation states seem to have

lost the functions, for which they were created, of controlling and rationalising economic, social and technological forces.

What are nations and states, whose characteristics combine to form the nation states? Paul (1996a) contends that “states govern a territory with boundaries and have laws, taxes, officials, currencies, postal services, police and (usually) armies and wage war, negotiate treaties and regulate life within the territorial jurisdiction”. Nations are groups of people with a common language, culture and historical identity (Paul, 1996a).

These traits are inherent in modern nation states although they are not exclusive. The ethnic Chinese or Indians can be seen as a nation, but they are spread around the world. The territories within which the various ethnic groups have been historically living and rooted have significantly changed over the time, and the movements of people across political borders have changed the characteristics of nation states. Migration and adoption of other citizenships are some of the changes altering the nation state map. These changes have been due mainly to the forces of globalisation.

According to Harvard University professor Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, immigration is changing the world more than at any other time in history, opening up business opportunities and also new challenges. With over 175 million people worldwide who are transnational migrants, immigration and globalisation are pushing nation states in ways the nation states don't like to be pushed (Lagac, 2003). United Nations figures show that the number of people around the world who were living in a country other than the one in which they were born rose from 75 million in 1965 to 120 million in 1990 (Hatton & Williamson, 2002, p 2).

The migration of people creates various ethnic communities within the nation states. Every country is not always a melting pot of immigrants, but ethnic diversity and differences are evident. With time, ethnic minorities emerge as formidable political and economic forces, and seek equal rights for themselves. The ethnic Indians and Chinese were taken by the British to Malaya (present Malaysia) in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to work in plantations and mining. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended, the Malays found themselves becoming a minority in their own country. As one European observer noted, if the

Chinese immigrants had brought women with them, they would have completely absorbed the Malay population within a few generations (Kimball, 2003). Indians (7.7 percent) and Chinese (26 percent) represent a sizable component of the 24.5 million people in Malaysia. The Malays and other indigenous people form 65.1 percent of the population (Wikipedia, 2002). The Indians and Chinese enjoy almost all the rights the Malays enjoy and have political and social economic interests in the state system. The vernacular press is supplemented by Chinese and Indian language newspapers and programmes on the broadcast media cater to the diverse ethnic groups.

The Indian Diaspora around the world numbers 20 million and they manifest deep commitment to cultural identities. According to a report on the Indian Diaspora, the ethnic Indian media in foreign countries reflects the diversity of regions, languages and opinions of India (*The Indian Diaspora*, 2001, p xi, xxix).

While the migration of people changes ethnic boundaries of nations, “globalization and the new technologies have contributed to the shrinking of state authority and the explosion of a whole series of new actors engaged in governance activities” (Sassen, 1999).

While Ohmae (2000) sees nation states as local authorities of the global system, Hirst and Thompson (1999) contend that the nation states can no longer independently affect the levels of economic activity or employment within their territories. According to them, “the job of nation states is like that of municipalities within states heretofore: to provide the infrastructure and public goods that the business needs at the lowest possible cost” (p 176).

Although Holton (1998) doubts that states hold the monopoly of power within the politics of globalisation, he argues that many aspects of globalisation are changing the roles and relationships of nation states to each other and to other organised interests within the global political system. Such changes may involve the decline of absolute state sovereignty.



Nation states have become inescapably vulnerable to the disciplines imposed by economic choices made elsewhere by people and institutions over which they have no practical control (McNeely, 2000). But not every country is vulnerable to such disciplines, and the developed countries which are members of the OECD and G-7 are unlikely to be forced to make choices as they are economically strong and politically developed.

Strong states have a capacity to influence the rules of the international economy and to control their own integration into the world economy (Woods, 2000). Industrialised countries such as the United States' decision to deregulate and liberalise in various ways instigated the flows of currency, goods, services and multinational activity across borders (Woods, 2000).

As members of the international community, nation states are bound by international conventions, charters and principles formulated by such institutions like the UN, UNESCO and IMF. If a nation state neglects to adopt world approved policies, domestic elements will try to carry out or enforce conformity (Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 2000). It is world pressure that has led many states to establish environmental protection agencies, and where states have not heeded world opinion local actors such as schools, scout troops and religious groups are likely to practice environmentalism and call for national action (Meyer et al., 2000). National environmental policies are strongly influenced by international institutions, such as the UNEP, the United Nations Environmental Programme. But as, Hironaka (2002) observes the less developed countries are more influenced by the international organisations with respect to environmental protection policies.

The intensification of economic activities globally has been the major factor in undermining state authority. Both Castells (1997) and Ohmae (2000) argue that global economic activities have undermined the authority of nation states. According to Hirst and Thompson (1999) "states are less autonomous, they have less exclusive control over economic and social processes within their territories, and they are less able to maintain national distinctiveness and cultural homogeneity" (p 263).

### 3.5 Political economy of the news media

The changing relations between states, between businesses and between individuals are particularly significant for the news media. Here, many critics point to globalisation as a political-economic phenomenon. The globalisation of media and concentration of media ownership can be examined through a political economy model. According to McChesney (2003), political economy of communication involves the examination of the structures of media industries including the questions of ownership and market structure and “how these affect media content, performance and impact” (p 27). Thus political economy is concerned with how corporate control affects and usually limits what journalists can do in their professional work of news gathering and processing (McChesney, 2003).

An analysis of the ownership and structure of the media in the US would show why the mainstream news media often support military intervention by the US in foreign countries, there being a tripartite relationship between the government, the military industrial complex and the media industrial complex.

There is an interlocking connection, as Henson (Cited in Kellner, 1992) points out, between the military and television networks. For example in 1989 General Electric (GE), which owns NBC, derived US\$9 billion of its US\$54.5 billion in revenues from military contracts. GE, as a leading arms manufacturer and contractor, “designed, manufactured or supplied parts or maintenance for nearly every major weapon system employed by the US during the Gulf War ... In other words, when correspondents and paid consultants on NBC television praised the performance of the US weapons, they were extolling equipment made by GE, the corporation that pays their salary” (Lee and Solmon cited in Kellner, 1992, p 59-60). Many GE board members sit on the boards of other corporate media like *The Washington Post* and are connected with US government agencies and oil corporations as well (Kellner, 1992).

Global media ownership is dominated by a few media conglomerates, whose main stakeholders are US firms. The global media market is dominated by nine transnational corporations – General Electric (owner of NBC), AT&T/ Liberty Media, Disney, AOL-

Time Warner, Sony, News Corporation, Viacom, Vivendi and Bertelsmann (McChesney, 1997; McChesney, 2004). With liberalisation and opening markets, major media corporations are vertically and horizontally integrating with take-overs and acquisitions. The global media system, which began to emerge 20 years ago with neoliberal globalisation, is now dominated by 8 to 10 transnational conglomerates. At the second-tier level are about 60 to 80 regional media firms (McChesney, 2003).

Time Warner, with over 80,000 staff globally, is the leading global media and Entertainment Company has in its stable America Online, Time Inc., Time Warner Cable, Home Box Office, New Line Cinema, Turner Broadcasting System and Warner Bros (Time Warner., 2006a). According to Time Warner, revenues rose five percent over 2004 to US\$43.7 billion, reflecting increases in the company's Cable, Networks, Publishing and Filmed Entertainment reporting segments (Time Warner., 2006b).

News Corporation, which operates in nine different media on six continents, in 1995 recorded its revenues were distributed between filmed entertainment (26 percent), newspapers (24 percent), television (21 percent), magazines (14 percent) and book publishing (12 percent). Its holdings include the US Fox broadcasting network; twenty-two television stations (the largest US station group); a 50 percent interest in several US and global cable networks; a 50 percent stake in Fox Kids Worldwide; ownership or major interests in satellite services; Twentieth Century Fox; some 130 newspapers (including *The Times* of London and the *New York Post*); twenty-five magazines, including TV Guide; book publishing interests, including HarperCollins; and the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team (Walsh, 2000).

Media concentration at national and global levels, when seen through a political economy perspective, appears to favour corporate interests and market considerations. In this regard the media system becomes 'manipulative', as termed by Trowler (Cited in Abel, 2004) as the media owners appropriate content to favour corporate interests. Noting the influence on content by the corporate owners, Abel said:

News proprietor use their position to exert influence over their editorial staff, and so over the actual content of the news. The views of this group are given a privileged

position over other viewpoints. As a result, the hearts and minds of the audience are also manipulated (Abel, 2004, p 186).

A similar outlook is given by Bagdikian (2004), who argues that major media corporations “have dominant influence over the public’s news, information, public ideas, popular culture, and political attitudes” (p 5). As mass media have become important economic and political institutions, “The dominant media have the power to set political agendas and shape the cultural landscape” (Steven, 2003, p 37). The roles of the news media are underpinned by media concentration, corporate interests and institutional factors. These serve not only to set news agendas, but to further corporate interests.

### 3.6 Media ownership and flow of cultural products

Corporatisation of the news media began as the news media moved from direct or partial state control to private ownership with neoliberalism and globalisation (Castells, 1997; McChesney, 2002). Castells (1997) notes that until the early 1980s, with the major exception of the United States, most television in the world was government controlled, and radios and newspapers were under the severe potential constraint of government good will, even in democratic countries. According to McChesney (2002), “prior to the 1980s and 1990s, national media systems were typified by domestically owned radio, television and newspaper industries” and from a national media system “a global commercial media market has merged”(p 149-150).

Globalisation of media has developed highly commercialised and concentrated media systems at the first-and second-tier levels. This has led to less competition, more monopoly, and thus to “a shrinking of the marketplace of ideas, but it serves powerful commercial interests tremendously” (McChesney, 2003, p 37).

One of the biggest impacts on the global audience is made by Western media companies. The Cable News Network based in Atlanta, USA, is able to affect the opinions of viewers in a remote country in Africa. Television channels such as CNN and BBC have global audiences and their content is syndicated to TV channels in various countries, thus giving them a wider coverage. In a way CNN and BBC could be described as

leading agenda setters for global audiences. CNN has gained some exclusivity with coverage of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre in China and the 1990 Persian Gulf War (Iraq War I), and with over 33 million viewers in 138 nations (Friedland, 2000) it is a strong cultural force to reckon with. Paterson (1997) argues that television news plays a substantial role in shaping public perception of international crises. TV broadcasters and news agencies such as Reuters Television, ABC, WTN and APTV (including CNN and BBC) to a considerable degree set the agenda for what international stories broadcasters choose to carry in their newscasts through the choice of stories, amount of visuals, texts and other information provided to clients (Paterson, 1997).

The world's print and broadcast media rely heavily on three news agencies – Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence-France Presse (AFP) – for content, which again illustrates that the flow of international news is dominated by the West. Boyd-Barrett (1999) argues that “news agencies are a part of modernisation and link it with globalisation” (p 300). Following are some of the key points he identified as to how news agencies play a pivotal role in the globalisation process (Boyd-Barrett, 1999, p 300-301). They are:

- Contribute to internationalisation, constructing influential news agenda and act upon retail media, government and finance
- Develop technologies to improve global telecommunication networks
- Bring the global to the local and incorporate the local within the global in their day-to-day news gathering and news dissemination
- News agencies such as Reuters facilitate global financial transactions; provide data that enables news commentators to think globally
- Contribute to the homogenisation of global culture in their distribution of certain influential kinds of political, economic, and sports discourse

It is clear that as dominant news suppliers to the global media market, the mainstream news agencies and news providers are in a strong position to influence global culture and as Boyd-Barrett (1997) argues, news agencies contribute to the processes of both national consolidation and globalisation and to the homogenisation of global culture.

AP produces about two million words a day in English and 50,000 in other languages, while Reuters, the world's biggest news provider, processes up to five million words a day. AFP has five news sites in English and each carries between 50,000 and 120,000 words a day (Elliot, 1998). According to its website, Reuters is the world's largest international multimedia news agency, providing information tailored for professionals in the financial services, media and corporate markets. Reuters supplies news – text, graphics, video and pictures – to media organisations and websites around the world. The company operates in 200 cities in 94 countries (Reuters, 2004). AP is a cooperative owned by its contributing newspapers, which both contribute stories to it and use material written by its staffers. AP has 242 bureaus worldwide with 1,700 US daily, weekly, non-English and college newspapers. Nearly 5000 radio/TV outlets use AP, while 330 international broadcasters receive AP's global video news service. There are 8,500 International subscribers who receive AP news and photos in 121 countries (AP, 2004). AFP's worldwide network takes in 165 countries, of which 110 are home to bureaus. According to the agency it continues to expand operations worldwide, reaching thousands of subscribers (radios, TV stations, newspapers, companies) from its main headquarters in Paris and regional centers in Washington, Hong Kong, Nicosia and Montevideo (AFP, 2004).

While millions of words, thousands of photos and hours of video footage are channelled by these agencies to subscribers around the world for publications and broadcast, equally visible as channels of Western cultural flow are the numerous publications being exported from the developed countries. News magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, and fashion magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *GQ* are read in far corners of the world.

The world print and broadcast media heavily depend on the few larger news agencies – The Big Three – for content. As wholesalers of news, these institutions have become dominant players in the news and information business, attracting a large global market and audience for the content they manufacture and commodify. The news wholesaling business is dominated by the AP, Reuters, and AFP, currently the “The Big Three” international news agencies (Thussu, 2002).

Research has shown that world newspapers depend on major news services and this dependence results in agencies dominating the foreign news agenda in world newspapers (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985). This dependence is seen to create an imbalance in that the information flow is one way and as Musa (1997) notes, the unidirectional tendency in the news flows reflects the hegemonic status of the news wholesalers.

While globalisation has made local events global (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1996) and vice-versa, developed countries get more coverage and there is a gap between the 'rich and poor' in terms of news flows. This was an issue raised in the 1970s by the UNESCO (MacBride Report, 1984). Jinquan et al (2002) argue that "strong nations control media resources, news agendas, and ideological fora, often to the exclusion of the poor and the weak" (p 179). The imbalance in news flows and the dependence on Western news agencies for global news coverage is noted by Devereux, as follows:

The global media industry has immense power in terms of how it covers events outside the developed world. Global news agencies and major broadcasting organizations are primarily responsible for the selection and packaging of news from the Third World. Third World countries have an obvious dependence on the global media industry, and especially in times of crisis when news has to travel fast. In this light media coverage of Third World issues sustains the unequal relations of power that exist between the West and the Third World (Devereux, 2003, p 46).

Being able to dominate the whole media content spectrum – from text to visuals – the world's leading news agencies are able to construct and manufacture news according to their news values. Their global dominance through the social construction of world events, such as military conflicts, via news text and television footage can "also shape the wider view of a war" (Thussu, 2002, p 205).

In setting the global news agenda, the major wire services "contributed to internationalization, constructing influential international news agendas that acted upon retail media, governments and finance" (Boyd-Barrett, 1997, p 143). It is apparent that the flow of news content and media products is clearly in favour of the industrialised countries. This imbalance leads towards a Western cultural hegemony.

The concentration of media ownership is seen to minimise the role of the fourth estate as ‘the market place of ideas’ given the conflicting corporate interests, with the latter’s priority on maximisation of profit rather than providing forums for public discussions and debates affecting people. Winter (1997), following a comprehensive study of media ownership in Canada, concluded that owners of media companies exert pressure on editorial content of the news media, affecting fair discussions of public issues.

The second tier of media corporations, controlling much of the global media, according to McChesney (2002) “resemble a cartel”, and “with hypercommercialism and growing corporate control comes an implicit political bias in media content” (p 158). Such bias is more apparent when international conflicts, involving major Western powers and weaker states, are covered. In the contest for the global media discourse the powerful sources are able to dominate. Thus, with a highly concentrated and foreign-owned press system in New Zealand, implications of globalisation of media are likely to be significant.

### 3.7 Media ownership and concentration in New Zealand

Formerly controlled by family shareholdings, the New Zealand print media began to corporatise in the 1960s, and by the end of the decade nine firms controlled 75 of the 100 publications in New Zealand (Starke, 2004). One of the first foreign acquisitions of a newspaper was *The Dominion* in 1964 by Rupert Murdoch, at a time when there was no restriction on foreign ownership (Norris, 2002). A year later the Media Ownership Act – which aimed to control foreign ownership of newspapers – was established only to be repealed 10 years later. From then on New Zealand became one of the most open countries in terms of foreign ownership in the media industry (Norris, 2002; McGregor, 1992). The Commerce Act 1975 (which has now been repealed) took into consideration public interest when dealing with the foreign acquisition of local print media.

According to McGregor (1992), “successive amendments to the Commerce Act have watered down the checks and balances necessary to prevent newspaper gobble-up. ... It is significant to note that the dilution of legislative protection has roughly paralleled the concentration in newspaper ownership” (p 36). Without any legal constraints on foreign



media ownership, the overseas share of the print media began to increase. By 1985, three firms – New Zealand News, INL and Wilson and Horton – controlled 76 percent of the daily newspaper circulation (McGregor, 1992). Nearly 50 percent of INL was owned by News Corporation, while Independent News Media has had a 100 percent share of Wilson and Horton since 1998 (Norris, 2002).

Today the two major companies controlling the print media are Fairfax and APN News & Media (ANM). According to Rosenberg (2004), in the near duopoly environment John Fairfax Holdings Ltd owns newspapers which in 2003 had nearly half (47.4%) of the daily newspaper circulation, while ANM had 43.8 percent of the daily newspaper circulation. In the same year Fairfax and ANM owned 87.4 percent of the audited daily press circulation of provincial newspapers (those with under 25,000 circulation), and 92.2 percent of the metropolitan readership (those newspapers with more than 25,000 circulation).

Little has changed. In 2006, of the eight daily newspapers with a daily circulation of over 25,000, Fairfax newspapers represented more than half (51%) of the combined daily circulation of more than 559,000, while ANM's share was 41 percent. New Zealand's Allied Press stood at a mere eight percent.

**Table 3.1 Ownership of daily newspapers with circulation of over 25,000**

Ownership	Share of circulation	Newspaper	ANC to 31/03/2006
Fairfax	51%	Dominion Post	98,251
		Press	92,465
		Waikato Times	41,083
		Southland Times	29,571
		Taranaki Daily News	26,506
ANM	41%	New Zealand Herald	200,309
Allied Press	8%	Otago Daily Times	43,246

Source: Newspaper Audit Results, Audit Bureau of Circulation, Wellington

Fairfax owns five metropolitan daily newspapers that have a daily circulation of more than 25,000 (Table 3.1). ABC figures released in May 2006 show that Fairfax newspapers accounted for a daily combined circulation of more than 287,876, while ANM's share was 228,346 (from two newspapers) and Allied Press 43,246 (from *The*

*Otago Daily Times*). *The Press*, which has a near monopoly in Christchurch, and *The Dominion Post* are the two largest newspapers owned by Fairfax. In 2003 the Australian-listed company bought Independent Newspapers Limited (INL) from News Corporation for \$NZ1.188 billion ("Fairfax proves itself in the first year," 2004; Louisson, 2003). Accordingly, INL's extensive New Zealand newspaper, magazine and distribution interests were sold to Fairfax New Zealand Ltd (*History of INL*, 2003).

According to Nielsen, based on a combined average issue readership of its newspapers and magazines Fairfax New Zealand's stable of newspapers and magazines reach 84.3 percent or 2,677,000 New Zealanders 15 years and over (Fairfax Media., 2006b).

Prior to 2003, INL, which was 45 percent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp had major news media publishing business which included *The Dominion Post*, *The Press*, *The Sunday Star-Times*, *Sunday News*, seven regional dailies and 61 community publications, 13 magazine titles ("Murdoch to sell New Zealand publishing interests to Australian rival," 2003).

ANM owns eight provincial dailies and its flagship newspaper is *The New Zealand Herald*. The company also owns, through Community Newspapers Ltd, at least 30 community newspapers covering Auckland, Hamilton, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay, Wellington, and Christchurch (Rosenberg, 2004).

Of the mainstream broadcast and print media, TVNZ is the only institution out of reach of foreign media control. The state-owned broadcaster had a narrow escape from foreign takeover when in 1999 the new Labour government prevented the National government's decision to sell TV One and TV2 (Horrocks, 2004).

Now TVNZ is run through a charter which identifies its role of public service broadcasting. According to the TVNZ Charter which was implemented on 1 March 2003, through free-to-air broadcasting it should "provide independent, comprehensive, impartial, and in-depth coverage and analysis of news and current affairs in New Zealand and throughout the world and of the activities of public and private institutions" (Television New Zealand., 2006). Under the charter, introduced by the

Labour-led government, the state-broadcaster receives annual government funding of NZ\$36 million ("Nats would scrap TVNZ charter " 2005). While the public service broadcasting has been formalised in the TVNZ charter, like most other media they have not escaped foreign influence through programming and news values.

TVNZ operates two channels, TV1 and TV2. TV3 is their main competitor, with popular news and current affairs programmes, and is owned by Canada's biggest TV broadcaster CanWest Global Communications Corporation through CanWest MediaWorks NZ. CanWest MediaWorks NZ, through its wholly owned subsidiaries, CanWest TVWorks Limited and CanWest RadioWorks Limited, owns and operates the TV3 and C4 television networks, national radio brands The Edge, The Rock, More FM, Kiwi FM, Radio Live, Radio Pacific/Radio Trackside, Solid Gold and The Breeze and several local radio stations (*Canwest Mediaworks Reports Strong Trading Results*, 2005).

Prime TV channel is a free-to-air network which began broadcasting in New Zealand on 30 August 1998. SKY television, of which Rupert Murdoch's News Corp owns 40 percent, bought Prime Television New Zealand Ltd in February 2006 for NZ \$30 million. SKY estimates that its 20.5 per cent audience share will jump to 26 per cent, leaving TVNZ with 52 per cent and CanWest with about 21 per cent (Dacruz, 2005).

There was strong criticism of INL's direction of coverage in its media in New Zealand. In the 1997 Roger Award for the worst transnational corporation in New Zealand, a judge observed that "The day in and day out publishing of INL's biased view of the world can be equated to a dangerous propaganda machine which deeply influences the hearts and minds of New Zealanders" (Cited in Rosenberg, 2004, p 14). INL's 45 percent is owned by News Ltd, the Australian branch of US-based News Corporation where Rupert Murdoch, owns 29.8 percent of the voting shares (Rosenberg, 2004).

Media owners and management can influence content through 'allocative' or 'operational' control. The allocative level is concerned with the "overall allocation of resources such as hiring and firing of editors" while the operational level is about the routine news production activities "such as what stories to cover, what to print and

where stories should go and the headlines” (McGregor, 1992, p 34). The editorial stance and orientation of coverage of different issues can be influenced by the newspaper owners through organisation and management measures. Controlling the news gathering resources, by such measures as using wire copy instead of assigning own staff correspondents to cover news events, can be also seen as influencing news discourse.

### 3.7.1 *Implications of media ownership and concentration*

There is concern in New Zealand regarding the impact concentration of media ownership would have especially on media content. Starke noted that one of the concerns is “the risk of impacting negatively on the content of newspapers and the quality of information, by reducing its diversity, reliability, accessibility and meaningfulness” (Starke, 2004, p 15).

Starke (2004) argued that one of the key changes from concentrated corporate media ownership is “a much higher amount of shared content, which does pose a significant threat to diversity of views and identity of the daily newspapers” (p 123). Noting the implications of news media concentration and the “demands to cut costs to improve profits” Norris wrote:

A chain of newspapers offers opportunities to recycle stories and articles from one paper to another, given that they each serve a different geographical market. Readers of *The Press* in Christchurch will be unaware that they are reading an article published the day before in *The Dominion*, or that a number of stories have been written by *The Dominion* reporters. From a national perspective, it can be argued that there is less diversity and a diminished range of opinion (Norris, 2002, p 48).

Through media concentration, diversity of content and view points is reduced when publications, in order to reduce costs and increase profit, begin to share copy across the various newspapers. It is much like newspapers running a common news agency story. Among Fairfax newspapers in New Zealand *The Press* and *The Dominion Post* share copy, while these publications also source content from Fairfax newspapers in Australia (Interview with Thompson, February 23rd, 2006).

Starke (2004), who conducted research on media concentration in New Zealand and how this might impact content, noted that with the increasing concentration of media ownership “there is no empirical evidence” that suggests owners of media companies influence the editorial stance of the foreign-owned daily newspapers. In discussing the issue of foreign ownership, she noted the following:

The professionals interviewed did not regard increasing foreign ownership as negative development. They regard it as widely positive because it brings benefits such as size, management know-how and investment into the market. The other side to this is ... that what is best for the interests of the shareholders of a foreign company may be at odds with what is best for the interest of New Zealand. As mentioned before, foreign shareholders are presumed not to care about New Zealand’s national identity and culture. Therefore, if the media here are under financial pressure, the amount of money spent on New Zealand content could be reduced since it is the most expensive to produce. Content that is bought in from overseas is cheaper, and if part of a multinational corporation, easy to access (Starke, 2004, p 123).

Starke’s findings were based mainly on interviews with senior editors and journalists of newspapers which are already foreign owned. It is unlikely that they would agree on the proposition that owners influence the editorial direction of newspapers. But Starke raised the alarm when she acknowledged the potential for influence on content by owners, and in the case of foreign owners or shareholders in New Zealand:

It can be said that no matter whether strong influence by the owners or the management of the media enterprise exists or not, the possibility that there could be direct interference should make daily newspaper journalism in New Zealand subject to constant public scrutiny. In any case, if private media remain in the hands of a few foreign owners they need to be counterbalanced by a strong public broadcasting media such as Radio New Zealand, TVNZ and Maori TV (Starke, 2004, p 127).

Without the existence of perfect competition in the media industry, the “watchdog” function the news media are ideally required to perform in a democracy cannot be achieved. With corporate influence on editorial policies news media’s role as a marketplace of ideas and forum for diverse views will become insignificant. Concentration of ownership of media gives the power to a few to control content and direction of news coverage. According to Rosenberg:

Concentration of ownership, as in any industry, increases the political and commercial power of the owners – in this case at both national and international levels – and delivers to them the ability to fix prices, control coverage, and undermine the conditions

that give journalists the strength to resist improper pressures on what they report: strong unions, secure jobs, the ability to change employers, and good working conditions (Rosenberg, 2004, p 27).

The news media as a marketplace of ideas, as viewed in the liberal pluralist model, is far outpaced by neoliberal media ownership. Indeed the main concern is about the impact on media content. As noted by Abel (2004), “Of particular concern is the increasing concentration of media ownership (in New Zealand), which means that the opportunity for diverse voices diminishes and power to control the news is vested in fewer and even more powerful people” (p 186) hence the undermining of the free flow of news. The issue of lack of media diversity was also noted by a Paris-based media watchdog, which in its 2004 report noted that in New Zealand “the concentration of media ownership in a few hands threatens diversity” (Reporters Without Borders., 2004).

The main concern in New Zealand in the context of foreign control of broadcast and print media is that the New Zealand perspective is being narrowed by the global and corporate interests of the owners. A recent advertisement by Fairfax for its newly re-launched newspaper *The Financial Review* shows how the local news agenda could be influenced from overseas. The advertisement said that “working from offices in Auckland, the Editor will cooperate closely with Fairfax’s other business titles in New Zealand and Australia, including *Business Day* and the *Australian Financial Review*”(Fairfax Media., 2006a). The impact foreign ownership would have on local news media content was observed by New Zealand media analyst Wayne Hope in an interview with TV One:

It is a funeral for the New Zealand media and we have been colonised by the Australian media for some time... [If we look at] Business news as a case study, what you are finding is that Australian perspectives are crowding out local perspectives. Business news comes from an Australian perspective. We get very little New Zealand business news from New Zealand. This is because it is cheaper to do that. *The Australian Financial Review* is the mother ship for all the business news coming through the Fairfax empire (TV One., 2006, 24 May ).

Even on the day INL shareholders voted to sell its New Zealand publishing business to Fairfax, concern about the impact this might have on editorial content was raised by

some associated with INL. Marjie Robson, widow of the former INL managing director Mike Robson, said on 31<sup>st</sup> June 2003, after attending the shareholders meeting:

My personal hope is that the new owners of the publications will not turn the New Zealand papers into a branch of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Australian Financial Review* – that they will stay strong and reflect New Zealand and New Zealanders. ... I hope Fairfax will respect the fact that New Zealanders have their own views and readers are interested in our country, our sports, our finances, our own columnists and our features - that we do not want to be Australians (Cited in Louisson, 2003).

Claims of editorial independence from the vested interests of the corporate sector have been many, but the opposite has also been found to be alarmingly true, given the concentration of media ownership. Media owners have two kinds of control over the media – direct personal control over the organisation and operation of the media interests and influence on their competition through concentration and amalgamation (Murdock, 1996). Campbell argues that a privately owned media company belongs to the owner who may control the content through employees such as journalists and editors. He contends that:

At the end of the day privately owned news organisation is the de facto ‘private property’ of the editor (acting on behalf of their employer) who has the right to choose who has access to the newspaper. ... Depending on the level of influence owners thus have on the editorial content of the news organisation’s output, one could argue that journalists in privately owned news organisations are not ‘free’ but instead are subject to the authority of the editor, and ultimately the owner of the organisation (Campbell, 2004, p 64).

In Iraq War II coverage, Murdoch explicitly backed the US invasion, and this was seen most notably on the US network channel Fox News, which took a pro-war stance (Rutenberg, 2003; Morris, 2005).

The duopoly in the media industry in New Zealand is likely to have an impact on the direction of editorial content, given the nature of media ownership. The tendency for local news media to source content from overseas newspapers means that news agencies have an impact on the discussion and deliberation of world issues. The concentration of media ownership, a result of profit maximisation and market domination drive by transnational companies, affects media content. A New Zealand opinion poll by Roy Morgan Research showed that the public were concerned about the market-oriented

nature of media organisations. The poll, conducted in December 2005, showed that 65 percent thought media organisations were interested in making profits rather than informing the public. Roy Morgan Research noted that “The Media never stops ‘talking’ about the financial performance and profits of Media companies. It is no wonder that 65 percent of New Zealanders are concerned that Media organizations are more interested in profit than information” (Roy Morgan Research., 2005).

### 3.8 Discussion

It emerges from this chapter that the globalisation process has brought about changes to the economies of nation states through investments and trade by transnational companies. As Tehranian (1999) noted, global communication has significantly contributed to the rise of globalism in the economic, political and cultural arenas.

The commodification of cultural products, which include news, and the internationalisation of news through news agencies and other wholesale content providers have further strengthened the media and cultural imperialistic model. The flow of news and information still appears to be unidirectional, from centre to periphery. The issue of media dependency on major media corporations in the global press systems is a significant issue during military conflicts, when key actors attempt to influence the media discourse. The contest for media space between ‘authorities’ and ‘challengers’ has global implications as the internationalised press systems act as channels for communicating the media (messages) products. By virtue of their strong news production positions, major media corporations influence public opinion and political attitudes (Bagdikian, 2004).

Furthermore the commercial imperatives and profit maximisation drive of concentrated media firms influence the allocation of media resources for news gathering and processing. Sometimes by taking the least-cost approach, the diversity of the media is compromised and the news media’s role in a democratic society as the marketplace of ideas undermined. As Starke (2004) noted, the newspaper industry, controlled by Fairfax and ANM, has “the risk of impacting negatively on the content of newspapers



and the quality of information, by reducing its diversity, reliability, accessibility and meaningfulness” (p 15). Given the market forces and commercial imperatives of the concentrated media, it is not surprising that New Zealanders think that major media organisations are more interested in maximising profit than informing the public.

The greatest impact of globalisation in New Zealand has been on the country’s media system, with the print media industry now controlled by a foreign-owned duopoly. In this liberal and open market devoid of any legislation to control foreign ownership, the debate about the merits and demerits of the status quo is extensive. Media practitioners from the industry generally view foreign ownership and concentration as good for the media, while some others are concerned about the lack of diversity and the profit maximising nature of the media outlets.

While the media globalisation has been realised through the internationalisation of global economies and the deregulation and policies formulated by institutional actors such as IMF, WTO and the World Bank, news agencies and major US and UK newspapers also play a globalisation role through their commodification of news and information for global consumption. In this process they also impact or set the global news agendas (Boyd-Barrett, 1997; Boyd-Barrett, 1999). As news agencies are so important to world news coverage in New Zealand newspapers, especially in Iraq War II, it is important to examine their roles in the globalised media system. Thus, in the following Chapter 4, news agencies, their roles as agenda setters and international news flows are discussed.

## CHAPTER 4: NEWS AGENCIES AND NEWS FLOWS

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines international news flows, the position of news agencies in the international news coverage and their agenda setting roles for the world news media.

The rise of international news agencies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century pushed the globalisation process, as news was one of the first media products to be commodified for international trade (McQuail, 2005). Nowadays the network of global media agencies has become dominant not only in the sale of news products but also to a great extent in determining the direction of news coverage and setting news agendas.

The demand for news and information from the news media, economic and political institutions has increased the demand for international news, and provided opportunities for news agencies to become wholesalers of news to a diversified market – news media, business and political institutions. A handful of Western news agencies emerged as major stakeholders in a global news business. The news wholesaling business is dominated by the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and Agence France-Presse (AFP), currently “The Big Three” international news agencies, although in the 1980s Reuters,

UPI, AP and AFP were the dominant creators and gatekeepers of international news, then known as “The Big Four” (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1984; Thussu, 2002).

What mainly determines and shapes news coverage is economic interest, information availability, and the production cost of international news (Wu, 2000). As major global media institutions are commercial enterprises aiming to maximise profit, these factors have become more relevant in recent times given the globalisation of media firms, the concentration of media ownership and the commodification of media products. The market forces are determining news coverage and use.

Studies have shown that world newspapers depend on international news agencies and this dependence results in agencies dominating the foreign news agenda in world newspapers. As one international study concluded, the news agencies are “rather powerful agenda-setters for the press of many nations”(Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985, p 94).

Being able to dominate the whole media content spectrum – from text to visuals – the world’s leading news agencies and other content providers are able to construct news according to their news values. Their global dominance through the construction of world events such as military conflicts can “also shape the wider view of a war” (Thussu, 2002, p 205).

## 4.2 International news flows

In the 1970s there was a major debate on the international news flow imbalance, most notably criticized for the unfair and often biased representation of the developing or ‘Third World’ countries (Carlsson, 2003; Boyd-Barrett, 1997) by the then dominant news agencies – AFP, AP, Reuters and UPI. Of these, UPI has now been relegated from the elite club, due to economic crises in the 1980s, and is no longer considered to control one of the world’s major subscriber bases. These agencies which have been major players in the global news system since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century “contribute to both processes of national consolidation and to globalisation” (Boyd-Barrett, 1997, p 132).

As discussed in Chapter 3, global news wires and more recently the news services contribute to the globalisation of news media. And as Boyd-Barrett argues, news agencies construct global and national and “Contribute to internationalisation, constructing influential news agenda and acting upon retail media” (Boyd-Barrett, 1999, p 300-301).

The debate over the ‘free flow’ of information resulted in the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) creating a panel to study the issue. The MacBride Commission report which outlined the main points of the New World Information Communication Order (NWICO), recommended that “the utmost importance should be given to eliminating imbalances and disparities in communication and its structures, and particularly in information flows” and that “developing countries need to reduce their dependence” on international news content flowing from the major news agencies (The MacBride Report, 1980). The developed countries opposed the recommendations and undermined the imbalance of news flows issue by “a new phase of accelerated liberalization of communication, nationally and internationally”, and “other geopolitical changes largely closed down the debate” (McQuail, 2005, p 262).

The free flow argument can be explored through an economic and financial framework to determine why global news media are dependent on a handful of news agencies for international news coverage. Smaller newspapers cannot afford to have their own correspondents in world hot spots, thus opting to depend on news wires. Subscribing to a major news agency, which provides news text, photos and graphics round the clock, costs about US\$1500 a month for a medium-circulation daily newspaper. Thus “using news copy or footage provided by news services is much more economical than sending correspondents to investigate issues or cover incidents that take place on the foreign soil” (Wu, 2000, p 127). Even in established, larger media companies foreign departments, with a significant team of foreign correspondents, make up a large chunk of their total expenses to the tune of US\$2 million per year for a single foreign television bureau (Tunstall, 1992). Thus, for the majority of world newspapers, the best and most economically efficient source for foreign news is news agencies and news services. Even for major global news events that may have a higher level of news value,

few newspapers can send reporters to foreign locations, employing stringers or freelancers. News agencies are thus ideal information and news sources.

According to Skurnik (1981), although most newspapers rely more on news agency copy to fill the daily foreign newshole, larger newspapers such as *The New York Times* can depend on its foreign correspondents for coverage of global events and thus “it can choose what it prints” (p 99). However, smaller newspapers with few resources have to depend on news agencies and few can afford to subscribe to several news agencies, let alone send reporters on foreign assignments such as to cover the war in Iraq. The news agency dependency model was observed by Tunstall (1992), whose worldwide research revealed that “it is often the countries least capable of collecting their own foreign news that are most inclined to use a high proportion of foreign material in their news output” (p 86).

How foreign correspondents of major newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* or *The Guardian* work in news gathering is interesting. Normally they are based in important capitals as bureau chiefs, and are assigned to cover the region and neighbouring countries. In South Asia, those newspapers have bureaus in New Delhi, from where the journalists telephone sources in neighbouring countries to find information on news events that are newsworthy for them. And occasionally, say once a year, they visit those countries to write some human interest features, with more thematic coverage. When in November 1988 a Sri Lankan Tamil rebel group tried to overthrow the Maldives government in a dramatic fire fight (*Operation Cactus*, 2004), the conflict became top news in the world media. First, the newspapers relied on agency copy, which was filed from neighbouring Colombo. The major news agencies – Reuters, AP and AFP – filed stories on the event from Colombo or New Delhi. Within a few days, parachute journalism took hold, with correspondents from major newspapers and news agencies flocking to the Maldives to cover the developing story.

When news events are covered from an overseas location, verification of information is also a major issue that journalists have to contemplate when filing under deadline pressure. A Reuters item, filed on 3<sup>rd</sup> November, datelined Colombo, said that up to 200 residents of the capital Male may have died due to the clash between Maldives security

forces and Tamil guerrillas, although the death toll was in fact 19 Maldivians. The main sources for the news item were the Maldives High Commissioner in Colombo and residents of Male, who were contacted by telephone (Silva, 1988).

*The New York Times* carried eight stories on the attack between 3<sup>rd</sup> November and 18<sup>th</sup> December. The first story credited to AP appeared on the day of the Peoples Liberation of Tamil Elam (PLOTE) attack on 3<sup>rd</sup> November ("Coup Is Reported in the Maldives," 1988) and another 804-word item was filed by one of *The Times* correspondents, Sanjoy Hazarika, who later arrived in Male to cover the conflict (Hazarika, 1988). Another senior *Times* correspondent Barbara Crossette also filed a story which said that the mercenaries hired to overthrow the Maldives government were from a Tamil guerrilla group (Crossette, 1988).

In the case of *The New York Times*, as the attack in the Maldives was an unexpected event, they had to rely on AP for the first day's coverage, but were able to mobilise their regional correspondents to cover the event, both from Male and New Delhi. And for those newspapers that had no regional correspondents or saw no high news value in the incident news agencies were the only sources. In New Zealand, *The Press* carried three news items on the attack between November 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, all credited to Reuters. None of the items originated from Male, where the news event occurred, but from New Delhi, Colombo and Singapore.

A study of Malaysian newspapers' coverage of Iraq War I shows that the print media heavily depended on international agencies for news. Of the 1,463 news items analysed from four leading newspapers, from January 17 to February 28, 1991, 85.7 percent (1,151 items) were of foreign origin (Nain, 1992).

During Iraq War I, the Coalition Media Center was based in Saudi Arabia. However, the Saudi press sourced more content from international news agencies than their own staff, which is an indication of the level of dependency on the 'Big Four' news services. Research by Al-Kahtani (1999) found that in the coverage of Iraq War I (1990-1991), the Saudi Arabian press depended on foreign news sources such as Reuters, AFP, AP, UPI.

News agencies have become the main players in the international news business (Boyd-Barrett, 1997), as only a handful of larger newspapers can afford to cover global conflicts by their staff reporters. In the market driven media industry, sourcing world news content from the ‘news wholesalers’ is more economical than posting reporters to conflict zones. Lee’s examination of Iraq War II coverage shows that larger newspapers depend more on their own staff for coverage of the war compared to smaller publications, which rely on news agencies (Lee, 2004). Nearly 90 percent of the editorial content on the conflict in *The New York Times* was attributed to their staff, while the *Arab News* and the *Middle East Times* depended heavily on news agencies with 57 percent and 88 percent respectively.

During international conflicts, news agencies are still major suppliers of war news to world news media with a sudden increase in demand from global retailers (Rantanen, 2004). Noting the significance of news agencies during military conflicts, Rantanen (2004) contends that global news media source news from news agencies mainly because “the costs of sending and maintaining one’s own correspondents become very high” (p 304). He adds that smaller news media are likely to depend more on the news agencies than larger media companies. As observed by Rantanen, smaller newspapers would find it economically prohibitive to send their own journalists to cover conflicts and if the event is of no direct relevance to audiences then sourcing content from the wires and other media outlets seems more appropriate. In the coverage of Iraq War II, mainstream daily newspapers in New Zealand opted to use news wires and other news services.

Since Iraq War I, New Zealand newspapers have been using more foreign news sources, which are mainly US and UK newspapers and mainstream news agencies. As shown in Table 4.1, in Iraq War II coverage the three largest metropolitan newspapers used 15 different news sources, while the figure for the Kosovo War was five.

Table 4.1 News agencies and other news sources used by leading New Zealand daily newspapers for coverage of major military conflicts

Military conflicts	News sources
1. Vietnam War (1965-1975)	Reuters, NZPA
2. Iraq War I (Jan 1991)	Reuters, AP, AFP, NZPA, AAP, Press Association, KRTN
3. Kosovo War (March 1999)	Reuters, AP, AFP, AAP, NZPA
4. Iraq War II (March-May 2003)	Reuters, AFP, AP, AAP, NZPA, Press Association, Bloomberg, KRT, <i>New York Times</i> , <i>Washington Post</i> , <i>Los Angeles Times</i> , <i>Newsweek</i> , <i>Times of London</i> , <i>Independent</i> , <i>Observer</i> , <i>Telegraph</i> , <i>The Age</i>

*Note: The news sources for the Vietnam War, Iraq War I and the Kosovo conflict were identified after analysing the selected newspapers for the first month of the conflicts. News items related to the specific conflicts were thus recorded. For Iraq War II sources were from the content analysis carried out for this research.*

For coverage of the 1991 Iraq War, seven sources were used, while during the Vietnam War Reuters was the main source. Use of US and UK newspaper content for military conflict coverage is a more recent development, and is an indication of the attempts by newspapers to present diverse views. In Iraq War II coverage, *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* extensively used content from non-news agency sources. The use of more sources is also an indication of the globalisation of media, both in terms of content and affiliation. What can be seen from Table 4.1 is that in a span of some 40 years there has been a definite pattern of news flows from a few Western countries to the rest of the world thus confirming the complaints of Non-Aligned countries in the famous NWICO debates in the 1980s. However, what is also clear from the above table is that rather than a change in this flow there has been an intensification of the flow as additional major news content providers from the Western countries of the world have entered the news flow traffic.

An earlier study of news content of 16 New Zealand daily newspapers, during the period May 1, 1965 to April 20, 1966, shows that content from international news agencies dominated the foreign news hole (Cleveland, 1970). More recent research reveals that major news agencies dominated international coverage in newspapers. Reuters, AP, AAP and AFP accounted for nearly 70 percent of the international news in a study of five New Zealand metropolitan newspapers in 2002. News content from Reuters, which is one of the largest news agencies, accounted for 35.7 percent (Taira, 2003).

The major world news agencies in their coverage concentrated most heavily on political actors, and there was a reliance on official sources. As the UNESCO report notes:



There appears to be a reliance on ‘officialdom’ for news, clearly reflected in the concentration on politics and political actors. Equally strong, though, is a reliance on the exceptional event, as indicated by the frequent reporting of terrorism and military actions (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985, p 94).

The information imbalance, in terms of news flows, has created two major issues. Firstly news sources from the developed world, through their sheer dominance and influence are able to dominate news agenda in the world and limit and impede the flow of news from developing countries. As Thussu (2002) notes, “the imbalance in the flow of cultural products can affect the understanding of the South in the North and among the countries of the South, since most media flow continues to be from North to South and limited South– South exchange takes place” (p 205). The second issue is the role of sources as primary definers of news. In times of war, such as Iraq War II, British and United States officials were able to affect content and news flow through media management.

The intense coverage given to military conflicts by news agencies is an indication of the global demand for military conflict news. Compared to locally generated content on the Iraq War in four South Asian countries, content attributed to international news agencies showed stronger war journalism framing and stronger support for the US and Britain, the principal partners in the war against Iraq (Maslog et al., 2006).

### 4.3 The major news agencies

International news content in world newspapers is mainly attributed to a few news agencies, headquartered in Western Europe or North America. Ever since news agencies emerged to commodify and trade in news in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the key players have remained the same. The major agencies remain major content providers for the global news media market, and thus “exercise a great deal of control over what international news reaches people around the world” (Shulman, 1994, p 108). In New Zealand, most of the international wires are channelled to news media organisations through NZPA, whose own wire provides news text and images of local events.

The news wholesaling business is currently dominated by AP, Reuters, and AFP, the “The Big Three” international news agencies. Of these Reuters and AP are the two dominant news agencies, the latter being the main news agency in the US domestic market. The three news agencies continue to dominate the global flow of news, with AP alone putting out 20 million words per day (Thussu, 2002). Reuters, which dominates markets in Europe, Africa, and much of Asia, has become the leading provider of financial-data-on-screens around the world, while its news operations are seen as a secondary activity (Tunstall, 1992).

Although the news agencies began as providers of news text and still photos, the advent of television and the need for multimedia have diversified these media wholesalers. Reuters and AP provide content for television through Reuters Television and Associated Press Television News (APTN), which are the other major suppliers of news footage to worldwide subscribers. These two news agencies – from the UK and US – from a near duopoly in the world news agency business, thus dominating “the news agendas and news flows of the world” (Tunstall & Machin, 1999, p 88).

With a staff of over 15,000 in 91 countries Reuters provides news and real-time financial data to a large global market. Reuters, founded in 1851, claims in its website that it is the “world’s largest international multimedia news agency – 2,300 editorial staff, journalists, photographers and camera operators in 196 bureaux serving approximately 130 countries” (Reuters., 2006b). In 2004 the news agency filed over two and a half million news items, including 440,000 alerts, from 209 countries around the world and published in 18 languages (Reuters., 2006b).

The US-headquartered AP, established in 1846, serves 121 countries. Nearly 8,500 international subscribers receive AP news and photos while in the US, 1,700 daily, weekly, non-English and college newspapers use AP. According to AP, it is “the backbone of the world’s information system serving thousands of daily newspaper, radio, television and online customers with coverage in all media and news in all formats” (AP., 2006b).

AFP, which is the world's third largest news agency, currently generates around 10 percent of its revenues on the web (Daily Times., 2006). AFP produces each day 400,000 – 600,000 words in text, 1000 photos and 50 news graphics through a worldwide network that spans 165 countries, with nine bureaus in North America, 21 in Latin America, 25 in Asia-Pacific, nine in the Middle East, 36 in Europe and 16 in Africa (AFP., 2006b). The news agency was founded in 1835 and its worldwide operations reach thousands of subscribers via radio, television, newspapers and companies (AFP., 2006a).

International news agencies that have become major sources for news media are also exploring other niche markets such as internet-based alternative media, thus further strengthening their hold on the international news market. Reuters, AP and AFP provide content to online news media, which include news text and multimedia. With this diversification of products and services, these news agencies and other news content providers are integral parts of the international news system. According to 'Trends in Newsrooms 2006', published by the World Association of Newspapers (WAN), the business model of news agencies is changing with the availability of new media such as the internet:

Today, the advent of internet and mobile news has only exacerbated the prominence of news agencies and has possibly caused more problems for newspapers. Instead of having to distribute their content through newspapers or television stations, news agencies can directly contact the consumer through new media (World Association of Newspapers., 2006).

News agencies have become retailers of news by providing content to internet-based media and also through their websites (Rantanen, 2004). Communications technology has contributed to the decentralisation of news as not only are news agencies able to disseminate news to various channels, but the public are also empowered to inject content into the global news flow through alternative websites, blogs and other forms of new media. With this, according to Gurevitch (Cited in Rantanen, 2004), the *globalization of news* has started. However, how news agency and news service content is reported in news media such as newspapers differs with every publication. In the context of foreign news coverage in newspapers in New Zealand, the selection and framing of news by editors reflects the local news values and framework. Thus when

local news retailers collate news from external sources they also attempt to put them in the local context.

The traditional role of news agencies has been to provide content to news media, who retail news, but with the internet and the developing markets for online news, news agencies are also attracting audiences directly to them, bypassing the traditional retailers of news. Both Reuters and AP have websites that provide news items and videos for readers, the same as those which appear on the mainstream news media. The Associated Press provides news and information to commercial web sites, wireless services, corporate and government intranets and desktops using XML and other Web-ready formats, which customers can integrate with their own websites or applications (AP., 2006a). Reuters (Reuters., 2006c) and AFP also provide content to web-based and mobile media. Reuters also carry most of the news stories with photos and videos on its website, updated regularly, while its feed is also carried in news portals such as YahooNews (Reuters., 2006a). The YahooNews website sources content directly from news agencies and provides options for readers to choose from the three major news agencies – Reuters, AP and AFP – simply with a mouse click.

However, the major market for global news agencies are the print media around the world, who rely on wire services mainly for foreign news, for economic and organisational reasons.

In New Zealand, the newspapers receive wire services such as Reuters, AP, AFP and AAP through the New Zealand Press Association. According to NZPA, it “operates a 24 hour, seven-day-a-week service providing national and international news” to local news media. Its own wire provides general, political, business, sport, and entertainment news stories and information and pictures and graphics of news, sport and entertainment events in New Zealand (NZPA., 2006a). As the national news agency, owned by the daily newspaper industry, NZPA distributes international and domestic news to the daily and Sunday newspapers and their websites, as well as providing a domestic news service to radio and television networks, and international news agencies Reuters, Associated Press, Australian Associated Press and Agence France-Presse (Brown, 2006).

The NZPA provides national and international news to subscribers via a data link from its main newsroom in Wellington. According to NZPA its “newsroom sends out about 1000 different pieces of information every 24 hours, compiled from the news resources of its own staff, the daily newspapers, overseas wire services and other sources like The New Zealand Stock Exchange” (NZPA., 2006b).

Some of the foreign news wires that pass through NZPA are also edited before the content reaches the subscribers. According to NZPA editor Nick Brown, “some newspapers have direct feeds of the Reuters wire, but they largely rely on international agency copy that has been ‘filtered’ by NZPA staff who do some editing of the stories and sometimes combine stories from different agencies” (Interview with Brown, 13th July 2006).

International coverage by NZPA is primarily focused on the Asia-Pacific region and the service sends reporters throughout this region to cover major events. It relies on freelance correspondents in other parts of the world. Although NZPA did not send a journalist to cover the recent war in Iraq, it did after the 1991 Gulf War. Besides distributing the agency copy on the latest Iraq conflict, NZPA has occasionally phoned New Zealanders on the ground for stories (Interview with Brown, 13th July 2006).

#### 4.4 International news agencies as agenda setters

The news agency dependency model was observed by Tunstall after world-wide research that revealed that “it is often the countries least capable of collecting their own foreign news that are most inclined to use a high proportion of foreign material in their news output” (Tunstall, 1992, p 86).

According to Musa (1990), who studied the impact of international news agencies on Third World news agencies, the former play an agenda setting role for the latter. As most readers of international news are outside the direct experience of the events, they rely on the news that is reported to them in the news media through the wire services.

Thus, as Wanta et al argue, “media coverage of international news ... plays an important agenda-setting function” (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004, p 367). The news agencies, who supply media content, be that video, audio or news text, are agenda setters as “they make the first decisions on how and if international stories – particularly those from the news flow fringes of the non-industrialized world – will be covered” (Paterson, 1998, p 82).

The same appears to be true whether it is in the developed or least developed world. If international news agencies and other news services become the dominant source for national and local newspapers, then the agenda is being set by these sources. In New Zealand all the international news agencies are channelled through the New Zealand Press Association, akin to a national news agency. In the coverage of recent military conflicts such as Iraq War I and Iraq War II newspapers relied on international news agencies and the negative implication of this dependence on content has been criticized by academics and media analysts (Robie, 2003; Pauling, 1996; Shulman, 1994). In commenting on Iraq War I coverage by the New Zealand press, Jim Tully noted that “our view of the world is narrowed by the fact that we rely for our international news on three or four main news agencies. These three news agencies originate from two or three of the world’s most powerful Western nations” (Pauling, 1996, p 6). In the coverage of Iraq War II, the New Zealand news media depended heavily on mainstream global news agencies (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005).

The widespread coverage given to military conflicts such as the war in Iraq by news media of countries that are not directly involved in the conflicts is due to an increase on the supply side by global news agencies. Rantanen (2004) argues that this is an indication of “the power of global news: to set the agenda for news around the world” (p 302).

According to Abel, news media in New Zealand depend heavily on major international news agencies, thus limiting the diversity of views on international issues:

Almost all international news in the New Zealand media comes from overseas news agencies such as Reuters and Associated Press, while the New Zealand Press

Association is a major source of domestic news. As a result the number of voices being heard on any issue is not as wide as it might be” (Abel, 2004, p 190).

After a study of international news coverage in five New Zealand metropolitan newspapers, Taira (2003, p 147) concluded that the dynamics of news flows and globalisation has a profound impact on the New Zealand press in the following ways:

1. Except for stories that affect New Zealand directly, the world news agenda for the New Zealand metropolitan press is set by the international news wires
2. New Zealand news media receive the majority of foreign news through the news wires and as there is a mass of news from the news agencies, the New Zealand newspapers do not send reporters overseas unless the news issue involves New Zealand or is in close geographic proximity.
3. The dependence on international news agencies results in ‘standard Western’ ways of seeing global issues.
4. Even in the coverage of overseas news events, New Zealand correspondents ‘provide supplementary material to stories which rely, principally, if not exclusively on standard news feeds’.

The near total dependence on international news wires is mostly due to economic and management reasons, as the cost of sending staff to cover an event such as the war in Iraq would be enormous. Newspapers are profit oriented commercial enterprises, and as such using news wires – which are inexpensive news sources – would be in the best interests of the management, although copy generated by newspaper staff, with their own perspectives, would stand out as being more relevant to the newspapers’ audience, from the journalistic point of view. The direction of foreign news coverage is to a great extent determined by the news agencies, as the newspapers become dependent on them.

The immediacy of information delivery is another factor in the reliance of news media on news agencies. A UNESCO commissioned report on foreign news coverage in 29 countries concluded, “it is likely that one of the main reasons for the widespread use and influence of the big four Western news agencies is their ability to provide timely

reports of important events around the world for a reasonable price” (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985, p 94).

The total dependence on news agencies for world news coverage leads to these sources affecting the direction of coverage. The newspapers have to rely on wire copies to fill the foreign news pages, and this reliance leads them to become agenda setters. There is not much change in the wire copies, except the re-writing of headlines and occasionally the combining of items from different news agencies (Interview with Gardner, 8th March, 2006; Interview with Thompson, 23rd February, 2006). However the main content remains as structured by the news agencies, and the same emphasis is given when those items are published by the newspapers.

The New Zealand news media, according to Thompson, “republishes whatever information has been supplied to them off the satellite and over the wires from what are almost exclusively US and UK news sources” (Interview with Thompson, 23rd February, 2006). During Iraq War II this tilted coverage in favour of the US-led coalition. Publishing news that has been written for other publications also has some other implications. For example, what is written in *The New York Times* or *The Independent* by their staff reporters is aimed at their specific audiences and reflects the newspapers’ editorial stance. Thus, when an article that appeared in *The Independent* on an Iraq War-related issue is published in *The New Zealand Herald*, how the New Zealand newspaper readers decode the messages in the context of their own news frames of the conflict would be different from that of the British readers.

In the construction of global events for local audiences, journalists and editors are influenced by the larger global issues and events being covered and presented by the news agencies. As Stevenson and Cole (1984) noted, “it is often argued that the wire services set the media agenda by telling local editors (and their readers, in turn) what parts of the world and what issues they should think about” (p 48) in the news selection and processing stages. Research has shown that news agencies also affect the news agenda of the media (Whitney & Becker, 1982).



After a study of foreign news coverage in 17 countries, Stevenson and Cole concluded that there was evidence to suggest that Western news agencies influenced what parts of the world and what kinds of news the national media should focus on in covering international news (Stevenson & Cole, 1984). Thus news agencies and other content providers are in a more powerful gatekeeping position for world news retailers in that the former make choices in selecting what events to cover, which angles to focus on and what visuals or images to accompany the item. The news ‘wholesalers’ are well positioned to be the agenda setters for the media clients in the world. In setting the global news agenda, the major wire services “contributed to internationalization, constructing influential international news agendas that acted upon retail media, governments and finance” (Boyd-Barrett, 1997, p 143).

Besides the influence of news agencies in setting the media agenda, news media are also affected by coverage in other often larger news media. This is actually what media scholars refer to as inter-media agenda setting, where elite mainstream news organisations set the agenda for smaller news organisations (Lopez-Escobar E., Llamas, McCombs, & Rey, 1998; Reese & Danielian, 1989). For example, coverage of larger issues in *The New York Times* might be ‘mirrored’ by other, smaller news media.

Foreign news selection and editing is based on the news values and editorial policies of the newspapers. In these gatekeeping processes of selecting, editing and arranging news in a format that gives emphasis to certain items, the newspapers construct the news discourse according to their judgments and values. These operations of reorganisation, deletion, addition and substitution (van Dijk, 1988) do not entirely change the theme and direction of items, but still convey the message as constructed by the news agencies.

The news media and specifically the news gatherers at the frontlines of conflicts – elite newspapers, news agencies – rely on official or ex-official sources, thus exporting the elite-dominated content to the news retailers – the global media who rely on them for war coverage. Research has shown that in the two military conflicts in the Gulf involving major powers – Iraq War I and Iraq War II – official sources dominated news and the US press relied on official or ex-official sources, while only a small minority of content originated from alternative sources (Bennett, 1994; Tumber & Palmer, 2004).

Of the major news agencies, Reuters and AP also provide content for broadcast media, and function as global television news services. As a visual medium, television news plays a very powerful role in affecting public the perception of events, sometimes influencing public and foreign policies of countries (Hess, 2002; Robinson, 2003). Indeed broadcast media play a major role in the developed world where dependence on television news is high. This dependence leads to the news agencies becoming the agenda setters for the audiences. When news agency coverage is not representative of the real event, then the audience is left with the image constructed by journalists. Often this image is the result of journalists having encountered logistical and even political obstacles in their news gathering.

Looking at the way the news agencies covered war in the Balkans, Paterson observed the constraints journalists face and noted their agenda-setting impact:

International news agencies created the dominant image of the Bosnian civil war, an image highly distorted by the structural constraints inherent in television news agency coverage routines. Further the coverage shaped by those constraints has an ongoing agenda-setting impact across all media, making the distorted image the guide for coverage by all media (Paterson, 1997, p 151).

A study of how the local newspapers in Northern Ireland covered Iraq War II shows a heavy reliance on news agencies for content, although attempts were made to localise the news coverage (Rolston & McLaughlin, 2004). However, without many local angles available, the public discourse was determined by wire copies. The study concluded that the dependence on foreign wire services by the Belfast dailies meant that “much of the coverage of the war in Iraq was determined from outside the local society” (Rolston & McLaughlin, 2004, p 200).

Recent research on the coverage of Iraq War II in four Asian countries – India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines – shows that foreign news agency items have stronger war journalism framing than stories written by newspapers’ correspondents (Maslog et al., 2006). Of the 125 news agency items 64 percent were framed as war journalism and 29 percent peace journalism compared to 59 percent as peace journalism in the locally-produced content. For a newspaper whose audience favours a peaceful

resolution of a conflict such as the Iraq War, complete dependence on news agencies would result in the war being framed differently.

News agencies have indeed become powerful institutions, being able to set the news agenda in a globalised world where economic and organisational factors have, influenced international news coverage and reliance on the few content providers. As Ossokina (2003) argues, international news agencies have become major political actors, as most of the “press organisations, governments and individuals depended on news agencies” for news and information. Given their dominance, wire services are in a far stronger position to influence foreign policy and public opinion through the agenda they set with both news text and video footage. When dependence on wire services is high and local input low, the likely result is a ‘news agency effect’ on the power elites and the global public. Agenda setting research has shown that there is a relationship between the “order of importance given in the media to ‘issues’ and the order of significance attached to the same issues by politicians and the public” (McQuail, 2005, p 512).

The news media, including news agencies, have to make choices based on several factors, in the news selection process. There are many thousands of possible news events occurring around the globe on any given day. A news agency or a newspaper or any other media outlet has to select the events and issues to be covered based on news values, organisational and logistical factors. It is not possible to cover every news event, thus the gatekeepers – reporters, editors – resort to the news selection processes that ultimately give salience to certain events within the framework of news journalism. Through the news gathering and processing and eventually packaging and presenting, media practitioners set the news agenda for the public, by extrapolating from several thousand possible news items some that they think are of relevance to readers.

#### 4.5 Discussion

International news reporting began to change with the developments in communications technology, globalisation, and the demand for information in global economic and

financial systems. The international news agencies, which have been instrumental in the push towards the globalisation of news by commodifying news as a product (McQuail, 2005), have become dominant. A few news agencies dominate the content and direction of world news in thousands of print and broadcast media outlets throughout the world, thus vesting in them the ability to manipulate or control global opinion through their news products. According to Sreberny-Mohammadi (1985) who was the lead author of a UNESCO report on international news flows, the news agencies are “rather powerful agenda-setters for the press of many nations” (p 94).

International journalism – the reporting of global events for local consumption – by news agencies has changed over the past 22 years and the notion that news agencies are powerful agenda setters can be contested. At present there are many news sources in the once ‘monopoly market’ of the few elite news agencies, such as major US and UK newspapers and alternative news agencies. Thus editors are able to make news selection choices from a myriad of copy to accommodate their own agendas. International news in the New Zealand print media is dominated by Reuters, AP, AAP and AFP, while in the past five years content from other sources such as major US and UK publications is also being used more frequently. With the increase in more non-news agency content for world news coverage, the agenda is also being set by major US and UK newspapers.

With a global media market dominated by three major news agencies, the flow of news and information is likely to impact media consumers, as the news generated by the wire services is based on general news values, not those specific to any of the world’s diverse cultures. Without local input into the news agency copy, a story such as the Reuters story on the alleged finding of a chemical weapons factory in the Iraqi city of Najaf (“Chemical weapons “factory” overrun,” 2003) might have a similar impact whether it is published in newspapers in Britain, New Zealand, Fiji or the Maldives. The main sources in the news item were the US military, US government and the Pentagon. The media audience in those countries may be diverse, with different world views and opinions about the US-led invasion of Iraq, but they are exposed to the same content and thus the same news agenda. Unless the wire copy is re-written, or filed by the newspaper staff, the news agencies have the opportunity to set a common news agenda for the world audience.

The potential influence of news agencies in dominating the news agenda is apparent, but with more news agencies and news services at the disposal of foreign news editors, news media could determine the orientation of coverage by using multiple sources which would give more choices in news selection. The news angles or framing used by journalists from *The New York Times* and *The Independent* writing about civilian deaths due to Coalition bombing of an Iraq village might well be different. And the thematic focus of coverage of the bombing, for example, might differ between several news sources or agencies. Hence, with more news resources, news media could have the opportunity to frame the Iraq War in a way that would reflect the audiences' interests and political debates. However, if the newspapers used their own correspondents to cover the bombing, the coverage could be developed to reflect exactly the news values and interests of the newspapers.

News agencies and the newspapers follow several criteria in judging the newsworthiness of an event or a news story, based on the editorial policies of the media. The news values framework helps reporters and editors in the selection of news, but several internal and external factors influence the priorities given to different news values. Reporting and publishing news are thus very much influenced by news values and news selection processes. These aspects of journalism are explored in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: NEWS VALUES, NEWS SELECTION AND FRAMING

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### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the critical perspectives on news values, news selection processes and how media content is framed to construct coverage of news events. There are several variables influencing the news selection and processing equation, which the gatekeepers have to consider in all stages of the news production.

In reality, every news item that is fit to print does not get past the gatekeepers to media consumers. Journalists and editors have to subject the news content to selection and filtering based on a set of news values or a news selection framework that takes into account several factors. In the selection of national and international news for publication or broadcast, news judgements are made based on the news values and other professional considerations. McQuail identifies seven factors that affect the selection and flow of international news (McQuail, 2005) while Galtung and Ruge (1965) suggest a dozen factors that contribute to events to becoming news.

According to Golding and Elliott (1979), news values are used in the selection of items for inclusion in the final news product and as a guideline for presentation of the items. In the news selection and processing stages, journalists and editors frame the news and make certain aspects of the event more salient (Entman, 1991). In the news selection and framing processes journalists and editors use news values frameworks and

audience-oriented routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). With military conflicts commanding a high news value (Schechter, 2003), wars such as Iraq War II are seen important and newsworthy news beats for countries that are directly involved in the conflict. And even in New Zealand, which is geographically far removed from the conflict, the war in Iraq (at least the invasion phase) was an important news event. One factor that has made coverage important is globalisation, as discussed in Chapter 3, and the high news values which are discussed in this chapter.

## 5.2 News values

News coverage, whether it is local, national or foreign, in the news media in any country is shaped by the news values. The news values help journalists and editors to make the news judgements and determine what is newsworthy. As noted by Hall et al (1978), “News is the end product of a complex process which begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories” (p 53). In judging what is newsworthy, media practitioners use such values as conflict, frequency, intensity, meaningfulness, proximity, scarcity, and reference to elite nations among many others. The priority given to news values and thus the selection of conflicts for coverage is highly selective in the news media, as evidenced by the threat posed by North Korea as the US prepared to invade Iraq in March 2003. According to Boyd-Barrett (2004) despite the threat and hostile nuclear capability, “North Korea reporting was completely overshadowed by Iraq” (p 26-27).

Although not every conflict gets extensive coverage, when major world powers are directly involved in military conflicts the aggregate news values of conflicts increase. Media consumers are drawn to conflict news, mainly because of the drama, magnitude, relevance and impact. As noted by Boyd-Barrett (2004), war coverage is “commercially rewarding for the media, since its threat and unfolding ignite insatiable audience appetite for news” (p 26). Furthermore war journalism discourse is “high in tension and drama, with complex main plots and sub-plots played out within traditionally binary oppositions of aggressor and victim, winner and loser” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 26). According to Webster (2003), widespread coverage of conflicts is also due to the

“compelling interest” of the media in war, as “War is dramatic, attention-grabbing” (p 58). Webster writes:

There are clearly other factors involved such as the scale and intensity of the conflict, its location, where the participants come from, as well as its strategic implications. However, the inherent newsworthiness of war remains and increases the likelihood of it receiving prominent and sustained attention (Webster, 2003, p 58).

Conflict has a high news value, which is why global military conflicts get wide coverage. That does not mean every conflict is given the same level of prominence. Different news media in different countries may treat coverage of conflicts differently, as other news values also determine the news selection and thus coverage. For example, news values of Iraq War II for the US and UK news media may be different from those of the New Zealand press. At the very obvious level, the US and UK are directly involved in the conflict while New Zealand is not at all involved in the invasion of Iraq. Several factors have made Iraq War II of high news value to many nations irrespective of levels of involvement.

Unanimity among global media outlets regarding the newsworthiness of major world conflicts would be more likely compared to that regarding a much localised conflict in a non-elite nation. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 by the US and Coalition forces attracted more coverage in more countries than the Sri Lankan government offensive against separatist Tamil guerrillas in the north and east of the country which has claimed more than 70,000 lives since 1983 (Fair, 2006).

Military conflicts also attract widespread media attention because they have “all the ingredients by virtue of combining essential elements of news values such as unusualness, drama, episode and event orientation” (Musa, 2007, p 14). Any direct association of major powers in military conflicts would have a multiplying effect in terms of the intensity of the coverage.

Although conflict and drama are seen as high news values, the combination of elite nations and military conflicts attracts intense media coverage by mainstream global news media. However, when conflicts involve non-elite actors such as a Third World



country media attention is significantly lower. Noting this imbalance in coverage, Musa said:

Whereas Africa is home to over 60 percent of world ethnic conflicts, the global media have underreported such conflicts with serious implications for their perception and resolution. Yet the underreporting of African conflict ... is a manifestation of the asymmetries of globalisation" (Musa, 2007, p 14).

During a recent meeting of *The Press* staff with its readers, some readers noted the tendency of the newspaper to focus on elite nations and major powers such as the US, while larger humanitarian crises are given less prominence. One reader noted that the "International section lacks depth and real 'news' and Iraq is given more coverage/prominence than Sudan. More on international conflict is required not just if America is involved" ("What readers said about The Press," 2006).

A study of international news coverage showed that the US was dominant in almost all foreign news items and powerful countries such as Russia and France were also prominent. In a 1985 study of print and broadcast media in 38 countries, the US accounted for about 18 percent of the entire world's media space devoted to foreign countries during the two weeks of study (Wu, 2000). One in five items dealt with the US, which "vividly indicates that international news coverage is uneven not only at the level of each individual country, but also at the level of the world" (Wu, 2000, p 121).

Those countries with enormous economic and political clout tend to be emphasised in the press. Trade volume and presence of international news agencies are two principal predictors of news coverage, while physical distance plays a minor role (Wu, 2000).

There are several factors that determine coverage of international news. It is not only the conflict, but also economic and political relations, and geographic and cultural proximity which ultimately determine which foreign news events are covered. Another key factor is the desire of media consumers to know about powerful countries (McQuail, 2005), whose action could affect them. McQuail (2005, p 263) identifies seven factors that affect the selection and flow of international news:

- The nature of news as an event occur
- Timing of events and news cycles
- Reporting and transmitting resources available
- The operation of international news agencies
- News values
- Geography, trade and diplomacy
- Cultural affinity and language

Almost all of the points identified by McQuail are relevant in the New Zealand context in relation to the war in Iraq. As a major military conflict in recent times, involving major powers and a Gulf state, the news values of the conflict were high for every news media. With modern communications technology there was no shortage of news resources for news retailers, thus international news flows were high. News agencies, and other media outlets commodified news for the global news media market and New Zealand was one such consumer. Though geographically distant, culturally New Zealand is closer to key actors, notably Australia and Britain, which makes the case for extensive coverage justified.

One of the reasons why the conflict in Rwanda did not get extensive coverage was due to the lack of news gathering resources directed at the country (Pottier, 2002). Thus coverage from international news agencies and other news gatherers and disseminators has been minimal in the case of Rwanda. The result of “media’s failure to adequately” cover the Rwandan genocide of 1994, was that slaughter was “wrongly portrayed as ancient tribal hatred” (Pottier, 2002, p 56). And with the departure of foreign personnel working in Rwanda, media coverage also declined. According to a UN report, “When the genocide was accelerating, the Western press virtually ceased to report Rwanda” (Cited in Pottier, 2002, p 56).

The difference between Rwanda and the Kosovo conflict was that elite actors were involved in the latter, while in the former the genocide was by domestic actors. Furthermore, Rwanda is in Africa, a region that is not economically and politically very important to the developed countries, thus the crisis did not attract much media attention compared to Kosovo, which is located in the heart of Europe.

According to Galtung (2002), in war journalism the news media “sees a conflict as a battle and the battle as sports arena and gladiator circus”, thus focusing on winning, as in sports reporting where “winning is not everything, it is the only thing’ ”. He noted that war journalism is oriented in four key directions – it is violence oriented, propaganda oriented, elite oriented, and victory oriented (Galtung, 2002). The orientation of war coverage is also influenced by the prevailing public opinion of the audiences and government policies towards the conflict. Noting these factors, Boyd-Barrett (2004) argued that war journalism is often one sided, as “The media typically cover war from the point of view of the country in which they and their owners and readers are based, reflecting the point of view of that country’s government and its foreign policy elites” (p 29).

Bell (1991) suggested three more news values – competition, predictability and prefabrication – which can be applied in the context of both news agencies and other news media. As profit-making enterprises, media outlets are always in competition, thus they report exclusive stories and related issues as major stories. The predictability factor becomes relevant as journalists tend to cover expected and pre-scheduled events, while ready-made content, such as media releases and news agency copy has a greater chance of being published (Bell, 1991).

Golding and Elliott (1979) suggested a number of key news values – drama, visual attractiveness, entertainment, importance, size, proximity, brevity, negativity, recency, elites and personalities – most of which also have been suggested by other scholars (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001; McGregor, 2002; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). But, Golding and Elliott noted that any news value is used in two ways in the news processing by journalists or editors:

News values are used in two ways. They are criteria of selection from material available to the newsroom of those items worthy of inclusion in the final product. Second they are the guidelines for the presentation of items, suggesting what to emphasise, what to omit, and where to give priority in the preparation of the items for presentation to the audience. News values are thus working rules, thus comprising a corpus of occupational lore which implicitly and often expressly explains and guides newsroom practice (Golding & Elliott, 1979, p 114).

A study of British national newspapers by Harcup and O'Neill has shown, in conformity with Galtung and Ruge, that for news story to be selected, one or more news value requirements has to be met. Based on their research, they proposed the following set of news values (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001, p 279):

1. **Power elite.** Stories concerning powerful individuals, organisations or institutions.
2. **Celebrity.** Stories concerning people who are already famous.
3. **Entertainment.** Stories concerning sex, show business, human interest, animals, an unfolding drama, or offering opportunities for humorous treatment, entertaining photographs or witty headlines.
4. **Surprise.** Stories that have an element of surprise and/or contrast.
5. **Bad news.** Stories with particularly negative overtones, such as conflict or tragedy.
6. **Good news.** Stories with particularly positive overtones such as rescues and cures.
7. **Magnitude.** Stories that are perceived as sufficiently significant either in the numbers of people involved or in potential impact.
8. **Relevance.** Stories about issues, groups and nations perceived to be relevant to the audience.
9. **Follow-up.** Stories about subjects already in the news.
10. **Newspaper agenda.** Stories that set or fit the news organisation's own agenda.

Harcup and O'Neill's study examined the news values currently operational in British newspapers and critically evaluated Galtung and Ruge's (1965) seminal work on foreign news selection and values, proposing more contemporary news values (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001).

According to Schechter (2003), the news values of military conflicts is high and thus "war is often the 'big story' (when sex isn't) and a defining moment for many journalists. It's the story that permits news departments to mobilise their 'troops' – that's what ABC called employees when I worked there" (p 128). With conflict and drama judged as high news values, news content is likely to be more event-oriented

than issue-oriented as the latter needs context and often in-depth analysis (Shoemaker, 1987).

### 5.3 News selection

In the news selection process editors do not pick content blindly, instead working within the larger news values framework where market forces and audience interest determine the relevance and significance of the world news items under consideration. Although the New Zealand news media relied on mainstream international news outlets for Iraq War II coverage, through rigorous news selection processes a ‘balanced’ approach to war reporting was taken. Comrie and Fountaine (2005), argued that this “Balance was present on two levels: in the media’s attempt to be generally even-handed in selection of ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ articles” (p 245).

From a structural and sociological perspective, the news media can be seen to operate in relation to other societal institutions. And as they are bound by political and economic considerations, the news selection, processing and publication are influenced by the societal variables. Looking at these dimensions, Herman (2002) contended that “the media comprise numerous independent entities that operate on the basis of common outlooks, incentives and pressures from the market, government and internal organizational forces” (p 64).

Noting that institutional factors play a significant role in the news selection process, Knight (1982) argued that “The selectivity of news ... is institutional rather than personal. Its effect, nonetheless, is that news accounts are partial accounts, structured according to the regnant rules of newsworthiness and format, rules which ‘automatically’ include certain data and exclude other” (p 33). According to McQuail, internal processing of content furthers the selection bias and organisational routines are aimed to support the media organisation’s interests. On this matter, McQuail notes:

Media organisations tend to reproduce selectively according to criteria that suit their own goals and interests. These may sometimes be professional and craft criteria, but

more weight is usually given to what sells most or gets highest ratings (McQuail, 2005, p 329).

As noted by Skurnik (1981), “newspapers tend to select, from the myriad [of] available news, that which harmonizes to which they subscribe” (p 100). Based on the news values framework, journalists and editors make the news judgement to develop the story, and choose the news angle to highlight, as well as the placement and priority of the article. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) point out that “news judgment is the ability to evaluate stories based on agreed-on news values, which provide yardsticks of newsworthiness and constitute audience-oriented routines” (p 90).

Even though newspaper editors try to balance coverage of events through the selection of content from multiple sources (Interview with Thompson, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2006; Interview with Gardner, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2006) these processes must still posit the publications in a particular direction as international news has already been processed through news selection and news values frameworks by news agencies and foreign newspapers. Moreover, newspapers cannot be purely objective as “the very process of selecting the words or images, their inclusion or omission and even their location on the page or the screen, is part of the process of persuasion that is propaganda” (Taylor, 1992a).

While news media receive thousands of foreign news items daily (from the wires and news services), the factors and criteria in news selection are varied, depending on the editorial policies of the media organisation. The news selection choices are influenced by the audiences and market considerations. However, there are also certain fundamental concepts and attributes associated with the professional values of journalism that determine the selection of news.

A set of news values guides gatekeepers in determining selection, emphasis and placement of news. Galtung and Ruge (1965) suggested a dozen factors that cause events to become news, which include threshold, frequency, intensity, meaningfulness, proximity, continuity, scarcity, reference to elite nations and people.

In the news selection process, these values are not applied in isolation; rather several key factors are looked at in making editorial choices, such as selection, placement and priority of the news items. The more the news values are associated with a particular news event, the more likely that it will be chosen as a news item (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). News values are used by reporters in covering events and by editors in selecting wire or staff copies for publications. If a newspaper's sole source of foreign news is news agencies, then that newspaper is dependent on the agencies' editors' who influence journalists in their decision to cover and report news events. There is no relationship between the news agency journalists and the newspaper editors who subscribe to their stories. On the other hand, if a newspaper sends staff to cover a global news event such as the war in Iraq, the editor has much editorial control in directing their staff to report certain events that meet the newspaper's set of news values, audience and market considerations.

A news agency reporter will be responsible to the news values and other professional guidelines of the agency while the news media, which subscribe to the agency news, do not have any editorial influence on the news agency editors or reporters. And the influence on editorial decisions from the readers is very minimal. It is the editors who, as gatekeepers, decide on what is newsworthy and 'fit' for publication. Meadows and Ewart (2001) have noted that reporters from both news agencies and newspapers get their reporting cues from the management rather than the audience. However, this does not mean that in making editorial choices, audience and market considerations are completely ignored. News media, whether print or broadcast, have to orient the news product according to the demands and tastes of the audiences.

When Galtung and Ruge analysed the structure of foreign news in 1965, the main news media was print, and television journalism was still at infancy and limited to the developed countries. The impact of today's instant and live coverage of news events was not foreseen during the 1960s, and as such in forming the news selection factors, the Swedish researchers did not take into account the visual medium. McGregor thus suggested a revision of Galtung and Ruge, to accommodate additional news values – visualness, emotion, conflict and 'celebrification' of the journalist – to reflect the strong impact of visual news coverage on television (McGregor, 2002). While, visualness of

news events is vital for television journalism, modern design trends, which call for photos and graphics to enhance news reading, have become essential for print media as well.

National interest plays a significant role in the news selection process. According to Skurnik (1981), “newspapers select information in accordance with their nation’s interests ... [and in the selection process] concentrate on the more salient aspects of foreign developments, usually those which affect them most” (p 101). In the news gathering, writing and editing processes, editorial decisions such as news selection, priority and placement are made by reporters and editors, whose personal characteristics and political orientation also affect the media routines (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

Where newspapers have to depend completely on a few news agencies for world news, the general direction of coverage can be changed by developing the items in-house and using alternative sources. During Iraq War II, some newspapers in South Asia developed war-related news stories, with local perspectives (Maslog et al., 2006). According to Skurnik (1981), who studied the dependence of African newspapers on wire services in the 1980s, many African journalists “supplement western wire service copy with other sources, such as foreign radio broadcast and African newspapers and magazines they subscribe to” (p 100).

Even if newspapers depend heavily on foreign news agencies, their direction of coverage of global events can be tilted in favour of the dominant cultural and political discourses in respective countries. The gatekeepers can employ several methods in the news selection and processing to orient coverage according to the editorial standing of the newspapers. However such systematic selection, based on certain values, might create a bias and weaken professional values such as objectivity and fairness. A study of newspapers in Bangladesh showed that in an effort to harmonise coverage of the Iraq War with public opinion, newspaper editors employed a news selection process where content unfavourable to the audiences was edited or omitted, while highlighting content that reflected public and audience sentiments was highlighted (Zaman, 2004). War coverage in the Bangladesh newspapers was biased against the US and UK through “deliberate omission and commission of information”, so that items favouring Iraq and



Saddam Hussein were given prominence, and reports “supporting the West were accompanied by adverse comments” (Zaman, 2004, p 92). More than 44 percent of the items were against the US and UK, only 8.3 percent were against Iraq.

A study of the print media of four countries in South Asia shows that Western news agencies – Reuters, AFP and AP – were the dominant news sources (Zaman, 2004). These news agencies accounted for 39.6 percent of items published in the 11 newspapers sampled for the research from Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka. Sources credited to the staff writers were 14 percent, followed by local writers (12.6%), broadcasters and the internet (9.1%), and foreign newspapers and overseas writers (8.6%).

Although, Reuters, AFP and AP were dominant news sources in the South Asian media, through the news selection and framing, consistent with cultural and political values, the war coverage was unfavourable to US and UK. In framing the war news, media practitioners highlight and give more salience to certain aspects such as military strategies, anti-war protests, civilian casualties or environmental problems, to name a few themes.

Tankard (2001) proposes frame study through the identification and content analysis of 11 framing mechanisms which include headlines, subheads, photos, leads, selection of sources and quotes, logos, pull quotes, concluding statements or paragraphs of articles.

Catch phrases, words and symbols can be analysed to measure framing. To analyse the humanitarian and military frames in the coverage of the Operation Restore Hope in Somalia by *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, Bantimaroudis and Ban (2001) did a quantitative content analysis of the use of the terms ‘peacekeepers’ and ‘humanitarian’ to measure the humanitarian frame, while ‘military’ and ‘intervention’ were used to find the military frame.

## 5.4 News framing

One of the editorial processes that has a far reaching impact on media consumers is news framing, where a chosen news angle is highlighted through news text, visuals and presentation. In this process, editors may set a certain news agenda for the public, while equally important issues may be marginalised in the process of giving salience to the topic the journalists and editors, through their news judgements and cultural framework, may consider more relevant. Framing is relevant in all stages of news production, from news gathering, news selection and news processing and packaging, and is shaped by individual schemas of media practitioners, journalistic routines and socio-political issues (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). From the multistage perspective, framing involves two stages – the ‘general level of framing’ where news selection is made and the ‘second level of framing’ which is the final stage of news production when the news item is processed, packaged and presented for the audiences (Ruigrok, Ridder, & Scholten, 2005).

In the process of making particular news events more salient, using editorial and design techniques journalists “reinforce common ways of interpreting developments” (Norris, Kern, & Just, 2003, p 11). According to Norris et al (2003) “The essence of framing is selection to prioritize some facts, images, or developments over others, thereby unconsciously promoting one particular interpretation of events” (p 11). While for Entman (1991) to frame means “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text” (p 52). Gamson and Modigliani (Cited in Carragee & Roef, 2004) defined frame as a “central organizing idea ... for making sense of relevant events” (p 214). Tankard et al (Cited in Tankard, 2001) defined the news media frame as “a central organizing idea of news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration” (p 100-101).

Although the news sources or the primary definers control the ‘news capital’, how a news story is produced by media professionals is more likely to be influenced by the ethical and journalistic guidelines which have to be followed in the mainstream news media. The news media in the process of news reproduction translate the news

resources from the primary definers into ‘public idioms’ thereby “translating a news item into a variant of the public language” that makes it more comprehensible to the audiences (Hall et al., 1978, p 61). According to Hall et al, the various editorial processes help to produce the statements of news sources according to the editorial policies of the newspapers:

Not every statement by a relevant primary definer in respect to a particular topic is likely to be reproduced in the media; nor is every part of each statement. By exercising selectivity the media begin to impose their own criteria on the structured ‘raw materials – and thus actively appropriate and transform them (Hall et al., 1978, p 60).

Hall et al’s argument is less relevant in Iraq War II coverage in New Zealand newspapers, as the local news media depended on third parties for content, who made the very first choices of news selection and thus what aspects to highlight and which angle to lead. The few framing choices available to New Zealand editors were re-writing headlines, priority and placement on the page, including visuals (photos, graphics) to accompany the stories and the writing of photo captions.

In coverage of military conflicts, where there are several sides to the conflict, contesting interpretations and frames can also emerge. The invasion of Iraq in March 2003 by a US-led Coalition force was seen differently in the US than in other countries, and issues made salient differed considerably. Norris et al (2003) note that “there can be dissonance between the predominant frames offered by leaders and the news media on different sides of any political conflict” (p 11). Reviewing how contesting and conflicting frames emerge in war coverage, a group of researchers noted that “the media can select to focus on the destruction of war as opposed to freedom from tyranny, can frame the event as an invasion versus attack, can emphasize the victims versus invaders, and can highlight a positive versus negative attitude toward the war” (Dimitrova et al., 2005, p 26). In Iraq War II coverage in New Zealand, the three leading metropolitan newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – used positive and negative dichotomy in labelling the initial phase of the conflict. For example, the logos used in the war coverage included “attack on Iraq”, “war on Iraq” and “war in Iraq”.

Framing is not static but rather a dynamic process, and with a changing socio-political environment and the media perception of a news event, and thus the ‘news frame’, may change (Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Hallin, 1986). In the coverage of the Vietnam War, the general direction of the war frames changed from a pro-administration position to a more adversarial position after the 1968 Tet offensive (Hallin, 1986). The frame changing can also be attributed to the indexing hypothesis, where political divisions between government and opposition emerge on a given issue and news media become more critical observers. In the indexing hypothesis, which is discussed in Chapter 6, the news media “‘index’ the range of voices and view points in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic” (Bennett, 1990, p 106).

According to Chyi and McCombs (2004), “During any news event’s life span, the news media often reframe the event by emphasizing different attributes of the event – consciously or unconsciously – in order to keep the story alive and fresh” (p 22). In the coverage of the crisis in Somalia in 1992, *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* used the humanitarian frame, but this declined throughout 1993 and 1994. This may have been due to the operational and tactical changes in the intervention (Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001).

In the coverage of global news events, newspapers seek to relate to their local audiences and often seek to localise through a process of ‘domestication’ where possible. According to Jinqun et al (2002), “the conversion of a global agenda into a home agenda ... starts out with selective framing of issues or topics through the lens of professional norms, national interest, cultural repertoire, and market dynamics” (p 17). However not every news event covered in the local or national media is localised, as organisational and cultural factors limit a ‘home dimension’. Moreover, the globalisation of news has exposed people to news events far away both geographically and culturally and the need for localisation is not always necessary.

### 5.3.1 *Episodic and thematic framing*

Coverage of news events can be divided into two categories – event oriented and context oriented. Straight news is often event oriented as it answers the traditional ‘W’ elements in a news story, often leading with ‘what’, ‘when’ and ‘where’, while the ‘why’ element that would give context to the event is usually examined separately in features and news analyses. International news events are often covered through event-oriented frames and especially in the coverage of global conflicts. According to Iyengar (1991), while event-oriented coverage of terrorism is high, an equal emphasis is not placed on contextualising the events through examination of the “historical, economic, or social antecedents” ( p 15) that underpin them. Studies have shown that in the coverage of Iraq War II, episodic framing was the rule and context-oriented coverage the exception (Lee, 2004; Pfau et al., 2004). Lee examined the war coverage in three daily newspapers – *The New York Times*, *Arab News* and *Middle East Times* – and found that more than 88 percent of the sampled items (n=502) were episodic. Analysis by Pfau et al of four major US daily newspapers also showed that coverage was event oriented. Iyengar and Simon (1994), who studied the television news coverage of Iraq War I, concluded that episodic framing dominated the war discourse. In war coverage, where events unfold, episodic frames are more common and as such, during the invasion phase of Iraq War II, episodic frames dominated (Dimitrova et al., 2005).

According to Iyengar (1991) episodic framing personalises the issues while thematic framing examines the “collective or general evidence” for the news events. More “in-depth, interpretive analysis” (Iyengar, 1991) is available when news events are thematically framed. For military conflicts such as Iraq War II, which raised questions about the legitimacy and moral basis of the US-led invasion, thematic framing is important so that the war could be contextualised.

After a comprehensive study of the news framing by television, Iyengar (1991) concluded that framing impacts how media consumers “assign responsibility for political issues” and “episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions or responsibility, while thematic framing has the opposite effect” (p 15-16).

Clearly, thematic coverage of news events is more complex than episodic coverage, as contextualisation requires research and analysis. Organisational and journalistic routines would also impact on how a media organisation frames events. With tight deadlines to consider and competition from others, news organisations would find the episodic frame the most convenient. According to Iyengar and McGrady (2005), “Market pressures on news organisations have created a bias in favour of episodic framing. The constant pursuit of high ratings means that the news must capture and hold the attention of the audience” (p 234). As episodic coverage focuses on concrete incidents and events, the visual appeal of such framing is high and thus “captures people’s attention” as such stories are also more “emotionally involving” (Baum, 2003, p 235) than the opinionated analyses. Norris (1997) argues that “the use of episodic rather than thematic frames may lead to less effective public deliberation about the serious policy problems facing the United States”(p 13).

## 4.2 Discussion

It is clear from this chapter why military conflicts such as Iraq War II are given media attention, not only in New Zealand but in the news media in most countries of the world. While the involvement of elite nations, the tension and drama of the conflict has high and uniform news values among the global media, coverage around the world has differed significantly. Both internal and external factors have shaped how different media outlets in different socio-political settings have oriented the coverage.

Media scholars have identified several news values, many of which focus on similar concepts (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001; McGregor, 2002; Galtung & Ruge, 1965). For a news story to be selected by reporters or editors one or more requirements of the news values has to be met. The attributes and importance of the news values vary depending on the item type, origin and in which medium or channel the item is published. However certain items of very high news values may have a universal dimension in the news values attributes.

News values may vary depending on the cultural and ideological context in which it is applied. As Golding and Elliott (1979) have argued, news values are used in the selection of the final product and as a guideline for presentation of the items for public consumption. In the gatekeeping process, at all levels of news gathering, writing, editing and publication, journalists apply the news values framework, and make the news judgement, which gives them “the ability to evaluate stories based on agreed-on news values, which provide yardsticks of newsworthiness and constitute audience-oriented routines” (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p 90).

In the context of war coverage in New Zealand, the final news product served to newspaper readers has passed through several complex gates, some managed by external media agents. At the very formation of the news resources, news agency journalists (who have a global audience) select and cover news events based on their organisational guidelines and news values. Finally the agency product reaches not only the news media in New Zealand, but the same copy is part of the global newsfeed that is received in every newsroom in the world. In the case of US and UK elite newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Independent*, when writing stories their journalists apply their internal news values framework which is strongly influenced by their immediate readership and audience (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). These journalists would not consider that their readership is in New Zealand. This is not a very ideal situation for editors in New Zealand. Given the constraints of assigning staff to cover a conflict in a distant country, New Zealand editors use news agency and news service copy to construct the coverage of international events. With the availability of sources, editors are able to frame the coverage in the cultural and ideological context of the audiences. Perhaps when editors used ‘pro’ and ‘anti’ articles (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005) in the coverage of Iraq War II in New Zealand newspapers, they were trying to make the war frames relevant to their audiences.

In the news production processes, journalists and editors subject news copy at first to a general level of framing, then to a second level of framing (Ruigrok et al., 2005), thus giving salience to the news through editorial and design decisions. News events are framed differently by different media (Hall et al., 1978; Entman, 1991 ; Norris et al., 2003), and are shaped by organisational, political and market forces. Often contesting

and conflicting frames emerge in war coverage. How Iraq War II is covered in the US may be different from its coverage in the Middle East, Iraq or New Zealand, as cultural and political factors influence how media professionals give salience to news issues and thus frame the news.



## CHAPTER 6: MEDIA-SOURCE INTERACTIONS

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### 6.1 Introduction

In the analysis of military conflict coverage, where sources attempt to heavily manage news and thus influence public opinion, it is important to explore the source-media interactions. As discussed in Chapter 2, military and government sources embark on public diplomacy or propaganda campaigns and through media management strategies attempt perception engineering in order to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the national and global public. This is important for the strategic success of military engagements. In the case of Iraq War II, the US-led Coalition forces implemented media management strategies in which they attempted to influence the news agenda through the source-media interactions.

Thus, this chapter aims to look closely at source-media relations, how they interact and why they at times exist in a ‘symbiotic’ relationship. Sources provide the raw material for news, and thus news media maintain close relationship with established sources such as government and corporate sectors. For the institutions the media are integral to the political communication process and they therefore have vested interests in supplying the news raw material, which may be information about a planned space project, military operation or aid to a Third World country. The media, as commercial enterprises, need to fill the news hole, and in competition with others seek to get the scoop and provide exclusive coverage. Herman & Chomsky (1988) have argued in their

proposition of the propaganda model that there exists a “symbiotic relationship” between the elite sources and the news media. When such relations exist, the sources are able to manipulate and set the media coverage perspectives through news management and propaganda.

In the war on Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States set the media agenda through public relations strategies and media management. As Schechter (2003) observed, “government sources increasingly set the agenda [in the battlefields] and help frame the issues from which the news is constructed” (p xxvi). While ideally journalism seeks to balance news items through different sourcing and perspectives, not always does the normative function become a reality. Especially during military conflicts, when faced with propaganda, censorship and limited access to news events and news actors, journalistic ‘objectivity’ is compromised.

Media-state relations can also be analysed from a hegemonic perspective which encompasses culture, power, ideology and the ‘index’ model. According to Bennett (1990), who proposed the ‘indexing hypothesis’, “mass media professionals ... tend to ‘index’ the range of voices and view points in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic” (p 106). However, consensus on topics changes over time, as shown very clearly in the case of the Vietnam War and Iraq War II, when at the beginning of these conflicts both the opposition and the public supported the US government’s policies.

The hegemonic control of the media is rather through the cultural and ideological constructs of the state and the power elite. The state is able to exert hegemonic control through ideological and cultural constructs to influence public consent when media practitioners index the political discourse. The so-called ‘war on terror’ of US President George Bush is an ideological construct to exert hegemonic control over the people, change their perceptions and thus garner support for executing foreign policy, most notably the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq two years later.

## 6.2 Source-media relations

Without sources news would be a scarce commodity and without journalists and media institutions to gather and process news, news sources and actors would have limited avenues for political communication. Both have institutional and organisational reasons to communicate, inform or sell news and information. As Williams (2003) noted, “sources are central to the news production” and it is important to establish contacts with sources “for a reliable flow of newsworthy information” (p 115). During military conflicts the news media, the government and the military work together closely and the former relies on the official sources for news raw material in the process of war reporting.

In defining sources, Shoemaker and Reese (1991) describe them as “external suppliers of raw materials”, while for Gans (1980) sources are “the actors whom journalists observe or interview, including interviewees who appear on the air or who are quoted in articles... and those who only supply background information or story suggestions” (p 80).

News media, as sellers of news and information, are always competing for exclusivity of news, and thus heavily depend on news sources. And as sources realise the media dependency on them, they are often able to dictate and manipulate the way news is covered and reported. The dependence of journalists upon sources also affects how a story is covered (Palmer, 2000). Institutional sources need to use the media to influence public opinion, promote views and manufacture consent. In this regard they “employ news managers and ‘spin doctors’ whose task is to maximise the favourable presentation of policy and action and minimise any negative aspect” (McQuail, 2005, p 325). While the sources aim at getting maximum positive exposure in the media, access to media depends on several factors. According to McQuail (2005), source accessibility to news media depends on the “Efficient supply of suitable material; power and influence of source; good public relations and news management; dependency of media on limited source; mutual self-interest in news coverage” (p 326).

The dominance of military and government sources in war journalism discourse is due to their authority and influence and the dependency of media on the few official sources in the reporting of conflicts.

Both the source and media benefit from one another, and the symbiotic relationship is always maintained in the journalistic routines of news gathering and processing. Describing source-journalist relations as a dance, Gans (1980) said that “sources seek access to journalists, and journalists seek access to sources. Although it takes two to tango, either sources or journalists can lead, but more often than not, sources do the leading” (p 116). Taking a similar view, Shoemaker (1987) argued that “news comes to journalists primarily from institutional sources who exert pressure of various kinds on journalists and the news process” ( p 14). The newsgathering and reporting routines serve to frame within the dominant interpretations and thus give leverage and preference to ‘primary definers’ or institutional sources who ‘cue in’ the media to specific news topics (Hall et al., 1978, p 57). Two fundamental aspects of news production – deadline pressures and professional values such as impartiality and objectivity – create a structured media-source environment where “preference given in the media to the opinions of the powerful is that these ‘spokesmen’ become what we call the *primary definers* of topics” (Hall et al., 1978, p 58).

Herman & Chomsky (1988), in discussing the source-media relationship pointed out that the “media need a steady, reliable flow of the raw material of news” thus drawing both institutions into “a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interest” (p 22). Such a relationship may compromise the key journalistic principles of truth, objectivity and fairness unless media practitioners stay loyal to their professional values.

According to Goldman (1999), “sources also exploit this dependency relationship by ‘managing’ the media, by suggesting the sort of ‘spin’ on events that favours their own interests though it may be at odds with the truth” (p 186). So heavily do journalists depend on some sources for information that as Sigal observes:

Reporters will go a long way for authoritative sources, not only more readily accepting their versions of reality, but also acceding to the rules of disclosure they may set, embargoing stories until a release time they find convenient, cloaking their identities, at times even killing a story outright at their request. Tacit alliances form between reporters and officials on the beat, as each uses the other to advantage within his organisation. Officials exploit reporters' need for news to deliver messages to target audiences in an effort to muster and maintain support, both in and out of government ... (Sigal, 1986, p 22)

A key factor that influences journalists to use government and military sources is “the convention of authoritative sources”, and they seek to establish and inform their news gathering routines around the government or military (Sigal, 1986). Government and institutional sources, according to Hall et al (1978), are placed at the apex of a “hierarchy of credibility” which gives them the advantage over other or “less credible” sources.

In the reporting of the wars in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), Western journalists constructed coverage using “Western political and military sources, mainly about Western military personnel, strategies, successes, and, less often, backed with comments from (often vetted) Western military ‘experts’” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 29-30). This dependence on Western official sources illustrates a Western-centric approach according to which the Afghanistan or Iraqi sources were seen as ‘unreliable’, ‘censored’, or ‘unverifiable’. This biased Western position is “blind to media dependence on government or military sources of their own side for their most regular, professionally scripted, and above all *safe* information, disinformation or lies” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 30). The coverage of the invasion phase of Iraq War II in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times* showed that the latter relied more on official sources (Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2005).

According to research into Iraq War II coverage by the Danish media in March and April 2003, there was heavy dependence on British, US and Danish military sources, and the focus was on war strategy, weapons and battlefield developments rather than the humanitarian issues of the conflict. Stig Hjarvard, one of the authors of the research, noted that “The dependence on military sources was surprising. Danish media could have found more independent sources in their description ... The media coverage of the political debates between opponents and supporters of the war was balanced. But after

the invasion, it changed course, focusing on the armed intervention and relegating debate on the justification of the war and the reasons for the war to the back burner” (“Report accuses Danish media of bias in Iraq war coverage,” 2004).

Knight (1982) contends that in the selection of news sources, media practitioners take a “double-edge filtering” approach where “access to news media is structured differently in favour of the powerful and bureaucratically organized” while at the same time the news media approach “powerful and bureaucratic sources of news more actively and persistently than other sources” (p 20).

Becker’s model of the hierarchy of credibility places official sources as the most authoritative and suggests that “any tale told by those at the top intrinsically deserves to be regarded as the most credible account . . . Thus, credibility and the right to be heard are differentially distributed through the ranks of the system” (Cited in Atton & Wickenden, 2005, p 348). Official sources, from within the government, command more power than other elite actors and thus dominate the news agenda with their ability to use state and government instruments in the conduct of state affairs. In the post 9/11 world, the US government has been able to manufacture consent, and as ‘primary definers’, in the construction of the news events, “preference is given to the opinions of those in authority” (Williams, 2003, p 115).

During the initial phase of Iraq War II, the Coalition Media Centre in Doha, from where senior military and government officials gave press briefings, was an important and authoritative news beat. The news routines resulting from media management through the Coalition Media Centre and the practice of embedding influenced the journalists’ use of official sources. Given the saturation of official information made available by military and government officials, coverage emerging from these media centres was likely to be oriented towards the US and Coalition.

From a cultural structural perspective, media practitioners are drawn to government and institutional sources as “such sources are in a position of power, draw legitimate support from the public, and are expected to provide expert knowledge” (Davis, 2003, p 34).

The extent of official source use in the news media was analysed by Sigal (Cited in Bennett, 1988) in a study of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* – two liberal and leading newspapers in the US that are said to be independent and often critical of the US government. Both have legacies of reporting major issues and exposing the government, notably the Watergate coverage (*The Washington Post*) and publication of the Pentagon Papers (*The New York Times*). Sigal found that government sources were the main sources in nearly 47 percent of the items. And foreign news also reflected a similar direction with 27.5 percent (Sigal cited in Bennett, 1988).

Sigal (1986) noted that certain sources were able to dominate news because of the social location of journalists or routines. The study shows that as a result of reporters' social location, news gathering routines, and journalistic conventions, nearly half of the sources of all national and foreign news on page one of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* were US government officials (Sigal, 1986). Commenting on the extensive use of official sources in the two newspapers, Bennett (1988) concluded that “Even the best journalism in the land is extremely dependent on the political messages of a small spectrum of ‘official sources’” (p 96).

In military conflict reporting, relying on only official sources while neglecting or limiting alternative sources results in biased reporting. Ideally, journalists should verify information from independent sources. In Sweden, journalism tradition strongly calls for balancing sources and it is “considered especially important in times of crises, wars, or other instances in which the news might otherwise be biased toward one side or the other in a conflict” (Nord & Strömbäck, 2003, p 61).

While verification of claims by sources is an important professional value in journalism, there have been cases during Iraq War II when some media organisations have treated claims made by military officials as facts. This attitude towards official sources has led “prominent American journalists into embarrassing errors in their coverage of the US invasion of Iraq, particularly in relation to claims that proof had been found that Iraq possesses banned weapons” (*Lack of Skepticism Leads to Poor Reporting on Iraq Weapons Claims*, 2003). In one incident Fox News Channel and *Philadelphia Daily News* on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003 described an alleged discovery of chemical weapons in Najaf

as “biggest find of the Iraq war”, which a day later turned out to be false. When news leads and leaks originate from government and official sources, journalists tend to accept the information as authoritative and true. In crises where government and military have opportunities to make gains through disinformation, the news media are likely to be channels for propaganda as journalists do not always verify news information that originates from officials (Fishman, 1980).

As discussed in Chapter 2 the news management strategies of the US in Iraq, during the invasion phase, were aimed at gaining more positive coverage for them, while disinformation campaigns were conducted to discredit the enemy (Iraq). The propaganda campaigns were conducted through different media including military and government officials providing an ‘information subsidy’ to news media at the official news briefings at the Coalition Media Center in Doha.

A study of media coverage in Sweden of the 9/11 attacks against the US, and the US attacks in Afghanistan, showed that elite US and Swedish sources were frequently used, while Afghani elite sources were used less. In the coverage of the US attacks in Afghanistan, 35 percent of the news articles were derived from US elite sources, namely military and government officials (Nord & Strömbäck, 2003). And in news features the figure was 46 percent. In the coverage of the 9/11 attacks US elite sources accounted for 40 percent of the news articles and 42 percent of the news features. Thus the heavy reliance on elite US sources “indicates that there was a bias in the media coverage of these two events, which ultimately favoured the American side of the conflict” (Nord & Strömbäck, 2003, p 63).

Journalistic routines of news gathering and processing can be analysed within the context of media sociology, and as Manning (2001) has noted, in the social construction of events journalists work with each other and sources. Journalists have very close working and informal relations with government officials and, power elites as this ensures raw material that can be churned out to develop news stories. Journalists’ association with and use of these sources in the news process might, however, be affected by several factors. In the selection of sources, journalists are involved in



journalistic routines and media practices, interacting with a unique political, economic and societal culture (Shin & Cameron, 2003).

Even in international news coverage, the news makers are government officials with “the activities of ordinary citizens – particularly those who do not act in exceptional ways – are not news in any part of the world” (Stevenson & Cole, 1984, p 56).

With the increase in public relations and media management, journalists’ dependency on PR ‘information subsidies’ has grown. According to Davis (2003), this is an indication of the powerful impact of public relations on the media and “the traditional hierarchies of media-source relations are being altered significantly in the new PR-saturated media environment” (p 27). Resource-rich institutions are able to saturate the news space and set the media agenda.

With dependency on official sources alternative perspectives are limited and non-elite viewpoints are excluded from the mainstream news discourse (Stech, 1996). Elite source domination occurs mainly within the mainstream news media while in general alternative media use more non-elite sources. And the reason for using non-elite sources may be to give a forum for “those marginalised by the mainstream media” (Atton & Wickenden, 2005, p 349). Research by Atton and Wickenden on source use in the British alternative publication *SchNEWS* shows that in contrast to elite source domination in mainstream news media, the alternative press give “ordinary people” privileged media access. Their study shows that *SchNEWS* used protesters and activists, who represented “a counter-elite that dominates an alternative hierarchy of sources” (Atton & Wickenden, 2005, p 357). As the metropolitan newspapers in New Zealand rely completely on mainstream news sources, the opportunities for alternative voices during the Iraq conflict is were limited if not non-existent. The ‘Big Three’ news agencies and elite US and UK newspapers have been the main content providers, who in turn relied on dominant official sources in their war coverage.

When institutional sources are able to manage and control the flow of information in their favour they are able to set the public agenda, while the less influential unofficial sources have fewer options and opportunities to influence the public through the news

media. The consequence of giving preference to official sources is that the discussion of diverse issues is limited and thus the ideals of the free press as a ‘marketplace of ideas’ are far from reality. The market is dominated by official products, and choices given to consumers are limited, thus narrowing the perspectives on societal issues. Bennett (1988) has argued that when information is controlled by government officials, it must “limit the range of problems, solutions, values and ideas” (p 96) that the public has in hand to discuss and debate.

Looking at the media-government relationship, Thrall argued that there are three competing theories of media-state relations – the ‘watchdog’, the ‘lapdog’, and the ‘attack dog’. According to Thrall (2000), the lapdog theory is more appropriate to describe the media-government relationship as “journalists rely so heavily on official and elite sources for information and opinion that the press does not operate as a watchdog, but instead serves to promote the interests and policy positions of those in power at the expense of others” (p 250).

### *6.2.1 Military sources and the media*

During military conflicts from Bosnia to Iraq, military and government officials have taken every possible measure to win the information war, and have fed information to the news media to set national and global news agenda that has favoured the US and Western alliance. Military and government sources try to gain access to the “news encoding process” (Manning, 2001) to garner favourable public opinion for military and political actions.

From the frontlines, official sources control the way information is channelled, through media management. According to Schechter (2003) in the battlefields “government sources increasingly set the agenda and help frame the issues from which the news is constructed” (p xxvi) by journalists, who may be embedded or have access to carefully prepared press releases and media conferences. And the belief that “deviation from official sources might compromise security, aid and comfort the enemy, divulge

military secrets” (Stech, 1996, p 242) also helps to strengthen and in a way legitimise the extensive use of military and government officials during military conflicts.

The news media’s dependence on the military for news raw material on military operations and strategies, and their often unquestioning acceptance of claims as facts have given rise to the opinion that wars are conducted by information strategists. In the reporting to US-led wars, media dependency has undermined the objective reporting of events and minimised the room for context and issue-oriented reporting. The relationship between the military and the news media can be characterised as one of interdependency (Allen, 1996). According to Reese and Buckalew (1995), who studied news framing of Iraq War I, in a tripartite relationship “the news media and corporate needs work together to further a culture supportive of military adventures such as those in the Gulf” (1995).

Another key issue that arises in war journalism is its specialised nature. Unlike regular beat reporting or general assignment work, coverage of military conflicts such as the war in Iraq is more complex and thus reporters with a background in military and defence aspects will be in a more advantageous position. When at press conferences given by military officials, for example, they will be able to raise technical questions and be proactive rather than reactive. When journalists are not well aware of the issues of international conflicts, the sources are also likely to dominate the news agenda of the journalists. As Taylor (2003) notes “Most of the 1,500 journalists in Riyadh were not specialised defence or foreign correspondents; this provided the military with another opportunity to dominate the news agenda with their own” (p 76).

A study of coverage of US-China relations in *The New York Times* and *People’s Daily* by Xigen Li showed that government officials were used as major sources in both publications. In *The New York Times*, 57 percent of the sources cited were US officials, thus Li concluded that his research “provided support to source dependency in international news coverage” (Li, 2004).

Another study of how AP, Agence France Presse, Xinhua, ITAR-TASS and Inter Press Service used official sources in the run-up to Iraq War II, showed that US officials

dominated the news. Of these AP, Inter Press Service and Xinhua most frequently cited US officials. AFP cited US officials more than any other nation's source, but if all Western European officials were considered together, then the AFP cited a slightly higher percentage of Western European officials, 21 percent, than US officials, 19 percent. Inter Press Service cited Asian officials almost as often as it cited US officials. More than 70 percent of ITAR-TASS' sources were Russian officials, and 24 percent were US officials (Horvit, 2004).

There are several factors that cause news media to rely on official sources, which include news gathering routines, organisational factors, media management and audience and advertiser expectations. Especially in breaking news events, when factors such as copy deadline and verification impose pressure on the journalist, source diversity and accuracy becomes limited. Noting these journalistic hurdles, Offley (2002) said that a "combination of military secrecy, dispersed forces and physical danger in Afghanistan has forced American military reporters to rely almost exclusively on their sources within the US military and intelligence community for coverage of the war, and as a result, the possibility of inaccuracy and error has increased" (p 10).

In the US, government-media relations have in recent times increased, and within the wider military conflicts involving the US, jingoism has created a 'Post Vietnam Patriotic Syndrome' that needs to be reviewed. Schechter (2003) believes that "it is not too late for the US media establishment to get the message, distance themselves from 'official sources' and 'coded' propaganda, and seek out more diverse sources of information" (p 129).

Jingoism was so strong in the media after 9/11 that some senior journalists were even seen crying on TV, which undermined journalistic values. Referring to CBS anchor Dan Rather, O'Brien (2002), who covered the Vietnam War, noted that "He's not supposed to do his job differently because his country is at war. While the rest of his countrymen may feel a desire to proclaim allegiance to the nation and the government, he's supposed to more stringently criticize and question. Putting political decision-makers' feet to the fire, that's what he's supposed to do" (p 14).

### 6.3 Media hegemony

When countries are at war, with foreign nations or groups, and there is a demand from the public to ‘rally around the flag’, as was the case in the US during the initial phase of Iraq War II, the hegemonic role of the news media becomes very visible. In the case of Iraq War II, in the US the mainstream news media supported the established power system and projected the arguments of the Bush administration while excluding or minimising the oppositional view points (Berman, 2003). The news media framed the US-led invasion of Iraq as a ‘war on terror’ and did not fully question the legitimacy of waging a war on Iraq, given the unsubstantiated evidence of an Iraq and Al Qaeda link and or WMD programmes.

According to the media hegemony theory, which is rooted in Marxist ideology, the mass media work in the interests of the ruling class in society. The globalisation of media through media concentration and ownership supports the hegemony theory, which was formulated by Italian socialist Antonio Gramsci, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concept of hegemony or domination, as articulated by Gramsci encompasses culture, power and ideology, and how these components are invoked and executed depends on the type of political and cultural system (Croteau & Hoynes, 2003; Devereux, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 3, it was neoliberalism that globalised the media systems through transnational corporations and other institutional instruments. Thus globalisation facilitates the developed nations, where the ownership of global media systems is based, to create consensus and consent.

According to Devereux (2003), “Hegemony ... may be achieved through the use or threat of force or more typically through the creation of consensus. Domination of the latter kind in capitalist society comes about by means of the powerful being able to fashion a consensus between those in power and those with little or no power” (p 100-102).

In an authoritarian country such as Iraq under Saddam Hussein, force may be the main method of social control, while in liberal democracies such as the United States and

Britain, the ruling authorities may instead use cultural and ideological constructs to create consent and exert power.

Public (1997) believed that “the news media help perpetuate a structure of dominance and the status quo”, which is an argument that reflects how the media content in the US is ‘manufactured’ to the needs and wants of the corporate (capitalist) sector. Indeed, with such media concentration in the developed countries, the dominant capitalist ideologies are sure to be reflected in the mainstream news discourse. Looking at the hegemonic approach, Altheide (1984, p 476) proposed three assumptions about the role the media play in the construction of events in conformity with ‘ruling class’ ideology:

- 1) The socialization and ideology of journalists (Journalists promote an ideological hegemony using cultural categories and symbols)
- 2) The tendency of journalists and their reports to support and perpetuate the status quo (Journalists tend to cover topics and present news reports that are supportive of the status quo, as in the index model)
- 3) The negative character of foreign news coverage, especially that of Third World countries (Taking a pro-American approach in their coverage, journalists tend to focus on negativity such as crime and political problems in Third World countries)

In democratic societies, the news media are not under direct control of the state or government, and function under the framework of a libertarian model of free press and free market economy. The hegemonic control of the media and the public is rather through cultural and ideological constructs of the state and the power elite. Within this theoretical framework, the ‘war on terror’, ‘Iraq and WMD’, ‘Iraq and Al Qaeda’, ‘Iran and nuclear weapons’ could be seen as cultural and ideological constructs.

Soon after the plans were laid to invade Afghanistan in 2001, US President George Bush tagged the mission a ‘crusade’, after which it became a ‘War for Civilization’, followed by a ‘War against Global Terror’, then a ‘Titanic War on Terror’ (Ahmed, 2003). As such, in the aftermath of 9/11 the US government used different constructs and appeals to ‘manufacture consent’.

Using such constructs the state can engineer opinion and manufacture consent instead of using overt ‘force’ on the news media. According to Gill and Law (1989), Gramsci’s concept of “a hegemonic order was one where consent, rather than coercion, primarily characterised the relations between classes and between the state and civil society” (p 476). Elaborating on how hegemony operates in democratic societies, where the press is technically detached from the state and function as the ‘Fourth Estate’, Croteau and Hoynes say:

In liberal democratic societies such as the United States, force is not the primary means by which the powerful rule. ... Gramsci’s work suggests that power is wielded in a different arena – that of culture, in the realm of everyday life – where people essentially agree to current social arrangements.

Consent, then, is the key to understanding Gramsci’s use of hegemony, which is exercised through a kind of ‘cultural leadership’. Consent is something that is won; ruling groups in a society actively seek to have their worldview accepted by all members of the society as the universal way of thinking (Croteau & Hoynes, 2002, p 166).

In liberal democracies power is amalgamated through a process of consent rather than force. In the manufacture of consent, governments embark on public relations strategies and direct propaganda, both of which were very well utilised following the 9/11 attacks on the US. Ideological and cultural constructs were used by the US to get public consent on the war against Afghanistan and later Iraq. The extensive propaganda and public relations strategies used to underpin the ‘war on terror’ construct turned the US public opinion towards the belief that Iraq played a role in 9/11. A CNN/USAToday/Gallup poll found in March 2003 that 88 percent believed that “Saddam Hussein is involved in supporting terrorist groups that have plans to attack the United States” and 51 percent also agreed that “Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the September 11th terrorist attacks” (Fried, 2005, p 126).

## 6.4 Indexing hypothesis

After the 9/11 attacks on the US, the government and political elites were able to reach consensus on the need for punitive military actions against threats to US security, and

thus to mobilise public opinion on the larger ‘war on terror’. In times of crisis such as post 9/11, when extensive support from political opposition and the public was given to the government, “news media will tend to support government policy” (Cottle, 2003, p 14) and use sources that are congruent with the overall government policies. US war coverage, from Afghanistan to Iraq, has reflected the growing audience-centred direction and national interest. The news media have thus served the audience and national interests, but compromised the professional journalistic values that call for objectivity and fairness.

After a study of press coverage of the US policy in Central America, Bennett (1990) formulated a model on press-state relations showing that the news media take a conciliatory approach in supporting the government when the political elites and opposition appear to approve the government foreign policy. Bennett (1990), in his ‘indexing hypothesis’, argued that “mass media professionals ... tend to ‘index’ the range of voices and view points in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic” (p 106). After analysing coverage in *The New York Times* of US funding of the contra rebels in Nicaragua, Bennett concluded:

The overriding norm of contemporary journalism seems to involve compressing public opinion to fit into the range of debate between decisive institutional power blocs. In this ironic twist on the democratic ideal, modern public opinion can be thought of as an ‘index’ constructed from dominant institutional voices as recorded in the mass media (Bennett, 1990, p 25).

Other scholarly research (Hallin, 1994; Bennett & Paletz, 1994) on coverage of military conflicts such as the Vietnam War and Iraq War I have supported the index model of Bennett. And Mermin (1999), whose findings regarding media coverage of eight post-Vietnam US military interventions supported Bennett’s thesis, describes the hypothesis as follows:

If there is debate inside the American government over US policy, critical perspectives appear in the news. If government policy has bipartisan support in Washington, however, critical perspectives expressed outside the government are not reported (Mermin, 1999, p 5).



During the first four years of the Vietnam conflict there was bipartisan consensus about the need to pursue a foreign policy that called for containing communism, hence the press was not adversarial towards Kennedy and later Johnson, until the Tet Offensive in 1968 (Thrall, 2000).

In the run-up to Iraq War II, the mainstream news media in the US supported the Bush administration's policy towards Iraq, and few questioned the merits or de-merits of waging a war for which government justifications were weak. The extensive public relations and public diplomacy efforts by the US government have altered the US media attitude towards the Saddam Hussein regime, and garnered support for a pro-war stance (Fried, 2005). According to a EWP survey of the top 50 US daily newspapers, none were strongly 'antiwar'. Newspapers that leaned towards a military engagement with Iraq include include *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *New York Post*, and *Newsday* (Berman, 2003). Of the top 10 newspapers, only the *USA Today* and *The New York Times* expressed the view that the US government needs to be restrained.

The change in public attitude, political opposition and media discourse in favour of the US government is noted by Ravi, who observed that eventually there was unequivocal support for the war on Iraq from all quarters:

In the United States, elite opinion was divided a year before the war started, and well into the fall of 2002 and there was a vigorous public debate on the case for the war. *The New York Times*, too, opposed going to war at this stage. However, after the Congress passed a resolution authorizing the use of force and when it became clear that war was inevitable, the dissenting voices among the elite—the congressional leaders, in particular—fell silent and opposition to the war was virtually pushed to the margins. Yet *The New York Times* did not join the silenced elite but kept up its opposition to the war till it actually began. Only after the war began did it stop raising questions on the justification for the war" (Ravi, 2005, p 60).

Recent research on the coverage of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq showed that the sampled news media – *The Washington Post*, CBS Evening News and a sample of national newspapers – used a defensive reporting style in the coverage of Abu Ghraib (Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2006).

The framing of events at Abu Ghraib by the mainstream press followed the predictable pattern of indexing. ... At the height of attention to the Abu Ghraib story, when public opinion was in the formative stage, the mainstream media allowed the administration's "isolated abuse" frame to dominate the news and declined to offer the public a coherent alternative frame. ...

Even when provided with considerable photographic and documentary evidence and the critical statements of governmental and nongovernmental actors, the nation's leading media proved unable or unwilling to construct a coherent challenge to the administration's claims about its policies on torturing detainees. As it turned out in this case, the photos may have driven the story, but the White House communication staff ultimately wrote the captions (Bennett et al., 2006).

The news media, as key institutions in society, have to consider audience pressure, and public opinion and other domestic political factors when covering issues. According to McQuail (1994), "The media are by origin, practice and convention very much national institutions and respond to domestic political and social pressures and to the expectation of their audiences. They reflect, express and sometimes actively serve the 'national interest,' as determined by other, more powerful actors and institutions" (p 121).

Given that public opinion in New Zealand was not favourable towards a US-led unilateral military action against Iraq (Cone, 2003a; Roy Morgan Research Polls., 2003; Phipps, 2004), it is important to see how the three metropolitan newspapers in New Zealand covered the war.

## 6.5 Discussion

In the very first stages of news gathering and production, when journalists and sources interact, the latter attempt to influence the news agenda. As discussed in Chapter 2, in military conflict coverage official sources (government and military) attempt to influence the war journalism discourse in order to sway public opinion. Given the globalisation of media, the instantaneity of war coverage and the immediacy of impact on national and global publics, influencing the news agenda has become a top priority of official sources. Thus at the very first stage of news production, the primary definers attempt to influence the media through their interactions with journalists. Sources also use strategic communications and outright propaganda to influence the direction of

media content. Iraq War II has shown that military and government sources of the US and UK were successful in dominating media agenda.

While journalists and editors have choices in framing news stories, their quest for sources, or as Shoemaker and Reese (1991) call them, “external suppliers of raw materials”, influences the news agenda. When the media have few choices, and rely on certain sources such as government and military officials, these are able to affect the direction of the coverage. As Palmer (2000) argued, dependence of journalists upon sources affects how a story is covered. Thus, in Iraq War II, , through embedding and official news briefings at CENTCOM media centre, Coalition sources were able to set the media agenda for journalists.

As pointed out by Shoemaker (1987), most news originates from institutional sources and as ‘primary definers’ (Hall et al., 1978), these sources try to influence the direction of reporting. The close media-source relationship, described as “a symbiotic relationship” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p 22), leads to a state of dependency for the media. When there is a strong relationship, sources are able to capitalise on the situation and manage the media. A good example of such media dependency on sources can be seen in military conflicts such as Iraq War II, where US government and military officials have been able to manipulate information and orient the news coverage through public relations strategies.

Source-media interactions can also be seen through the hegemony and index models. In democratic societies, as in the US and UK, the authorities dominate the media discourse through ideological constructs to sway the media and thus public opinion. In this process, too, the institutional sources use public relations strategies to popularise ideological constructs – most notable among them in recent times have been the ‘war on terror’ and Iran and its nuclear threat. When authorities are able to dominate the media agenda, and thus silence or relegate alternative views, it leads to indexing.

The index hypothesis is based on the premise that the news media favours the government on foreign policy issues when political elites and opposition appear to reach a consensus on the government’s position. As discussed in previous chapters, during

major conflicts such as the Vietnam War and Iraq War II the media supported the government when the opposition and the authorities appeared to reach consensus on foreign policy. And when divisions emerge between the government and the opposition, the media also change direction. Similarly in military conflict coverage the changing dynamics of source-media interactions are also a reflection of the larger political debates and even public opinion.

However, in New Zealand, which has not in any way been involved in Iraq War II (at least in the invasion phase), the situation may be different. One important reason is that the war journalism discourse in the mainstream newspapers is manufactured by foreign sources. The newspapers' ability to make direct choices in the initial stages of news production – news gathering and processing – is limited. As discussed in chapter 5, news agencies and elite US and UK newspaper journalists use their own news values and framework for news production. Thus the newspaper audiences in New Zealand are in fact served with content shaped and moulded for a totally different audience based mainly in the US and UK. These factors are likely to have influenced how Iraq War II has been covered in the metropolitan press in New Zealand.

## CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHOD

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### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research questions central to this study and the research methods employed to address them. The study primarily focuses on the way the larger New Zealand newspapers reported Iraq War II, in terms of thematic coverage, news sources and direction. The reliance on news agencies and other content providers is also analysed, together with an exploration of the extent to which official sources dominate the war journalism discourse. While the main method of research is content analysis of the sampled newspaper content, qualitative interviews with newspaper editors were also used to determine the internal and organisational processes involved in the news production of New Zealand newspapers.

Given the aim of the research was to analyse the war journalism content in the metropolitan press, content analysis was deemed the most appropriate method to answer the research questions. Content analysis is a popular mass media research method as it “provides an efficient way to investigate the content of the media” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p 111).

As the primary research methodology adopted for this study is content analysis, a multistage sampling procedure was used, with (1) selection of the content sources or titles, (2) sampling frames and dates and (3) selection of content through identifying the

units of analysis and categories. The criteria and procedures employed in the selection of sources or newspapers are discussed later in the chapter.

## 7.2 Research questions

The following questions will be answered through content analysis, to assess the international news flows, the orientation of military conflict coverage and the extent of the media management.

- 1. How did the New Zealand metropolitan newspapers cover Iraq War II?**
- 2. To what extent did the New Zealand metropolitan newspapers depend on global news agencies, and other content providers, for the coverage of Iraq War II?**
- 3. To what extent did the US and Coalition dominate the news agenda?**

### **RQ1. How did the New Zealand metropolitan newspapers cover Iraq War II?**

In the coverage of military conflicts, the direction of the national media depends on whether the country is directly or indirectly involved in the war, as well as on foreign policy and public opinion. A comparative study of Iraq War II coverage in *The New York Times*, *Arab News* and *The Middle East Times* shows that the elite US newspaper emphasised US war efforts, used mainly US official sources and was opposed to Saddam Hussein's regime. On the other hand, the Arab newspapers in their coverage used more Arab sources and raised more antiwar voices (Lee, 2004). The main themes of coverage, emphasis and placement of stories were evaluated to see how *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* covered Iraq War II for local audiences. The major themes explored included the process of combat, the impact of the war, debate about the war, casualties of the war, the military build up and the context of

the war. The location of stories, emphasis and priority given to stories are also analysed to find out how the newspapers reported the war.

**RQ2. To what extent did the Zealand metropolitan newspapers depend on global news agencies, and other content providers, for the coverage of Iraq War II?**

Within the globalisation framework, the role played by global news media outlets such as the news agencies in news ‘wholesaling’ has become extensive, with print and electronic media ‘retailing’ that content for domestic consumption. Events that are prioritised within the newspapers’ news value judgement system are instantly channelled to consumers, thus accelerating the globalisation of news. International news business is dominated by the Associated Press, Reuters and AFP, who have between 90 and 100 bureaus around the world and file between 400 and 500 news items every day (Moisy, 1996). These news agencies are also the main news content providers for New Zealand newspapers. Furthermore, news services from major US and UK newspapers have also become content providers to global media outlets. Use of content from elite US and UK newspapers by newspapers in New Zealand also reflects the growing globalisation of media. Newspapers in New Zealand, which are owned by foreign media companies, with interests in the US, UK and Australia show the trend in globalisation and internationalisation of media content as well.

To answer this research question, news content providers and news agencies were analysed. The extent to which the newspapers were able to generate their own content was also evaluated.

Within the globalisation paradigm, two facets of international news agencies are apparent – the ownership of media corporations across national boundaries and the globalisation of news. The news agencies are injecting news content into global news media outlets in a process of turning global to local, and international news agencies contribute to the globalisation process (Boyd-Barrett, 2000).

**RQ3. To what extent did the US and Coalition dominate the news agenda?**

The media management practices of US and Coalition forces during Iraq War II were organised to give the maximum positive exposure to the military operations, thereby swaying national and global public opinion in their favour. Through meticulously designed public relations strategies, the 24-hour news cycle was “saturated by content from the Pentagon, Qatar based CENTCOM Media Centre, and embedded journalists”. More than 3000 journalists were based in the region, 500 of whom were embedded with various military units (Tumber & Palmer, 2004). Thus the US military and government controlled the representation of the conflict in the global media (Quenqua, 2003).

The public relations and media strategies paid off, at least in the initial phase of the war when the media were upbeat about a swift victory in Iraq. A good example of how the US military and government were able to set the news agenda for global audiences was the story of the rescue of Jessica Lynch by US Special Forces. The story, which claimed she was “fighting to the death” (Schmidt & Loeb, 2003), later turned out to be false (Rennie, 2003; Colford & Siemaszki, 2003).

Thus the military and government sources dominated the news, setting the agenda for audiences around the world. This research question seeks to determine the extent to which the US and the Coalition countries dominated the news, and the relationship between news sources and directions of coverage.

It appears that, especially in times of military conflict, news media and the government and military authorities have a symbiotic relationship, in that each need the other to survive. The government and the military involved in the conflict need the news media to ‘saturate the news agenda’ so to influence public opinion, while news media need information for coverage of the conflict. Numerous studies have shown that media rely on elite sources, such as government and the military and other official sources, for war coverage (Carruthers, 2000; Taylor, 1992b).

In the US, Iraq War I coverage was dominated by official sources (Bennett, 1994) and nearly 10 years later, in Iraq War II, the US press extensively used official or ex-official



sources (Tumber & Palmer, 2004). A comparative study of Iraq War II coverage by *The New York Times* and Egypt's leading daily *Al-Ahram* shows that the newspapers' cultural and political affiliations influenced the use of sources. More than 70 percent of the sources in *The New York Times* were US, while in *Al-Ahram* US sources accounted for 29 percent (Ghanem, 2005).

This research explores the primary sources in the news and their direction, and analyses how the use of primary sources varied with story origin. If US and Coalition sources dominated the news, then, as Herman and Chomsky (1988) articulated in the 'propaganda model', production and dissemination of news is controlled by profit-oriented mass media firms and political elites. When elite sources are able to dominate the news, through various strategies, they are able to manufacture consent.

The research questions are concerned about the content of the newspapers, and as this study does not in any way aim to make claims or generalisations about media effects, content analysis is seen as the most appropriate method of research. Previous media research into war journalism content in the news media has widely used content analysis, which is clearly an indication of the suitability of the method in a research topic like this.

### 7.3 Content analysis

Content analysis can be defined as a research technique for the systematic classification and description of communication content, which may involve quantitative or qualitative analysis, or both (Berger, 2000). For Holsti (1969) it is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (p 14).

Krippendorff (1980) defined content analysis as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. It is a media content research methodology that "entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images and symbolic matter" (p 3). Berelson (1971) defined the concept as "a research technique for the

objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (p 18). He contends that content analysis is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding, which is a scientific method for describing various facets of communication content in a summary fashion (Berelson, 1971).

Kerlinger (1986) also defined content analysis as a method of studying and analysing communication content in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner. Holsti, Krippendorff and Berelson, who are considered authoritative on the discipline of content analysis in social science research, were unanimous regarding the need for content analysis to be systematic and objective. Indeed without such a rigorous approach, the validity and replicability of the findings cannot be achieved. Hence, explicit and consistent guidelines were set up for selecting samples and coding. These guidelines are discussed later in the chapter.

Berelson has pointed out that content analysis mainly focuses on the manifest content, rather than the latent content, thus increasing the reliability of interpretation and coding of messages in the text. Manifest content is “the meaning that is easily understood or recognised” while latent content is “meanings that are present (in a text) but that have not yet emerged or become visible” (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004, p 207-208). Noting that manifest content is what the researcher could easily see and count on the surface (of the content) being analysed, Stacks (2002) said that “Manifest content may be the number of times specific financial figures are given in an annual report ... the number of times a particular client is mentioned in the mass media, or the size of photographs used in a magazine or number of column inches published about your client” (p 109).

Latent content, however, can be interpreted and deconstructed through prior knowledge and the research context. As there was the need for thematic analysis of the content in this research, latent content, which is “more qualitative and deals with the underlying or deeper meanings” (Stacks, 2002, p 109) of the editorial content, is also used. For example in this thesis the thematic coverage explores the direction of news sources, whether the sources were favourable or unfavourable towards any key actor in the Iraq

War. Once clear definitions of the directions have been arrived at, the latent content in the story can be coded.

### 7.3.1 *Content analysis as a method for war coverage research*

Numerous studies investigating print media coverage have employed content analysis as the main method of inquiry to analyse the editorial content of the news media. Such studies have included a focus on the coverage of the American Civil War (Hamilton, 1988), World War II (Yoshimoto, 1994), the Korean war (Kim, 1991), the Algerian civil war (Khane, 1993; Ghodbane, 1985), Vietnam War (Hoang, 2005; Flowers, 1996; Peterson, 1994; Patterson, 1982; Holk, 1979; Showalter, 1975), Middle East conflicts (Batarfi, 1999; Salamon, 1989; Buelkeshk, 1985; Husni, 1980), the Gulf War (Willcox, 2004; Alruwaitea, 1997; Keeble, 1996; Al-Kahtani, 1999; Chrisco, 1995; White, 2004), and the Iraq War of 2003 (Barker, 2004; Lee, 2004).

Several recent inquiries into the news media coverage of Iraq War I (Alruwaitea, 1997; Keeble, 1996; Al-Kahtani, 1999; White, 2004), and Iraq War II (Barker, 2004; Lee, 2004) used content analysis, applying the techniques and methods that are also used in this research. Keeble (1996) examined the British and US press coverage of the 1991 Gulf War, using quantitative content analysis, in relation to the propaganda model formulated by Herman and Chomsky, while Al-Kahtani (1999) analysed the performance of the Saudi Arabian press and their agenda-setting capacity during the same conflict, using content analysis and interviews with Saudi media, academics and journalists. Alruwaitea (1997) studied how the elite US newspapers, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times* constructed the Arab image during the Gulf War and Intefada. The Gulf War was analysed in the context of state-media relationships.

While White (2004) conducted comparative framing study of seven US newspapers during Iraq War I and Iraq War II, Barker (2004) studied the cultural influences on the news in the coverage of Iraq War II in Swedish and American news media. Lee in his content analysis of the coverage of Iraq War II by *The New York Times*, *The Arab News*

and *The Middle East Times* sampled content sources from the start of war on March 20 to May 1, when the US made the official declaration of the end of war (Lee, 2004). He used a sample of 502 stories, which included news articles, editorials and opinions, to find out the direction of the war coverage. However, in this research, all the editorial content – news, features, news analysis, opinions, editorials and letters to the editor – was scrutinised. Unless newspaper content is analysed in its totality, it is unlikely to get the clear direction of coverage.

### *7.3.2 Advantages and limitations of content analysis*

According to Stacks (2002), one of the key advantages of content analysis is “its ability to objectively and reliably describe a message or group of messages” (p 108). However this can only be achieved if relevant procedures such as developing clear categories, coding units and sampling frames are followed. Content analysis is also objective in the sense that if another researcher conducted the analysis, using the same categories and coding instruments, the findings would be similar if not the same. But for that objectivity to be realised “a clear set of criteria and procedures ... that fully explains the sampling and categorization methods” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997) should be formulated. The findings of a content analysis are quantifiable and thus the method “aids researchers in the quest for precision” (p 112).

One of the limitations, however, is that different researchers may use different coding categories and definitions, thus findings are “limited to the framework of the categories and definitions used in the analysis” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p 115). According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), “content analysis alone cannot serve as a basis for making statements about the effects of content on an audience” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997p 115). However, the findings of a content analysis could be used with research that examines the audience. By analysing media content causes (or inputs) can be determined, while research focused on the audience would uncover effects (List, 2002). Another limitation of content analysis is that the actual processes of news production cannot be understood from a textual analysis. Through a content analysis the intentions of the media practitioners cannot be judged. Thus the researcher has to rely on previous

literature to make inferences. Therefore in this study qualitative interviews with New Zealand newspaper editors were conducted to explore the news selection and processing decisions and the criteria used in the international news processing and production.

#### 7.4 Qualitative interviewing

The aim of conducting qualitative interviews with editors of the three major New Zealand newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post*, *The Press* – was to identify the editorial policies in relation to international news, Iraq War II coverage, and news selection and editing processes. Understanding these dimensions would help in the final analysis of media content.

Qualitative interviews, also known as intensive or in-depth interviews, are different from survey interviews. In survey interviews, conducted using a fixed set of questions, all the respondents are asked the same questions and in the same order, while in qualitative interviews the researcher uses semi-structured questions (List, 2002) and not necessarily in the same order. Follow up questions may also be asked to clarify an answer given by the interviewee. A key advantage of qualitative interviews is the extensive details they provide, while on the negative side “generalizability is sometimes a problem” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p 100). Due to the informal nature of the interview some respondents may answer briefly while others may discuss a question in greater detail. These shortcomings can be minimised if the interviewer is well prepared and is able to manage the interviews in such a way as to extract information on the previously identified topics.

#### 7.5 Sampling

As the focus of this research is the study of mainstream New Zealand daily newspapers, the criterion for the selection of the sample was the circulation of these publications. *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* are considered the top-

selling newspapers of New Zealand, with a combined audited newspaper circulation (ANC) of more than 397,000 in 2004.

According to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) there are eight daily newspapers with a circulation of more than 25,000. ABC figures for 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004, (Table 7.1) show that the top three newspapers were *The New Zealand Herald* (208,419), *The Dominion Post* (98,229) and *The Press* (90,828) (ABC, 2004). These three metropolitan newspapers command more than 70 percent of the gross circulation of all newspapers with a daily circulation of over 25,000. The eight newspapers have a combined circulation of 571,271 and *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* accounted for a gross circulation of 397,476. These newspapers represent three distinct geographic, economic and political regions, with *The New Zealand Herald* being published in Auckland, which is the main business and financial centre of New Zealand, while *The Dominion Post* comes out from the ‘beltway’ of New Zealand, Wellington, and *The Press* from Christchurch, located in the predominantly agricultural South Island.

**Table 7.1 Daily newspapers with circulation of over 25,000 copies**

Publications	ANC to 30/09/2002	ANC to 31/03/2003	ANC to 30/09/2003	ANC to 30/09/2004	ANC to 31/03/2004
The New Zealand Herald	211,246	210,910	207,299	208,419	211,490
The Dominion Post	101,511	99,089	98,107	98,229	99,123
The Press	90,759	91,111	90,394	90,828	92,436
The Otago Daily Times	44,099	44,546	45,143	44,849	45,400
The Waikato Times	41,983	40,972	41,783	41,849	41,009
The Hawkes Bay Today	30,912	30,079	30,056	31,233	30,197
The Southland Times	29,830	29,928	29,369	29,371	29,557
The Taranaki Daily News	26,783	26,687	26,660	26,493	26,749

*Source: Newspaper Audit Results, Audit Bureau of Circulation, Wellington*

Even the latest figures released by ABC, on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2006, show that the circulation of these newspapers remains much the same as it was in 2004. In the six months to March 31, 2006 *The New Zealand Herald* sold an average of 200,309 copies a day ("Herald maintains title as biggest selling daily" 2006), while the figure for *The Dominion Post* ("Dompost numbers increase," 2006) was 98,251 and 92,465 for *The Press* ("Press circulation," 2006).

*The New Zealand Herald*, published since 1863, is now owned by Australia's APN News Media Limited, which publishes 24 daily and more than 90 non-daily newspapers

in Australia and New Zealand (2004). The other two newspapers, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*, were bought from Independent Newspapers Limited on 1 July 2003 by Fairfax New Zealand. According to Fairfax, the company has under its umbrella nine daily newspapers and two national Sunday papers, a stable of magazines with particular strength in the lifestyle category, a magazine publishing business and an internet operation.

## 7.6 Time period and sampling frame

The invasion of Iraq by the US-led Coalition began on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003 with aerial attacks on Baghdad, and the city was captured by 1<sup>st</sup> May. On that day US President George Bush declared that “major combat operations in Iraq have ended” (Kornblut, 2003, p A1). However, the war continued even after that date, with Saddam loyalists and other insurgents resisting the US and Coalition forces. Following are some of the key dates in the first two months of the war (more detailed timeline of the invasion phase of the war given in Appendix 2):

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| March 20 | The war against Iraq begins 5:30 am Baghdad time when the US launches Operation Iraqi Freedom.  |
| March 24 | US troops march within 60 miles of Baghdad.   |
| March 27 | Iraq says 350 civilians have died in air raids since the conflict began.  |
| April 5  | US tanks roll into the Iraqi capital and engage in firefights with Iraqi troops   |
| April 7  | British forces take control of Basra, Iraq's second-largest city.   |
| April 9  | US forces take control of Baghdad; US marines help crowds to topple a giant statue of Saddam Hussein and widespread looting breaks out unhindered in the Iraqi capital. US vice-president, Dick Cheney, says the Iraqi regime is collapsing, and that military progress shows criticism of the war was misguided. |
| April 14 | Major fighting in Iraq is declared over by the Pentagon   |
| May 1    | The US declares an end to major combat operations   |
| May 22   | UN Security Council approves a resolution lifting the economic sanctions against Iraq   |

A sampling frame was systematically selected beginning with 21<sup>st</sup> March 2003 and finishing on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2003. Although the war started a day earlier on 20<sup>th</sup> March at about 5:30 am (Iraq time) Thursday, New Zealand newspapers began to cover the US attack on Iraq the following day, from 21<sup>st</sup> March. From the sampling period (21 March-22 May 2003), 21 sampling dates were selected, starting with the first date and selecting every third day (21 March, 24 March, 27 March ... 13 May, 16 May, and 22 May). There were 54 publication dates in the sampling frame of 63 days and 22 publication dates were thus selected for content analysis.

As the focus of the research is the actual war coverage in the three largest New Zealand newspapers, the time frame is deemed appropriate. A high degree of accuracy in this systematic sampling has been maintained by the sampling frame, which was selected to begin with an obvious starting point (beginning of the war) and until 22<sup>nd</sup> May, which was nearly three weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> May, the date of the official end of major combat operations by the United States.

The three newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – published combined editions for Saturday and Sunday, as their weekend issue. If the sampling date fell on either Saturday or Sunday, the weekend edition was selected for analysis. There were 600 items in the sampled dates, with 346 items in *The New Zealand Herald*, followed by 186 in *The Dominion Post* and 168 in *The Press*.

## 7.7 Reliability

In any research, consideration should be given to attaining the highest levels of reliability, and this is particularly essential to content analysis. As Wimmer and Dominick (1997) point out, “if a content analysis is to be objective, its measures and procedures must be reliable” (p 126). To achieve reliability, Wimmer and Dominick (1997) suggest that categories be defined clearly, coders trained and a pilot study be conducted. In this study these steps were taken, although training of coders was not necessary as the author was the sole coder. To test the reliability of coding, intra-coder reliability was conducted instead of inter-coder reliability.



To achieve a higher level of reliability, before the content analysis was conducted, categories were defined in maximum detail so that they were mutually exclusive and did not overlap. The author coded all the content himself, as the sample size was manageable for one person to do the coding. Due to the nature of the content being studied, training others to a satisfactory level would have taken a lot of time and resources. Thus, the author, having undertaken extensive research on content analyses of media coverage found it deemed it appropriate to code the content himself. Furthermore, coding consistency is higher if one person does the coding (List, 2002), thus in this research the high level of reliability is attributed to the author being the sole coder. The reliability can be tested even if one person does the coding. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), in such situations where one person codes all the content, “to test intracoder reliability, the same individual codes a set of data twice, at different times, and the reliability statistics are computed using the two sets of results” (p 131).

To increase reliability, a pilot study was conducted, for which a sub-sample of the data was content analysed. The sampled dates for the pilot study were 21 March, 24 March, 27 March and 30 March. A total of 310 items, which included news, features, news analysis, editorials, news briefs and letters to the editor were coded. This procedure showed the need for further explanation of the categories for the efficacy and accuracy of the research. Extensive efforts were taken to clearly define the categories as “precise category definitions generally increase reliability” (Wimmer & Dominick, 1997, p 121).

To test the reliability of the coding, after the total sample of 600 items was coded, 125 items (25 percent) were recoded to ascertain the coding reliability coefficient.

According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), a sub-sample of data between 10 percent and 25 percent can be reanalysed to measure the reliability. As the author is the sole coder, the intracoder reliability coefficient was calculated using the following formula, which determines the reliability of nominal data in terms of the percentage agreement.

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

In the above formula, M is the total number of coding decisions made in the two coding sessions, while  $N_1$  and  $N_2$  are the number of coding decisions made in the two different coding sessions.

**Table 7.2 Reliability coefficients**

Categories	Intra-coder agreement	Reliability coefficient
Type of item	125	1.000
Section	125	1.000
Item origin, location	124	0.992
Headline size	123	0.984
Priority	123	0.984
News agencies/ newspapers	122	0.976
Episodic/Thematic framing	117	0.936
Direction of primary source	114	0.912
Primary source	113	0.904
Main theme	113	0.904
Direction of item	112	0.896

*Note: For reliability test 25 percent (125 items) of the total sample (n=600) was analysed*

An acceptable level of reliability coefficient was reached in the reliability test with 1.00 for item type, .98 for headline sizes, .99 for item origins, .90 for directions, .98 for priority of item, .90 for themes, and .90 for primary source. The strength of this reliability is high as the coefficients are higher than .80. According to Lombard et al (2005), coefficients of .90 or greater are always acceptable, .80 or greater is acceptable in most situations, and .70 may be appropriate in some exploratory studies for some indices.

## 7.8 Categories and units of analysis

Within the scope of the study and the research questions, several categories were identified for coding, mainly to answer the research questions and also to put the war coverage in context. There were categories that were of direct relevance to the research questions and others that provided background information in the search for answers to these questions.

The coding guide was developed to provide a clear and concise definition of categories, for which data were coded through content analysis. The categories were clearly formulated so that they were mutually exclusive, exhaustive and reliable. The units of analysis were any news content -- this included news, features, editorials, opinion, and letters to the editor -- that was related to the Iraq conflict. That may have been an item about the launch of area attacks on Baghdad by the Coalition forces, or anti-war demonstrations in Australia, or the reaction of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark to the US-led attack on Iraq.

In determining if the item was related to Iraq War II, the first several paragraphs of the item were checked to see if they were related to the conflict directly or indirectly. There were stories, for example, that were not related to the Iraq issue, but which at the very end briefly mentioned the crisis as background information. Such items were not coded. The only exceptions were the brief news items or News in Brief. These are indeed very brief items, often a sentence long. A preliminary examination of editorial content also revealed that these short items did not have source, and only sometimes news agency attributions, thus making them less important for evaluation in answering the research questions that are raised in this thesis.

A comprehensive guideline is necessary for accurate and consistent coding, thus achieving a higher level of reliability. After the sample dates were selected, all the relevant items were electronically copied from microfilm archives of *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*, available at the University of Canterbury in January-February 2005. There were no missing copies and all the sample dates were available, thus achieving a 100 percent count. Coding was carried out on four sampled dates, beginning 21 March, as a pilot study to assess the validity and reliability of the techniques being employed. The research procedures and coding categories were revised, and final coding of content was carried out by the author between September and December 2005. The final coded data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## 7.9 Definitions of categories

A comprehensive coding guideline and clear definitions of categories are important in order to attain a high level of validity. Thus major categories and their definitions as used in the content analysis are given below:

- 1. **Headline size:**** Headline size was measured, as it shows the emphasis editors place on the news story. Normally important stories are given larger headlines. Headlines were coded under one column, two columns, three columns, four columns, five columns, six columns, seven columns and banner headlines. The three newspapers mainly used a seven-column format in the layout. Banner headlines are headlines that are written across the page in very large and bold fonts. Such headlines mostly appear on the front pages, although occasionally in other sections.
- 2. **Type of item:**** The content was categorised according to its type under news, news analysis, feature, editorial, opinion/column and letter. News or straight news is an item that presents the facts, mostly answering the When, Where, How, Who questions, without putting forward the opinion of the writer. Such stories are written in inverted pyramid style and the writer presents most important facts at the beginning of the item. Feature articles are human interest narratives where sources are also cited, but the writer may also suggest views and opinions. The style of writing is different from that of straight news. News analysis is analytical and interpretive and explanatory. The editorial or the leader is the item that sets the views and policies of the newspaper. Opinions, columns, mostly published on the Op-ed page, articles or columns by specialist writers or contributors that express their opinions. Letters are the feedback of readers, and may represent individuals or organisations.
- 3. **Item origin/ location:**** The three newspapers followed different styles in their war coverage, with some items carrying datelines and bylines while others did not mention the origin of the item. If there was no dateline, the item's origin was determined by reading the first few paragraphs. Items for which the origin was not clear were categorised as 'unclear'.

- 4. Direction of the item:** All the different items were analysed for their direction. After reading the entire item, the coder made the judgement whether the item was favourable to the US, unfavourable to the US, favourable to the British, unfavourable to the British, favourable to Iraq, unfavourable to Iraq, unfavourable to both the US and Iraq, neutral or the direction is unclear. An example might be a news item titled, “Anti-war movement killing itself”, which informs readers that the number of people attending anti-war demonstrations has been on the decline since January 2003. Although a story about anti-war movements and demonstrations staged by them might be seen as unfavourable to the US, this item should be coded as favourable since the item indirectly claims that opposition to the US-led war is declining; or rather support for US military actions is gaining. In all the items the direction was determined from the contextual messages, and both the headline and the body of the article were evaluated to determine the direction. The item was coded as being neutral if it was neither favourable nor unfavourable to any of the major actors in the conflict.
- 5. Section:** The items were also coded for their location within the newspaper, as this is also an important criterion for deciding the level of importance given to items. A story on the front page would be more important than an item in the World News section. The newspapers under study are divided into a main section (A) and a World section (B). By this very hierarchy, section A is the most important and normally reserved for national or local news. But during the first week of Iraq War II, the newspapers moved most of the war coverage to the main section. The editorial page is where the newspaper’s editorial is published, and often opinion and letters to the editor appear on this page. The page opposite this page is known as the Op-ed page, where opinions and columns are also published.
- 6. Priority of the item:** The prominence given to the item on the page is also identified by assessing the size of the headline and the inclusion of photos or graphics. Only three variables were marked: these were lead story, second story or third story. A pilot study of a small sample of newspapers showed that it was difficult to determine the priority level of more than three items. If the page

contained about seven items, normally about two to three items were distinct while the rest may have been given the same headline size and text space. Items that did not fall into the categories were marked as 'other'.

- 7. News agencies and other content providers:** News items were coded to identify the news agency or other content provider from which they derived. News items that were written by the newspaper staff of *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* were normally given by-lines at the beginning of the item. Such items were coded as content generated by the newspaper. Likewise, news agencies, normally credited at the end of articles, were also coded. If there was no source credited, the item was coded under 'no source cited'.
- 8. Primary sources in the item:** All the news items, news features and news analyses were studied to determine the most important or primary source. The other editorial content such as editorials, opinions and letters were excluded from this, as in these items writers present their own views, based on background information, facts and personal judgements rather than attributing to news sources. Straight news, on the other hand, was attributed to various sources and as news stories often contained more than one source only the main or primary source was coded. This was determined by identifying the amount of space and priority given to the source. For example, a story about the launch of air strikes against Iraq might have quoted US president George Bush (US government source), provided an assessment of the damage by a Pentagon official (US military source), and finally quoted the angry reaction from Iraqi president Saddam Hussein (Iraqi government source). In this case there were three main sources, but which is primary or secondary is determined by the prominence and amount of space given to the sources.
- 9. Main theme of the item:** This is the main topic of the editorial content. There were more than 50 themes identified for coding, which came under nine major categories:

  1. Military build-up/ technology (Where the story focuses on the military build-up, such as sending troops and hardware to the theatre of conflict, or on the military technology that is being used in the war)

2. Impact of war (The economic, environmental and humanitarian impact of the war)
3. Debate about the war (Anti-war and pro-war demonstrations, criticisms of Iraq, US and its Coalition, antiwar reactions and responses)
4. New Zealand and Iraq War II (Support or criticism of New Zealand government policy towards Iraq War II)
5. Casualties of war (Both military and civilian casualties on all the sides)
6. Diplomacy (Diplomatic efforts by the UN, US and Coalition and other countries)
7. Prisoners of war (POWs from any of the countries involved in the war)
8. Process of combat (News about the combat operations by infantry, air force and other engagements)
9. Context of war (Stories that put the conflict into context through giving the background to the conflict or Iraq history and culture)
10. Other (Some other themes that were not in the main categories)

**10. Episodic/ Thematic coverage:** All the editorial items (except letters to the editor) were analysed for their direction in terms of episodic or thematic coverage. Episodic items are event oriented, reporting what happened without contextualising the issue or news event.

## CHAPTER 8: INTERVIEW WITH NEW ZEALAND EDITORS

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### 8.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the editorial policies of the New Zealand newspapers vis-à-vis Iraq War II coverage, international news, news values and news selection. As this research focuses on the war coverage in three leading New Zealand daily newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Press* and *The Dominion Post* – it was considered important to interview the editors of the three publications in order to qualitatively analyse the editorial policies. Interviews were conducted with senior editors of *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* in 2006 and 2007. As the New Zealand Press Association (NZPA) is the leading news agency in New Zealand, editor of NZPA was also interviewed to assess how the agency covered international news events such as the war in Iraq and other major stories.

As these interviews were semi-structured, some key questions were formulated and all the editors were given the questions in advance before the actual interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted in person, by telephone and email (see Appendix



4 for the questionnaire). A face-to-face interview with the editor of *The Press*, Paul Thompson, was conducted at his office and lasted nearly one and a half hours. The interviews with *The New Zealand Herald* Assistant Editor John Gardner and Patrick Piercy, Chief sub-editor of *The Dominion Post* were conducted over the phone. The interviews lasted about 45 minutes. The editor of NZPA answered the questions through e-mail. All the interviews were conducted between March 2006 and February 2007.

This chapter presents excerpts from these interviews and discusses the international news coverage, news selection and other editorial policies of these newspapers and the news agency within the theoretical issues outlined in Chapters 4 and 6. These include the news values, news selection and international news flows through news agencies and other content providers such as major US and UK newspapers.

## 8.2 International news and Iraq War II coverage

As discussed in Chapter 1, the mainstream New Zealand press gave extensive coverage to Iraq War II, sourcing editorial content mainly from major news agencies and some leading newspapers of the UK and US. The New Zealand newspapers appeared to be capitalising on Iraq War II as a major news event, with *The New Zealand Herald* promising its readers the “most comprehensive coverage” while *The Dominion Post* intended to cover news from any location with “expert analysis”. For the comprehensive war reporting published by the newspapers, the major sources were foreign news agencies and newspapers, while a few opinion articles originated from the New Zealand newspapers themselves.

Although Iraq War II has a high news value, the New Zealand newspapers did not send their journalists to cover the conflict from Iraq or the Gulf, mainly for economic reasons. While noting the reasons for not sending newspaper staff to cover the war, *The New Zealand Herald* Assistant Editor John Gardner, said “the answer is quite simple, it is (an) economic” consideration (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006). Like *The New Zealand Herald*'s editor, of *The Press* Paul Thompson also cited economic reasons for not sending staff journalists to report from the Gulf region. However, he noted that if

New Zealand had a direct news interest in the war, the newspaper would have considered sending journalists to Iraq as the New Zealand news value would be higher. He said that “If New Zealand became engaged in a conflict (such as Iraq War II) and regular troops became involved ... we would need to go and cover it” (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006). Expressing similar views, Patrick Piercy, Chief sub-editor of *The Dominion Post* said that it was “predominantly economic” reasons that prevented a newspaper staff journalist being sent to cover the war. However, he also noted that “If New Zealand had a significant military presence in the Gulf we may well have sent someone” as the news values for local audiences would have become significantly higher (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

The initial coverage of Iraq War II was focussed on the invasion and military operations and both Gardner (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006) and Thompson agreed that coverage was more event-oriented. In this regard, Thompson said:

When the air strike on Iraq began and the drive to Baghdad was happening we began focusing very much on the process of military operations. Subsequent to that our coverage has focused on the insurgency, the ongoing democratic processes, humanitarian crisis, and US failure to do the job properly. At different phases you focus on different things. ... Main news was around invasion, but since then coverage has been less comprehensive, simply because less is happening in terms of what our readers are interested in (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

Both *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Press* sourced content from affiliated newspapers and through partnerships, which illustrates the globalised nature of news production and dissemination. As discussed in Chapter 3, *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* are owned by two foreign media companies, and thus have access to news copy generated by affiliated publications. During Iraq War II, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* were owned by Independent Newspapers Limited, 45 percent of which was owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation. *The New Zealand Herald* was owned by Dublin-based Independent News and Media (Rosenberg, 2004; “Murdoch to sell New Zealand publishing interests to Australian rival,” 2003).

Gardner noted that although *The New Zealand Herald* has some foreign correspondents, none were based in Iraq during the war. However he said that “We have a relationship with leading world newspapers and magazines such as *The Independent*, *Newsweek*,

*The Economist* and *Observer*. We have other news agencies that provide content on an ad hoc basis” (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006).

According to *The Dominion Post*, their main foreign news sources are mainstream international news agencies such as Reuters, AP and AFP and some overseas newspapers such as *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* from London, *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* in Melbourne (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

According to Thompson “through our relationship with Fairfax Australia we have access to their foreign correspondents’ copy” and thus are assured of a steady flow of international news to their main newsroom in Christchurch. Thompson noted that overseas wire services are their main news sources, although occasionally reporters are sent overseas on special assignments (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

He further said:

We do not have any permanent overseas correspondents, we often send reporters to the events. We did send reporters to Iraq in 2004 to visit the New Zealand contingent in Basra and also a reporter last year (2005) to cover tsunami commemorations. He went to Thailand and Banda Ache (Indonesia). We sent a reporter to Sri Lanka during the tsunami (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

For coverage of the tsunami, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Press* sent journalists to the affected region as the news values for New Zealand audiences were high due to several New Zealanders being reported missing or dead. Thus, sending their own journalists would assure newspapers of more localised and relevant stories.

New Zealand army engineers were sent to Iraq in September 2003 to assist the country in the reconstruction under a UN mandate (*NZDF deployment to Iraq* 2003). With this, news values for local media increased and provided greater opportunities for localisation of the war coverage. Hence in July 2004 *The Press* sent a reporter and a photographer to Basra to cover the work of New Zealand army engineers (Beynen, 2004), and like all other embedded journalists they also had to follow strict media guidelines that restricted reporting. Thompson noted that although “there was no vetting of copy” or “editing of the stories by the minders”, *The Press* journalists “were

controlled” (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006). Thompson believed that coverage of the humanitarian works carried out in Basra by the New Zealand army engineers by journalists from New Zealand newspapers would have been different from copy from news agencies: “Coverage of events will be different if we have reporters in the field, definitely. We can get a lot of local angles, talking to the Kiwis, and looking at what they were doing”( Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006). He also noted that the coverage will give readers an “in-depth perspective on the work our troops are doing in Iraq” (Beynen, 2004, p 16) . Such a localised New Zealand perspective would not be available from international news agencies or newspapers.

Sharing similar views with Thompson, *The Dominion Post* Chief sub-editor Piercy said that it was possible that his newspaper’s coverage would be different if their staff journalists were covering the conflict from the Gulf region or Iraq. He further noted that content in foreign publications is written for the publications’ audiences and thus the orientation of stories on the conflict would be different among newspapers:

We also have to bear in mind that the opinions of our readers are likely to be different from those of the readers of, say, *The Times* [of London] or *The Telegraph*. Our readership covers a wider political spectrum, largely because we are the only newspaper in Wellington, and New Zealanders are more likely to be opposed to the Iraq War than readers of *The Times*. This is partly because New Zealand has no troops in Iraq, and partly because its readership is likely to be more left-leaning (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

Although NZPA sent a reporter to cover Iraq War I, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, in the recent Iraq conflict the coverage has been carried out from New Zealand, when “NZPA has occasionally phoned New Zealanders on the ground for stories”. According to NZPA Editor Nick Brown, for international coverage it relies on freelance journalists, but when major regional news events develop journalists are occasionally sent to cover those stories. He said: “NZPA has two full-time correspondents in Sydney and some freelance correspondents in other parts of the world. Occasionally we send journalists on overseas assignments from NZ, particularly to the Asia-Pacific region” (Interview with Brown, February 13, 2007).

The editors of *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* noted that they were concerned that during Iraq War II the information flow was controlled and

thus the end users of the news, which come from news agencies and other content providers, were vulnerable to propaganda. There was not much they could do except be conscious of the war reporting coming from the Gulf region (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006). Gardner said that “in their coverage of the Iraq War, they were aware of the issues of facing reporters on the fronts, and also the conflicting views among media organisations. In military conflicts journalists are exposed to propaganda and spin. To address these issues we tried to provide a diverse coverage from different sources. We carried, for example, stories from Robert Fisk (*The Independent*), and used content from *The New York Times*” (Interview with Gardner, 8th March, 2006). Acknowledging that stories from the wires and foreign newspapers that were used in *The Dominion Post* during the invasion phase of Iraq War II might have been favourable towards the Coalition forces, Piercy said that they took steps to ensure coverage was even. He said, “We have a wide variety of sources and were conscious of the different biases of all those sources. We tried very hard to vary our coverage of the war” (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

Noting these issues of propaganda and news management, Thompson said:

During the Iraq War, information flow was highly controlled. I think over time we got a good mix of stories and reflected things evenly. But you are always vulnerable, on any given story there will be spin and there will be propaganda and over time we managed to balance that out. It is very difficult for editors to get through this because you want to get the stories in the papers. And you want to keep readers informed, and you don't want to be saying no to every story. But the wire services, given the constraints they faced, did a good job of reporting the main news. But there is always going to be the odd story which is questionable (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

One such ‘questionable’ story *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Press* and *The Dominion Post* prominently covered was that of the rescue of Jessica Lynch by US Special Forces. As discussed in Chapter 2, the rescue story was used as a PR tool to boost the US's image (Compton, 2004) and world press “desperate for some heroics” in the war fell for the propaganda coming from the US government and military sources (Allan & Zelizer, 2004). The Lynch story shows how vulnerable the news media are in military conflicts where information is heavily managed. As noted by Thompson, it was not an easy task for editors to sift through the war news items flowing from wires and positively identify the propaganda-laced content. Thus the newspapers, as admitted by the editors, were

exposed to spin and propaganda from the primary definers of news (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007; Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

Another key feature in the publishing of international news in New Zealand is the common outlook shared by newspapers on the selection of news. This was illustrated by the Lynch case, where each of the three newspapers saw the story as the most newsworthy item. The set of criteria or news values the newspapers use are similar, shaped as they are by professional journalism values, as well as cultural and market considerations. The fact that the Lynch story was given the same treatment on the front pages of the three largest newspapers in New Zealand shows that these newspapers subscribe to common news values and thus apply common news selection criteria. The story was full of drama and human interest, with the “heroic rescue” of a young woman who “fought off her Iraqi attackers ... until she went down” (Cohen, 2003, p A 25). Like many other world news media, the press in New Zealand were also looking for “some heroics” from the war (Allan & Zelizer, 2004), and in the Lynch drama they found what they were looking for.

### 8.3 News values and news selection

With a large supply of international news, especially during major military conflicts such as Iraq War II, newspaper editors have many choices in the selection of items for publication. The editorial decisions are made based on the dominant news values the news media subscribe to. As noted by Golding and Elliot (1979) news values are the guidelines used to determine which items will be selected for the final news product. During Iraq War II key news values included conflict and major powers. According to *The New Zealand Herald* Assistant Editor Gardner, if the key actor in the story is the US it is of greater public interest. He said that “what the readers are interested in is big powers such as the US, China. If the story does not involve the US it will be of less interest to the public”. Thus, as both the US and Britain were involved in this major world conflict, stories about Iraq War II were of high news value. When major powers such as the US and Britain are the main actors in news events, news values such as

“reference to elite nations” (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) or “power elite” (Harcup & O’Neill, 2001) become very significant in the news selection. Acknowledging that influential world powers such as the US and UK attract media attention, especially when they are engaged in military actions, Piercy noted that extensive coverage of Iraq War II was a manifestation of this. He also noted that war journalism has a high news value and thus “war makes for good copy, particularly when its progress can be followed on television” (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

*The Press* editor Thompson also viewed relevance to the readers and impact of the news event as major news values that determine the newsworthiness of an item. To illustrate the news values and selection criteria used by *The Press*, Thompson said:

What we are looking for is stories about significant events that matter, that have an impact on the world, New Zealand and our readers. That’s everything from a story about HIV spreading through the Pacific, unrest in the Solomon Islands, obviously the war on terror (Iraq War), terrorist attacks, freedom fighting. All those are stories we are interested in on any given day (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

Although the war in Iraq was geographically far from New Zealand, the conflict’s great impact and the involvement of major powers increased its news values. Equally important, however, were issues closer to New Zealand. As Thompson noted, unrest in the Solomon Islands, in close proximity to New Zealand, was also as important as the so-called ‘war on terror’.

According to Thompson, besides the impact of a story, newspapers have to consider publishing stories that would inform and educate the public. He said that *The Press* does not look at every story and assume that it will have a direct impact on its readers.

Thompson said: “It’s more about our readers’ need to understand the world, that these stories are the big stories and that is reflecting how the world operates. It could mean anything from bird flu to Hurricane Katrina” (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

In giving prominence to news values such as impact, elite nations and relevance to readers, the newspaper editors agreed that journalistic professionalism was given a high priority in the news selection processes. According to Gardner, in the news selection

processes a high professional standard is maintained, and there is a clear distinction between the editorial position of the newspaper and the publication of news. The newspaper's editorial position does not influence the news selection. In this regard, Gardner noted:

News coverage and editorial stance would be separate. Suppose we were hostile to the (Iraq) war, we would have covered the war in the same way. Even if we had an editorial position that is supportive of war we would have run Robert Fisk (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006).

Thompson also maintained that the newspaper's editorial stand on the war in no way influenced the coverage. He said that *The Press* argued that the UN had failed and that the US should go to war even though it was a drastic action. Thompson said:

*The Press* editorial position was in favour of the war. Editorials argued for the war, but news coverage was from every angle. I think we are the only newspaper that said war is justifiable. Our news coverage made sure we balanced things and provided every aspect to our readers. And a lot of that was bread and butter reporting of what was going on (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

In both *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Press* foreign news is discussed at the daily editorial or budget meetings, as is normal for larger newspapers. Decisions as to whether a story should be placed on the front page or in the world news section are made at the meetings. However, Piercy said that foreign news is discussed at the editorial meetings "especially when a significant story" such as the invasion of Iraq is running (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007). According to Gardner, "All is discussed at the editorial meeting. If the story is a contender for the front page it will be decided by the front page editor or whoever is responsible for the front page or Section A. And for the world section it is decided by the world section editor" (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006).

In *The Press*, world news is closely followed by the World News editor, who presents the key stories at the editorial meetings. According to Thompson:

The World News editor goes through the wires and tries to produce a compelling and comprehensive world news section everyday which covers the key stories. ... We have a structured news planning process throughout the day. World news is discussed in all our meetings (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).



The newspapers generally do not edit or change the content of the stories received from the wires or other content providers. According to Gardner of *The New Zealand Herald*, the only modifications are changing the headlines and combining stories from different sources:

We never attempt to change the meaning of the story. But certainly in terms of length, page design, there is substantial modification done. And it may well be that we may change the emphasis of the story to make it more relevant to our readers. We don't change the content of the story. We do combine stories from different wires. We often do that because there may be more details in one wire item that may not be in the other. Always the headlines are re-written. We never use wire copy headings. It is very unlikely that wire copy headlines are used (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006).

Thompson also noted that at *The Press* the foreign news copy is not modified or content changed other than in the re-writing headlines, the changing of news angles or lead and the combining of details from different news sources:

We often compile stories, so we may take a story from AP, add a bit from Reuters. Then we might change the intro or the angle. In the end we have a combined story that gives all the main points, contains the latest development. That's very common for us to do. We don't grab a story and put it blindly. We are often integrating, mixing, combining, sharpening and obviously cutting (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

In *The Dominion Post* foreign news is edited to make the items comprehensive, while headlines are re-written to suit the newspaper's style. In this regard the newspaper's Chief sub-editor Piercy said:

All copy in *The Dominion Post* is edited, either for newsworthiness or purely for length. But it would be extremely rare for them to be edited for 'political' reasons; occasionally they might be edited to make them less judgemental, but never to make them more judgemental. ... It is rare that we would use a wire agency heading. In my opinion, they are generally not of the standard we require. Occasionally we may repeat a heading from a foreign paper if we think it is a good one (Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

With the availability of many news sources and professionally written stories, the New Zealand newspapers do not see the need for editing, except re-writing headlines or changing news angles. This shows that the New Zealand newspapers have similar news

values to those of other media organisations and thus subscribe to universal news values rooted in the Western journalistic tradition.

## 8.4 Discussion

In the coverage of international events, such as the war in Iraq, New Zealand newspapers have relied on major wire services and elite US and UK newspapers (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007; Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006). As noted by Comrie and Fountaine (2005), the mainstream news media in New Zealand “relied heavily on international news providers” for the coverage of Iraq War II. Thus the steady flow of news from the mainstream global news players to periphery countries not only commodifies global news, but also helps to set a common global news agenda. As manufacturers of news, thus, international news providers are able to influence what global topics and issues national media are to cover (Stevenson & Cole, 1984). In this process of news wholesaling to global retailers, such as the news media in New Zealand, major wire services “contributed to internationalization, constructing influential international news agendas that acted upon retail media, governments and finance” (Boyd-Barrett, 1997, p 143).

Not many newspapers could afford to send reporters to cover Iraq War II, unless their audiences had direct interests in the conflict and news values far outweighed economic factors. As noted by editors of *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Press*, if New Zealand was involved in a military conflict, they would have to send their own reporter to the war zone to cover the conflict. As direct news relevance was low in Iraq War II, the New Zealand newspapers found it more economical to source content from major wires and other content providers. The high cost of sending journalists to foreign countries (Tunstall, 1992; Wu, 2000), thus market considerations, leads to heavy reliance on cheaper sources of world news – news agencies. Given the global ownership of New Zealand newspapers, mostly affiliated to major media companies such as APN News & Media, INL and Fairfax Australia, the New Zealand newspapers had access to copy filed by journalists from Iraq or the Gulf region, thus the need for sending their own

staff became less important. Hence, the key news providers for New Zealand newspapers were major global newspapers and news agencies.

Furthermore, the power of the global news providers in New Zealand is also accentuated by the fact that the New Zealand newspapers share common professional journalistic values with news media organisations world wide. The New Zealand newspapers do not need to edit or re-write wire copy, as it is already compatible with their news values and professional guidelines (Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007; Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006). Thus, the process of international news publication is simple – choose from a myriad of sources, select the story that is relevant to the readers, sub-edit the headlines, change the lead if necessary and publish. The newspapers do not consider it important to verify news content coming from international sources, as they expect the news agencies to be professional in their work (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

The fact that New Zealand newspaper editors find stories from overseas news media easily usable points to three developments:

First, to be able to rely on news stories from such overseas media outfits indicates some level of confidence in the promptness and regularity of such supply. Consequently one can argue that this is confirmation of the growing sophistication of news gathering and dissemination technologies, which today have made it possible for distant events to be circulated around the world with ease. Second, one can argue that the Iraq War is no longer a local or regional affair but a global one. Hence the story is understandable globally and that explains its ‘ready-made’ nature wherever it is disseminated. Third, and very importantly too, minimal gatekeeping on such news stories from overseas news media, as confirmed in these interviews, points to the emergence of common values, and common tastes in news processing and dissemination. The coverage of Jessica Lynch is a good example of the common outlook on news values.

It is certainly not mere coincidence that editors in New Zealand will arrive at the same opinion regarding the usability of news stories from Reuters and *The Times* based in the UK, and AP and *The Washington Post* located in the US. For, the interviews in this

chapter show that the criteria of news selection, especially regarding global events, are based on global news selection processes and news values.

In sum, therefore, global interdependence (Tehrani, 1999) as some globalisation theorists argue, or its variation that points to the dominance of Anglo-American institutions (Boyd-Barrett, 1999; McChesney, 1997; Musa, 1990) including the media, are both evident in the kind of relationship existing between the New Zealand press and overseas (Anglo-American) news media. How this relationship is manifested in concrete or material terms will be analysed in Chapter 9, where a detailed content analysis of the three largest newspapers of New Zealand is made.

What is clear at this point, however, is that structural factors of practical economic realities as well as institutional ones associated with the globalisation of news values are at play in so far as the dependence of New Zealand newspapers on overseas news media is concerned.

From the interviews with the editors, the following conclusions can also be made about the nature of Iraq War II coverage, news selection and news values in New Zealand newspapers:

- The newspapers opted to rely on news agencies and other content providers for the coverage of Iraq War II for economic reasons.
- If the conflict involved New Zealand the newspapers would be very likely to cover the news events with their own staff, as local news values would be higher.
- The New Zealand newspapers subscribe to common news values.
- Iraq War II coverage was more event-oriented than context-oriented.
- The newspapers were aware that the US, Coalition and Iraq sources managed news and used propaganda. To minimise spin and propaganda, the editors used content from different news providers.

The information obtained from the interviews with editors will help contextualise the findings of the quantitative content analysis. The results of the content analysis are presented in the following two chapters.

## CHAPTER 9: THEMES AND ORIENTATION OF WAR COVERAGE

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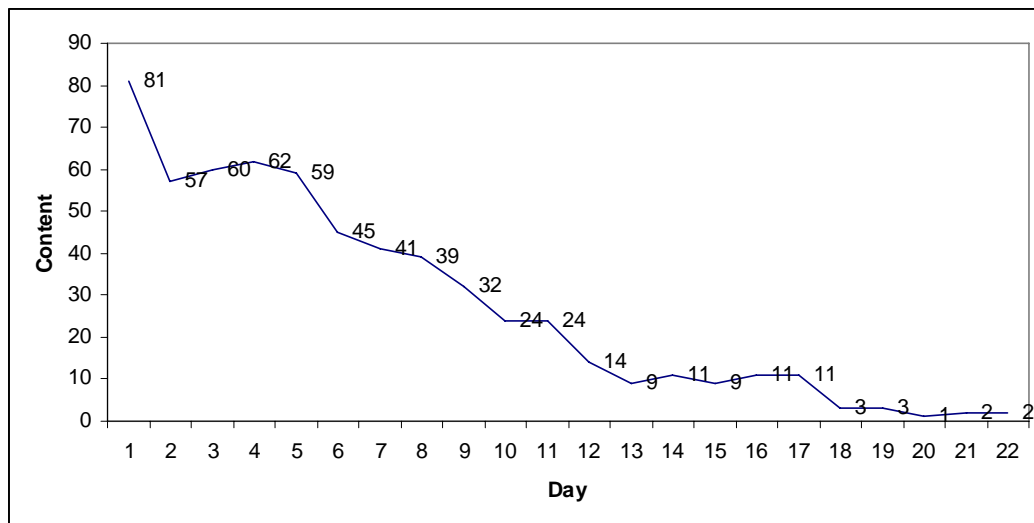
### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the empirical findings of the content analysis related to the direction, orientation and main themes of Iraq War II coverage. The findings presented in this chapter, along with information obtained from interviews with newspaper editors, as discussed in Chapter 8, answer the first research question – “How did the New Zealand metropolitan newspapers cover the Iraq War?” This chapter reports on and discusses the content analysis of Iraq War II coverage by the three leading metropolitan newspapers of New Zealand – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*.

These newspapers extensively reported the developments leading to the political and military confrontation between the US and Iraq. War coverage in New Zealand newspapers started on March 21<sup>st</sup> with 81 items on the conflict. News graphics and photos were widely used to cover the war stories. The extensive coverage given by *The New Zealand Herald* to the war led one of its readers to complain in a letter to the editor: “... Each day I hope for a picture on the front page that is not the Iraq War. Each day I am disappointed” (*The New Zealand Herald*, 2003, p A22).

Coverage gradually declined after April 4, with 45 items on this day, and on May 22 there were only two items on Iraq War II in the three newspapers (Figure 9.1). Of the 600 items analysed in total, 55 percent were news items, followed by letters to the editor (19%), features (13%), opinion (7.3%), news analysis (4.5%) and editorials (1%). The coverage of Iraq War II was extensive, with the front pages generally being dominated by news on this topic. The main source of foreign news was Reuters, with 17.1 percent (n=486) deriving from this agency. This is consistent with a recent study of foreign news content in four New Zealand newspapers (Taira, 2003). The amount of coverage given to the war by *The New Zealand Herald* was 41 percent, followed by *The Dominion Post* (31%) and *The Press* (28%).

Figure 9.1 War coverage during the sampled period (March 21- May 22) by *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* (n=600)



Until April 16, Iraq War II news occupied prime space on the front page or the main sections of the three newspapers. Although occasionally Iraq War II news made it onto front pages after that date, invariably coverage was relegated from the main section (Section A) to the World News section. From March 21 until April 16, the war coverage had presence on the front page and the main section. After May 1, there were no Iraq War II-related items on the front page of any newspaper. The coverage continued, at a declining rate, in the World sections. The decline in coverage may have been due to the fall of the Iraqi Government with the takeover of Baghdad by the US forces on April 10.

The findings show that the newspapers focused on covering the developments in the Gulf region, with more attention to event-oriented news than in-depth analysis of the events unfolding in and around Iraq. Straight news accounted for 55 percent of all the items that appeared in the three newspapers.

More than 37 percent of the 246 items that appeared in *The New Zealand Herald* were straight news (discussed in detail below), while for *The Dominion Post* it was nearly 65 percent and for *The Press* 69 percent (Table 9.1). News analysis accounted for only 4.5 percent while the figure for editorials and opinion and comments were 1.2 percent and 7.3 percent of the total sample. This is an indication of the priority given by the newspapers to event-oriented coverage rather than discussion and contextualisation of the war in Iraq. The focus of the war coverage by the newspapers was, as Thompson acknowledged (Interview with Paul Thompson, 2006) “on the process of military operations” during the invasion phase of the war.

Table 9.1 Content type (n=600)

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	Total
News	92 (15.3%)	122 (20.3%)	116 (19.3%)	330 (55.0%)
within content type	27.9%	37.0%	35.2%	100.0%
within newspaper	37.4%	65.6%	69.0%	55.0%
News analysis	16 (2.7%)	6 (1.0%)	5 (.8%)	27 (4.5%)
within content type	59.3%	22.2%	18.5%	100.0%
within newspaper	6.5%	3.2%	3.0%	4.5%
Feature	46 (7.7%)	16 (2.7%)	16 (2.7%)	78 (13.0%)
within content type	59.0%	20.5%	20.5%	100.0%
within newspaper	18.7%	8.6%	9.5%	13.0%
Editorial	2 (.3%)	2 (.3%)	3 (.5%)	7 (1.2%)
within content type	28.6%	28.6%	42.9%	100.0%
within newspaper	.8%	1.1%	1.8%	1.2%
Opinion, comment	29 (4.8%)	9 (1.5%)	6 (1.0)	44 (7.3%)
within content type	65.9%	20.5%	13.6%	100.0%
within newspaper	11.8%	4.8%	3.6%	7.3%
Letters	61 (10.2%)	31 (5.2%)	22 (3.7%)	114 (19.0%)
within content type	53.5%	27.2%	19.3%	100.0%
within newspaper	24.8%	16.7%	13.1%	19.0%
Total	246 (41.0%)	186 (31.0%)	168 (28.0%)	600 (100.0%)
within content type	41.0%	31.0%	28.0%	100.0%
within newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2 = 58.162$   $df = 10$ ,  $p < .05$

As noted above, however, when the three newspapers were compared, *The New Zealand Herald* appeared to report more news analysis, opinion and comments. News accounted for only 37.4 percent of the total items carried in *The New Zealand Herald*.

As shown in Table 9.1, news analysis accounted for 6.5 percent of the total content in *The New Zealand Herald*, while for *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* the figures were 3.2 percent and 3 percent respectively. Regarding opinion items, *The New Zealand Herald* stood much higher at 11.8 percent compared to 4.8 percent for *The Dominion Post* and 3.6 percent for *The Press*. The findings suggest that *The New Zealand Herald* appeared to give more analysis and thus context to the conflict.

The intensity of coverage was high in the main section (Section A) of the newspapers, which indicates the editorial importance given to the conflict, with 46 items (7.7%) on the front page and 189 items (31.5%) in the main section, with a combined total of 235 items (39.2%) in the main section. The rest of the items were in the world news section (31.8%), editorial and Op-Ed pages (26.3%), business section (2.5%) and other pages (.2%).

Readers' feedback and reaction on the war coverage was given prominence, with the three newspapers publishing 114 letters, which represented 19 percent of the total items (n=600) studied. Letters to the editor accounted for 10.2 percent for *The New Zealand Herald*, 5.2 percent for *The Dominion Post* and 3.7 percent for *The Press*. Within the newspapers, letters were the second dominant content type after news. Of the 114 letters, 23 (20.2%) were disapproving of New Zealand's stand on the war, while 16 (14%) were in favour of it. However most of the letters expressed criticism of the US Government's actions and policies towards Iraq, with 40 items (35.1%) being unfavourable to the US and only 16 (14%) supporting the US. The difference by newspapers was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 58.162$  df=10,  $p < .05$ ).

Each of the three newspapers also emphasised the visual coverage of the war, with extensive use of photos and graphics. Of the 283 photos which were used alongside 253 items, 128 photos (45.2%) were published in *The New Zealand Herald*, 71 (25.1%) in *The Dominion Post* and 84 (29.7%) in *The Press*. There were 35 graphics, which included news graphics about weapons and maps showing the location of fighting in Iraq. *The New Zealand Herald* used 15 graphics (42.9%), followed by *The Dominion Post* 12 (34.3%), and *The Press* eight (22.9%).



## 9.2 Direction and orientation of Iraq War II coverage

*The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* reflected the general public's view of the Iraq War. A *National Business Review* opinion poll in 2003 showed that opposition to unilateral action in Iraq without UN approval grew from 67 percent in October 2002 to 86 percent in February 2003. Only 12 percent of those polled supported New Zealand troops being involved in a military invasion of Iraq without UN sanctions, while 86 percent opposed it and two percent were unsure (Cone, 2003b, p 16). Another poll conducted by UMR Research for *The National Business Review* in April 2003, showed that 56 percent of those polled said that it was wrong for the US to invade Iraq without UN approval, while only 31 percent said they approved of the US decision and 13 percent were unsure (Cone, 2003a).

To study the direction and orientation of the sampled items, all the editorial content was analysed to determine if an item was favourable or unfavourable towards the governments of the US, UK, any other Coalition member and/or Iraq. The items were also analysed to see if they were favourable or unfavourable towards New Zealand's policy on the Iraq conflict. Items that were not oriented towards any of the above positions were seen as neutral. The direction of most items was very clear with regard to the above categories, from the manifest content, although there were some items where coding required careful and systematic analysis. One such item was titled, "Anti-war movement killing itself" which informed readers that the number of people attending anti-war demonstrations had been on the decline since January 2003. Although it might be assumed that a story about anti-war movements and demonstrations by them would be unfavourable to the US, this item was coded as favourable since it indirectly projected that opposition to the US-led war was declining; or rather support for US military actions was gaining. When there were multiple directions, the primary and most prominent position was coded.

The strong anti-war stance taken by the local news media (Cone, 2003a) as reflected in the content analysis shows that the direction of the coverage was not in favour of the war. There were 184 items (30.6%) that were unfavourable to the US, Britain or other Coalition countries. Of these 167 items (27.8%) were unfavourable to the US.

Table 9.2 Direction of item (n=600)

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	<i>Total</i>
Neutral	58 (9.7%)	62 (10.3%)	68 (11.3%)	188 (31.3%)
Unfavourable to US	72 (12.0%)	58 (9.7%)	37 (6.2%)	167 (27.8%)
Favourable to US	42 (7.0%)	19 (3.2%)	17 (2.8%)	78 (13.0%)
Unfavourable to Iraq	28 (4.7%)	23 (3.8%)	24 (4.0%)	75 (12.5%)
Unfavourable to NZ	19 (3.2%)	8 (1.3%)	3 (.5%)	30 (5.0%)
Favourable to NZ	13 (2.2%)	5 (.8%)	4 (.7%)	22 (3.7%)
Favourable to Iraq	3 (.5%)	3 (.5%)	6 (1.0%)	12 (2.0%)
Unfavourable to Coalition	3 (.5%)	4 (.7%)	2 (.3%)	9 (1.5%)
Unfavourable to British	3 (.5%)	2 (.3%)	3 (.5%)	8 (1.3%)
Favourable to Coalition	1 (.2%)	2 (.3%)	2 (.3%)	5 (.8%)
Favourable to British	2 (.3%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)
Unfavourable to US, Iraq	2 (.3%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>246 (41.0%)</b>	<b>186 (31.0%)</b>	<b>168 (28.0%)</b>	<b>600 (100.0%)</b>

$\chi^2 = 36.621$   $df=22$ ,  $p=.026$

there were 78 items (13%) that were favourable to the US (Table 9.2). The number of items that were favourable to Iraq was 12 (2%), while 75 items (12.5%) were unfavourable to Iraq. Interestingly more than 31 percent of the items were neutral, meaning that they were not slanted against the US or Coalition or Iraq. However, if newspapers are looked at individually, in *The New Zealand Herald* the number of neutral items – 58 (9.7%) – was outweighed by the number of those unfavourable towards the US – 72 (12%). In *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* there were 66 (11%) and 60 (10%) neutral items against 64 (10%) and 35 (5.8%) items that were unfavourable to the US.

On 21<sup>st</sup> March *The New Zealand Herald* carried a feature on page 3 which combined several items from *The New York Times*. The headlines had been changed, which made the whole item unfavourable towards the US. The original *New York Times* headline was “Watching Intently as a War Is Born 6,000 Miles Away” (Kelley & Gootman, 2003). However in *The New Zealand Herald* it appeared under the main headline, “City somber as first shots fired.” And the sub-headline (“From bars, lounges and parks, the people who suffered the Trade Centre bombing watch as another city comes under attack”) appears to draw a parallel between the Twin Towers bombing by Al-Qaeda and the attack on Iraq by the US-led Coalition (“City sombre as first shots fired,” 2003). An anti-war protest photo of New Zealanders in front of the American consulate in Auckland was also carried along with the story although it was not at all relevant to the feature.

The editing and re-writing of headlines by New Zealand editors of content from news services and news agencies illustrate the way the editors are able to frame news stories in order to represent different perspectives.

On the back page of Section A, on March 24<sup>th</sup>, *The New Zealand Herald* published five anti-war protest photos from England, Brazil, Japan, South Korea and Scotland. The photos showed antiwar protesters demonstrating in those countries, holding placards which read “Don’t Attack Iraq”, “Not in my Name”, “Not in our name Mr Blair”.

Although the newspapers varied in the direction and orientation of coverage, with *The New Zealand Herald* being the most unfavourable towards the US (12%), followed by *The Dominion Post* (9.7%) and *The Press* (6.2%), the difference by newspapers is not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 36.621$  df=22,  $p = .026$ ).

The direction of the items was also cross-tabulated against the content type, after removing the letters to the editor, to assess how editorial content such as news, features, analysis and opinion stood out. It showed that news and features were more favourable to the US and Coalition compared to other content types. While 26 percent of the news and features were unfavourable to US and Coalition, the figures were comparatively higher for news analysis (44.4%), editorials (42.9%) and opinion (47.7%). Of the 330 news items, 14.5 percent were favourable to the US and Coalition, 2.4 percent favourable to Iraq, 14.2 percent unfavourable to Iraq, while 40 percent were neutral. Likewise, regarding features, the percentage of neutral items was higher, with 39.7 percent, compared to unfavourable items towards US and Coalition at 26.9 percent. However, in all other content types, the percentage of neutral items was lower than the percentage of those with an unfavourable direction towards the US and Coalition. Only 22.2 percent of news analysis was neutral, while the figures for editorials and opinion were 28.6 percent and 20.5 percent respectively. These figures show that in the debate over the conflict in Iraq, the newspapers took an unfavourable position towards the US and Coalition, while straight news and features were more neutral. The overall direction of items towards Iraq was less significant than those directed towards the US and Coalition. The number of items that were either favourable or unfavourable towards

Iraq was small compared to the number that expressed an opinion towards the US and Coalition. For example, only 9.1 percent of opinion pieces were against Iraq, while the figure for those against the US and Coalition was 47.7 percent. Similarly 14.8 percent of the news analysis was unfavourable to Iraq, while 44.4 percent was unfavourable towards the US and Coalition. These figures also show that the coverage in the New Zealand newspapers was more focussed on what the US and Coalition were doing, and that various issues related to the invasion of Iraq were editorialised and debated.

The findings show that *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* carried more neutral items than of *The New Zealand Herald* in the coverage of the Iraq conflict. As shown in Table 9.3, in *The Dominion Post* neutral items accounted for 33.3 percent (62 items) of its content, while in *The Press* it was 40.5 percent (68 items). However, 29.3 percent (72) of *The New Zealand Herald* content were items that were unfavourable to the US, while neutral items accounted for 23.6 percent (58).

Table 9.3 Direction of items within newspapers (n=600)

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	<i>Total</i>
Favourable to US, Coalition	45 (18.3%)	21 (11.3%)	20 (11.9%)	86 (14.3%)
-Favourable to US	42 (17.1%)	19 (10.2%)	17 (10.1%)	78 (13.0%)
-Favourable to British	2 (.8%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.6%)	3 (.5%)
-Favourable to Coalition (other)	1 (.4%)	2 (1.1%)	2 (1.2%)	5 (.8%)
Unfavourable to US, Coalition	78 (31.7)	64 (34.5%)	42 (25%)	184 (30.6)
-Unfavourable to US	72 (29.3%)	58 (31.2%)	37 (22.0%)	167 (27.8%)
-Unfavourable to British	3 (1.2%)	2 (1.1%)	3 (1.8%)	8 (1.3%)
-Unfavourable to Coalition (other)	3 (1.2%)	4 (2.2%)	2 (1.2%)	9 (1.5%)
Favourable to Iraq	3 (1.2%)	3 (1.6%)	6 (3.6%)	12 (2.0%)
Unfavourable to Iraq	28 (11.4%)	23 (12.4%)	24 (14.3%)	75 (12.5%)
-Unfavourable to US and Iraqi	2 (.8%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.6%)	3 (.5%)
Neutral	58 (23.6%)	62 (33.3%)	68 (40.5%)	188 (31.3%)
-Unfavourable to NZ Iraq policy	19 (7.7%)	8 (4.3%)	3 (1.8%)	30 (5.0%)
-Favourable to NZ Iraq policy	13 (5.3%)	5 (2.7%)	4 (2.4%)	22 (3.7%)
Total	246 (100%)	186 (100%)	168(100%)	600 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 36.621$   $df = 22$ ,  $p = .026$

*The New Zealand Herald* carried more items that were unfavourable to the US and its Coalition members, with 78 items (31.7%) that were unfavourable compared to 45 items (18.3%) that were favourable. The newspaper did not, however, favour Iraq in its coverage, with only three favourable items, accounting for 1.2 percent of all the content in *The New Zealand Herald*, while 28 items (11.4%) were unfavourable to Iraq. With regard to the New Zealand Government's policy towards the Iraq conflict, 7.7 percent

of *The New Zealand Herald*'s were unfavourable to the government, while 5.3 percent were favourable.

While more than 33 percent of the 186 items published by *The Dominion Post* were neutral, 64 items (34.5%) were unfavourable to the US and its Coalition partners. Within this, more than 31 percent were unfavourable to the US. On the other hand, items that were favourable to the US and its Coalition forces were comparatively few, with only 21 items (11.3%). Like *The New Zealand Herald*, only three items (1.6%) in *The Dominion Post* were favourable, while 23 items (12.4%) were unfavourable to Iraq. There were eight items that were unfavourable to the New Zealand Government's policy vis-à-vis the Iraq War compared to five items (2.7%) that were favourable. Although not statistically significant, the unfavourable direction of coverage taken by the *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post* is an indication of how systematic news selection processes slanted the coverage. A study of Iraq War II coverage in Bangladesh has shown that the news media took an unfavourable position towards the US and Coalition by giving prominence to news favouring Iraq and Saddam Hussein, while reports that favoured the US and Coalition were edited with negative comments (Zaman, 2004). In the New Zealand newspapers' coverage, however, news content that were unfavourable towards the US and Coalition were given prominence.

Similar to the other two newspapers, *The Press* also carried more items that were unfavourable to the US and its Coalition partners than favourable ones. There were 42 items (25%) that were unfavourable, against 20 items (11.9%) that were favourable. Of these 37 items were unfavourable and 17 items favourable to the US in particular. Regarding the Iraqi Government, 24 items (14.3%) were unfavourable and six items (3.6%) were favourable. There were only three items (1.8%) that were unfavourable to the New Zealand Government's position on the war, while four items (2.4%) were favourable to that stance.

While 188 (31.3%) of the 600 items carried by the three newspapers were neutral, an equally large number of items were unfavourable to the US and Coalition. There were 184 items (30.6%) that were unfavourable, against 86 items (14.3%) that were favourable.

*The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post* gave substantial coverage to the humanitarian crisis arising from the conflict. Opinions regarding the necessity of invading Iraq were diverse and all the newspapers opened the opportunity for discussion from various viewpoints. In an op-ed piece, a *New Zealand Herald* columnist said that “invasion of Iraq is fully justified, whether Saddam has weapons of mass destruction or not” (George, 2003, A 13). But columnist Gordon McLauchlan, questioned the legitimacy of the US-led attack on Iraq in his op-ed column titled “... But war in Iraq certainly doesn’t”:

And why Iraq, when there are many regimes around the world as bad as or worse than Saddam Hussein in their treatment of their citizens – some of them supported in the recent past by the US?

... The US Administration has actually said that it plans to keep its economic and military advantage over the rest of the world as an instrument of foreign policy. In other words might will be right. That is not only deeply amoral, it is frightening (McLauchlan, 2003, p A23).

Another columnist, Gordon Roughan (2003), on the same op-ed page, questioned the moral basis for attacking Iraq (A 23):

Whatever mistakes the US made in the Middle East, I argued, could not justify an attack like that (Sept 11). There was no moral equivalence. But as I watch this obscenity in Iraq, the events of September 2001 suddenly seem a long time ago and less exceptional. Can one unprovoked attack justify another? (Roughan, 2003, p A23)

The New Zealand foreign policy vis-à-vis Iraq was scrutinised by the three newspapers through reader feedback. Of the 30 items that were unfavourable, 23 (76.7%) were letters to the editor; and of the 22 items that were supportive of the government’s Iraq War policy, 16 (72.7%) were letters from readers. The newspapers’ editorial position was not very clear from the letters, as there were few news items that were either favourable or otherwise towards the government. There were only two editorial/opinion pieces against the New Zealand Government, while four items favoured the Labour Government’s position.

When the direction and priority of all the items were analysed, neutral items were found to be the lead items. The priority of an item is determined by identifying headline and

item size and location of the item on the page. An item placed on the top of the page with larger headlines than the other stories would be coded as the main or lead story on the page. For this analysis, letters to the editor were not included as some letters did not have headlines and their placement did not indicate levels of importance attached to them. Newspapers' editorials were also not included in the analysis of item priority as they are always consistent, placed on the editorial page and generally without other competing headlines.

Table 9.4 Direction and priority of item (n=478)

	<i>Lead (First)</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Neutral	68 (14.2%)	53 (11.1%)	33 (6.9%)	23 (4.8%)	177 (37.0%)
Unfavourable to US	59 (12.3%)	39 (8.2%)	23 (4.8%)	5 (1.0%)	126 (26.4%)
Unfavourable to Iraq	28 (5.9%)	26 (5.4%)	9 (1.9%)	3 (.6%)	66 (13.8%)
Unfavourable to US Iraqi	0 (.0%)	2 (.4%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.6%)
Favourable to NZ	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	4 (.8%)
Favourable to US	40 (8.4%)	19 (4.0%)	2 (.4%)	0 (.0%)	61 (12.8%)
Favourable to British	1 (.2%)	2 (.4%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.6%)
Unfavourable to British	4 (.8%)	2 (.4%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	7 (1.5%)
Favourable to Iraq	6 (1.3%)	3 (.6%)	2 (.4%)	0 (.0%)	11 (2.3%)
Favourable to Coalition	2 (.4%)	3 (.6%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	5 (1.0%)
Unfavourable to Coalition	2 (.4%)	5 (1.0%)	2 (.4%)	0 (.0%)	9 (1.9%)
Unfavourable to NZ	3 (.6%)	2 (.4%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	6 (1.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>214 (44.8%)</b>	<b>157 (32.8%)</b>	<b>74 (15.5%)</b>	<b>33 (6.9%)</b>	<b>478 (100.0%)</b>

$X^2 = 51.017$   $df = 33$ ,  $p = .023$

As shown in Table 9.4, of the 214 lead stories, which included news, features, news analysis and opinion, 68 items (14.2%) were neutral while 59 items (12.3%) were unfavourable to the US (n=478). The number of favourable items to the US was 40 (8.45) (n=478). There was a similar pattern in the second level of items, with neutral items (11.1%) followed by unfavourable (8.2%) and favourable (4%) items to the US.

The news content was also analysed to see if there was a relationship between the direction and origin of the item. Of the 68 items that originated from the US, 23 items (33.8%) were favourable to the US and 18 items (26.5%) were unfavourable. There were nine (13.2%) items that were unfavourable to Iraq and none that favoured Iraq. However, 22 percent of the 177 items that originated from Iraq were unfavourable to the US, while only 16 items (2.7%) were positive towards the US. Most of the items that originated from New Zealand were unfavourable to the US, with 69 items (11.5%) in that direction. There were 19 items (3.2%) that were favourable to the US. There was only one item (.2%) that favoured Iraq, while 10 (1.7%) items were critical of Iraq.

In any newspaper, the editorial emphasis and priority is reflected in the size of the headline, especially the banner headlines. These are bold and large headlines written across the page, which indicate that the story is the most important item on the page. The three newspapers are set to seven columns. Of the 46 banner headlines, 17 (36%) were unfavourable and 11 (23.9%) favourable to the US, compared to two (4.3%) that were favourable and six (13%) that were unfavourable to Iraq. Items with headline sizes in the range of one to seven columns and neutral items dominated, followed by items unfavourable to the US. Items that were unfavourable to Iraq scored lowest among the eight headline sizes, which indicate that news content favourable to Iraq were not given prominence in the newspapers.

### 9.3 Direction of content originating from New Zealand

A lot of editorial content related to the Iraq War also originated from New Zealand, which indicates the level of importance given to war journalism discourse in this countries, and attempt by editors to localise the conflict and to make the coverage relevant to New Zealand audiences. The Iraq War related coverage from New Zealand included political debates about the conflict and op-ed pieces by academics, readers and journalists. There were also news and features on how Iraqis living in New Zealand saw the war and how it was impacting on them and their relatives living in Iraq.

Of the total sample (n=600), 31 percent (186 items) originated from New Zealand. More than half of these were letters to the editor (59.7%), followed by news (22.6%), opinion (11.8%), editorial (3.2%), features (2.2%) and news analysis (.5%). The number of news items originating from New Zealand was relatively high, standing at second after Iraq (40.3%), and at the same level as the US (12.7%). It is interesting to note that exactly half of all the comments and opinions (44 items) carried in the three newspapers originated from New Zealand, indicating that emphasis was given to the discussion of the conflict. Half of these comments and opinions were mainly unfavourable towards the US and Coalition, with only 9.1 percent that favoured the US and Coalition.



The content analysis also shows that of all the items that originated from New Zealand, 38.2 percent were unfavourable towards the US and Coalition, against 10.2 percent that were favourable (n=186). As shown in Table 9.5, *The Dominion Post* published more items that were unfavourable to the US and Coalition, with 64.4 percent of all the items carried in the newspaper fitting this category, while the figures for *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Press* were 34.5 percent and 34.9 percent respectively. The direction of *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* Compared towards the US and Coalition differed greatly from that of *The New Zealand Herald*. There were relatively few items that were favourable towards the US and Coalition in *The Dominion Post* (5.4%) and *The Press* (7%) compared to *The New Zealand Herald*'s 14.9 percent. Items that were not favourable to the US and Coalition in *The New Zealand Herald* accounted for 34.5 percent of the items that originated from New Zealand. However in *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* the figures were 46.4 percent and 21.1 percent respectively.

Table 9.5 Direction of item originating from New Zealand, by newspapers (n=186)

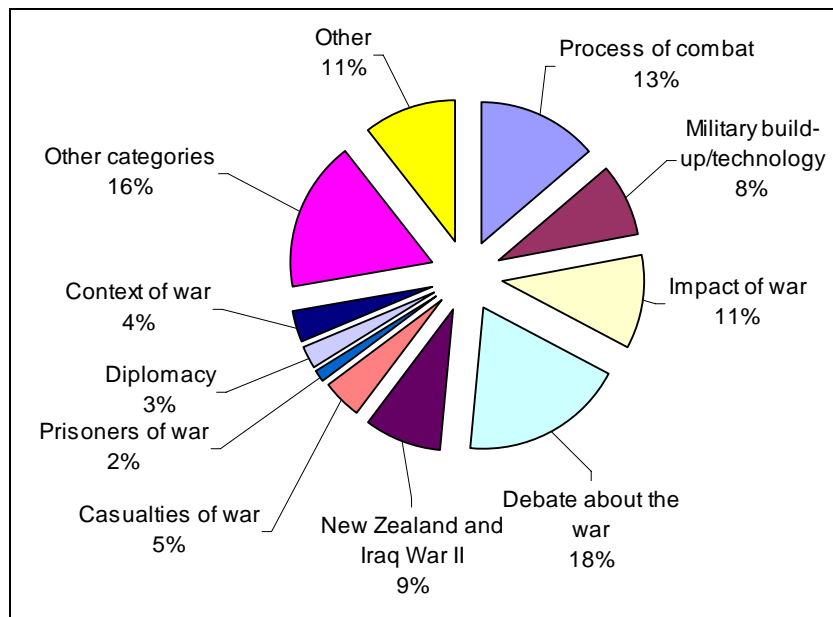
	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	Total
Favourable to US, Coalition	13	3	3	19
within direction of item	68.4%	15.8%	15.8%	100.0%
within newspaper	14.9%	5.4%	7.0%	10.2%
Unfavourable to US, Coalition	30	26	15	71
within direction of item	42.3%	36.6%	21.1%	100.0%
within newspaper	34.5%	46.4%	34.9%	38.2%
Favourable to Iraq	0	0	1	1
within direction of item	.0%	.0%	100.0%	100.0%
within newspaper	.0%	.0%	2.3%	.5%
Unfavourable to Iraq	4	3	3	10
within direction of item	40.0%	30.0%	30.0%	100.0%
within newspaper	4.6%	5.4%	7.0%	5.4%
Neutral	12	11	14	37
within direction of item	32.4%	29.7%	37.8%	100.0%
within newspaper	13.8%	19.6%	32.6%	19.9%
Unfavourable to NZ Iraq policy	17	8	3	28
within direction of item	60.7%	28.6%	10.7%	100.0%
within newspaper	19.5%	14.3%	7.0%	15.1%
Favourable to NZ Iraq policy	11	5	4	20
within direction of item	55.0%	25.0%	20.0%	100.0%
within newspaper	12.6%	8.9%	9.3%	10.8%
Total	87	56	43	186
within direction of item	46.8%	30.1%	23.1%	100.0%
within newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The second biggest category, after unfavourable items towards the US and Coalition, was neutral, which accounted for 19.9 percent of all the items originating from New Zealand. The overall direction towards Iraq was relatively insignificant, with 0.5 percent favourable and 5.4 percent unfavourable (n=186).

#### 9.4 Main themes of coverage

The publicly declared reason of the United States for declaring war on Iraq was Iraq's alleged link with al Qaeda (Pender, 2005; Minter, 2005) and procurement and development of weapons of mass destruction (Pillar, 2006; Bush, 2003). However, focus on these aspects in the coverage of the conflict was very minimal, with only three items (.5%) about Iraq-al Qaeda connections and 10 items (1.7%) on weapons of mass destruction. As shown in Figure 9.2, the main themes of war coverage in the New Zealand newspapers were process of combat (13%), debate about the war (18%) and impact of war (11%).

Figure 9.2 Main themes of coverage (n=600)



The three newspapers placed equal emphasis on the process of combat, with *The New Zealand Herald* publishing 25 items (4.2%), *The Dominion Post* 31 (5.2%) and *The Press* 26 items (4.3%) on this theme. Within the newspapers the process of combat accounted for 10.2 percent for *The New Zealand Herald*, 15.5 percent for *The Dominion Post* and 13.7 percent for *The Press*. Of the 246 items about the Iraq conflict carried in *The New Zealand Herald*, 24 items (9.8%) expressed criticism of the US while only two

items (.8%) were critical of Iraq. The space given by each of the newspapers to the debate about the war was similar. Of the 113 items, *The New Zealand Herald* carried 47 items (5.5%), *The Dominion Post* 36 items (4.8%) and *The Press* 30 items (3.2%).

A marked difference was evident, however, in terms of coverage of military build-up/technology, where *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post* stood close at 22 (3.7%) and 19 (3.1%) items, while for *The Press* the figure was nine items (1.6%).

The debate about the war was vociferous among the newspapers, with 113 items (18.9%) that included criticism of the US and Iraq and anti-war reactions and responses. Criticism of the US was stronger than that of Iraq, with 57 items (9.5%) in the former category while the figure for the latter stood at only 10 items (1.7%). Of the three newspapers, *The New Zealand Herald* published 47 items (7.8%) that fell within the purview of the debate about the war, while *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* remained at a similar position with 36 items (5.9%) and 30 items (5.1%) respectively.

As shown in Table 9.5, more than 13 percent (82 items) of the total number of items under study were on the process of combat, followed by criticism of the US (9.5%), the humanitarian impact (7.2%) and the US military build-up (4.7%). The coverage was not put into context by the New Zealand newspapers, as there were few items giving historical and background information (.8%) on the conflict.

Table 9.5 Main theme of items (n=600)

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	<i>Total</i>
Process of combat	25 (4.2%)	28 (4.7%)	29 (4.8%)	82 (13.7%)
Military build-up/technology	22 (3.7%)	19 (3.1%)	9 (1.6%)	50 (8.4%)
-US Military build-up	11 (1.8%)	11 (1.8%)	6 (1.0%)	28 (4.7%)
-US Military hardware-technology	6 (1.0%)	2 (.3%)	1 (.2%)	9 (1.5%)
-Iraq military build-up	4 (.7%)	3 (.5%)	1 (.2%)	8 (1.3%)
-Iraq military hardware-technology	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1(.2%)
-Coalition military build-up	1(.2%)	2 (.3%)	1(.2%)	4 (.7%)
Impact of war	21 (3.6%)	16 (2.7%)	27 (4.5%)	64 (10.7%)
-Economic impact	7 (1.2%)	3 (.5%)	10 (1.7%)	20 (3.3%)
-Environmental impact	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Humanitarian impact	13 (2.2%)	13 (2.2%)	17 (2.8%)	43 (7.2%)
Casualties of war	11 (1.9%)	9 (1.5%)	7 (1.2%)	27 (4.6%)
-US military casualties	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.3%)	4 (.7%)
-Iraq military casualties	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)
-Iraq civilian casualties	9 (1.5%)	5 (.8%)	2 (.3%)	16 (2.7%)
-Coalition military casualties	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)
-Coalition civilian casualties	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)
Prisoners of war	0 (.0%)	7 (1.2%)	2 (.4%)	9 (1.5%)

-US POW	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)
-Iraq POW	0 (.0%)	4 (.7%)	1 (.2%)	5 (.8%)
-UK POW	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
<b>Debate about the war</b>	<b>47 (5.5%)</b>	<b>36 (4.8%)</b>	<b>30 (3.2%)</b>	<b>113 (18.9%)</b>
-Anti-war demonstrations	5 (.8%)	2 (.3%)	3 (.5%)	10 (1.7%)
-Criticism of US govt	24 (4.0%)	23 (3.8%)	10 (1.7%)	57 (9.5%)
-Criticism of Iraq govt/ military	2 (.3%)	3 (.5%)	5 (.8%)	10 (1.7%)
-Criticism of US/Iraq govts	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Criticism of other Coalition members	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	3 (.5%)
-Anti-war responses, reaction	6 (1.0%)	5 (.8%)	7 (1.2%)	18 (3.0%)
-Pro-war responses, reaction	8 (1.3%)	2 (.3%)	4 (.7%)	14 (2.3%)
<b>New Zealand and Iraq war</b>	<b>32 (5.3%)</b>	<b>15 (2.5%)</b>	<b>5 (.9%)</b>	<b>52 (8.6%)</b>
-Criticism of NZ govt Iraq policy	15 (2.5%)	7 (1.2%)	4 (.7%)	26 (4.3%)
-Support for NZ govt Iraq policy	17 (2.8%)	8 (1.3%)	1 (.2%)	26 (4.3%)
<b>Diplomacy, peace journalism</b>	<b>8 (1.3%)</b>	<b>5 (.9%)</b>	<b>2 (.4%)</b>	<b>15 (2.5%)</b>
-Diplomatic efforts by UN	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Diplomatic efforts by US	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)
-Diplomatic efforts by others	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)
-Political/ diplomatic mobilisation for war by US	5 (.8%)	3 (.5%)	1 (.2%)	9 (1.5%)
-Political/ diplomatic mobilisation for war by Coalition	2 (.3%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)
<b>Context of war</b>	<b>14 (2.2%)</b>	<b>3 (.5%)</b>	<b>5 (.8%)</b>	<b>22 (3.7%)</b>
-Background to conflict	5 (.8%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	5 (.8%)
-Iraq history, culture	2 (.3%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)	4 (.7%)
-Iraq-Al Qaida link	2 (.3%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.5%)
-WMD	5 (.8%)	2 (.3%)	3 (.5%)	10 (1.7%)
<b>Other categories</b>	<b>41 (6.7%)</b>	<b>29 (4.9%)</b>	<b>33 (5.4%)</b>	<b>103 (17.2%)</b>
-About Iraqi officials	8 (1.3%)	10 (1.7%)	5 (.8%)	23 (3.8%)
-Iraq reconstruction	12 (2.0%)	7 (1.2%)	11 (1.8%)	30 (5.0%)
-Media, War coverage	5 (.8%)	3 (.5%)	2 (.3%)	10 (1.7%)
-Iraqi atrocities, crimes, abuse	6 (1.0%)	3 (.5%)	2 (.3%)	11 (1.8%)
-US, Coalition crimes	2 (.3%)	1 (.2%)	4 (.7%)	7 (1.2%)
-Civil unrest	6 (1.0%)	5 (.8%)	7 (1.2%)	18 (3.0%)
-Iraqi Opposition	2 (.3%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)	4 (.7%)
<b>Other</b>	<b>25 (4.2%)</b>	<b>19 (3.2%)</b>	<b>19 (3.2%)</b>	<b>63 (10.5%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>246 (41%)</b>	<b>186 (31%)</b>	<b>168 (38%)</b>	<b>600 (100%)</b>

$\chi^2 = 100.196$  df=86,  $p = .140$

The economic, environmental and humanitarian impact of the Iraq War was featured prominently by the newspapers, with 85 items (10.7%) on this subject. Emphasis was more on the humanitarian (7.2%) and economic impact (3.3%). *The Press* gave a higher level of attention to the impact of war with 37 items (4.5%), followed by *The New Zealand Herald* (3.6%) and *The Dominion Post* (2.7%). The difference by newspapers was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 100.196$  df=86,  $p = .140$ ).

The coverage did not focus much on the casualties of the conflict. There were only 27 items (4.6%) about the casualties of the war, with *The New Zealand Herald* publishing 11 items (1.9%), followed by *The Dominion Post* (1.5%) and *The Press* (1.2%). The

three newspapers gave more attention to the Iraqi civilian casualties than US military or Coalition casualties. Iraqi civilian casualties accounted for 16 items (2.7%), while US military casualties remained at four items (.7%).

In the coverage of Iraqi civilian casualties, the impact of missile attacks and bombing on Iraq was featured prominently in the three newspapers. *The Dominion Post* on page A2 had a page-lead story about the use of cluster bombs on Iraq by the US, and quoted US military officials who acknowledged that they were investigating the deaths of at least 11 civilians from cluster bombs ("Cluster bombs unleashed on Iraq," 2003, p A2). *The New Zealand Herald* carried a brief article about the cluster bombs and how they were used in Iraq by the United States. The article "Deadly weapons with long legacy", written by a journalist from *The Independent*, said that unexploded bomblets posed a danger to civilians (Whitaker, 2003, p B2).

The publication of strong anti-war journalist Robert Fisk's reports from Iraq in *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post* further emphasised the unfavourable direction the newspapers took towards the US.

In March 29-30 issue, *The New Zealand Herald* carried a feature by Robert Fisk of *The Independent*, headlined "Truth about Basra in the raw footage", focusing on the civilian casualties resulting from the US and British attacks on Iraq. He wrote that "far more terrible than the pictures of the dead British soldiers, however, is the tape from Basra's largest hospital as victims of the Anglo-American bombardment are brought to the operating rooms shrieking in pain" (Fisk, 2003d, p B16). *The Dominion Post* also carried the Fisk story, with a banner headline "Film reveals Basra's suffering" on the front page of its World Section (Fisk, 2003b, p B1).

*The New Zealand Herald* also looked at the humanitarian impact of the war in terms of civilian casualties. The article, "Innocent victims on the new front line", from *The New York Times* focused on the impact of the conflict. It also carried a photo of an injured boy being led to surgery (Hicks & Burns, 2003, p B2). Another powerful expression of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq resulting from Coalition bombing was the article carried on the front page of *The New Zealand Herald* on 24<sup>th</sup> March. The article titled "The

shock of war” by Robert Fisk, accompanied by a five-column photo of a wounded Iraqi child, occupied the entire front page of the newspaper (Fisk, 2003c).

On 2<sup>nd</sup> April, on page two of the main section *The New Zealand Herald* carried an article from *The Independent* highlighting the crisis faced by hospitals in Baghdad in treating injured civilians. Under the headline “Civilian casualties grow by hour”, the item reported that 12 hospitals, where headache pills were the only anaesthetic, had reached breaking point:

At one point, the military and civilian toll from bombing by Coalition jets and clashes with the United States forces along the Tigris was so heavy that one hospital received 100 casualties an hour (Milmo, 2003, p A2).

The article appeared on the front page of *The New Zealand Herald*, under a banner headline, in the national edition. *The New Zealand Herald* gave the most prominence to Iraq civilian casualties, with nine (1.5%) items on this subject, while *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* carried five (.8%) and two items (.3%) respectively.

*The Dominion Post* carried a feature by Robert Fisk in its World News section, titled “Death comes to Babylon”, highlighting the impact of bombing on civilians and their predicament. Fisk, a strong critic of the war, wrote (Fisk, 2003a, p B1):

But something terrible happened around Hillah this week, something unforgivable and something contrary to international law. One hesitates, as I say, to talk of human rights in this land of torture, but if the Americans and British don’t watch out, they are likely to find themselves condemned for what they have always – and rightly accused Iraq of: war crimes.

*The New Zealand Herald* published a long feature from AP about the Iraqi civilian casualties in Hillah, blamed on US cluster munitions, which scatter many tiny bomblets over a wide area. The article, with accompanying photo of an Iraqi weeping over the bodies of his six children, wife, two brothers, mother and father, highlighted the horrors of war (“Bomblets still wreaking havoc,” 2003, p B4).

With regard to the position taken by the New Zealand Government on the invasion of Iraq, the three newspapers had a balanced view. There were 26 items (4.3%) for and

against the government's policy. *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post* carried more items that were supportive of the government's stand, although they were significantly small compared to those that conveyed criticism of the policy.

Though the existence of weapons of mass destruction was an important reason, as proclaimed by the US, for invading Iraq, coverage of the issue was minimal, as mentioned earlier. *The New Zealand Herald* carried five items (.8%), *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* two (.3%) and three (.5%) respectively. However *The New Zealand Herald* highlighted the fact that no WMD had been found and that there had been an intelligence failure with regard to WMD in Iraq. This newspaper carried a story credited to Reuters and AFP, which said that the US should have been embarrassed over their failure to uncover weapons of mass destruction in Iraq ("Embarrassing lack of weapons," 2003, p B14). The British intelligence services came under fire after the Iraq War for misleading the nation on the issue of weapons of mass destruction. *The New Zealand Herald* published a news analysis from *The Telegraph* on May 1, highlighting the 'spin of the spies', in justifying an attack on Iraq. The article quoted opposition MPs as saying that they had been 'duped' into supporting a war by intelligence reports that left them in no doubt that biological and chemical weapons would be found (Sylvester, 2003, p A16).

Despite the lack of evidence of chemical weapons, *The New Zealand Herald* ran a lengthy feature from *The New York Times* on the front page of its World news section about chemical weapons in Iraq. Quoting a former Iraqi scientist who had apparently worked on Iraq's chemical weapons programme, the article said that Iraq had destroyed chemical weapons and biological warfare equipment just before the US-led invasion. The article appeared to favour the US position that Iraq had a chemical weapons programme (Miller, 2003, p B1).

In the same way that *The New Zealand Herald* published criticism of the US for failing to prove the pre-war allegation of WMD in Iraq, *The Dominion Post* ran a news item about the criticism levelled against the United States and Britain for failing to find banned weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The AFP item quoted *The Wall Street Journal* as saying, "If the United States does not make any undisputed discoveries of

forbidden weapons, the failure will feed already widespread scepticism abroad about its motives for going to war” (“Pressure on to find banned weapons,” 2003, p A2).

## 9.5 Episodic and thematic coverage

All the editorial content in the sample, excluding letters to the editor, was analysed to determine the orientation of the coverage in terms of episodic and thematic framing. With episodic framing the news item is event-oriented, while with thematic framing there is context to the story. According to Iyengar (Iyengar, 1991), in a thematically framed item there is more “in-depth, interpretive analysis”.

The findings show that overall the coverage was more event-oriented, with 74.5 percent of the items episodic and only 25.5 percent thematic (n=486). As shown in Table 9.6 most of the news agencies and newspapers leaned towards episodic coverage. Regarding content sourced from the major news agencies, 95.2 percent of Reuters’ items were episodic, while the figures for AFP and AP were 96.2 percent and 93.8 percent respectively. On the other hand, most of the content attributed to US and UK newspapers was focused on thematic coverage.

Table 9.6 Episodic/thematic coverage by news agencies, newspapers

	<i>Episodic</i>	<i>Thematic</i>	<i>Total</i>
Reuters	79 (95.2%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100.0%)
AP	61 (93.8%)	4 (6.2%)	65 (100.0%)
Independent	21 (48.8%)	22 (51.2%)	43 (100.0%)
New York Times	23 (67.6%)	11 (32.4%)	34 (100.0%)
NZ Herald	13 (41.9%)	18 (58.1%)	31 (100.0%)
Times of London	25 (86.2%)	4 (13.8%)	29 (100.0%)
AFP	25 (96.2%)	1 (3.8%)	26 (100.0%)
Dominion Post	15 (62.5%)	9 (37.5%)	24 (100.0%)
Telegraph	14 (70.0%)	6 (30.0%)	20 (100.0%)
Press	11 (57.9%)	8 (42.1%)	19 (100.0%)
No sources credited	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)	16 (100.0%)
Observer	6 (40.0%)	9 (60.0%)	15 (100.0%)
Press Association	13 (92.9%)	1 (7.1%)	14 (100.0%)
LA Times	9 (75.0%)	3 (25.0%)	12 (100.0%)
Washington Post	8 (72.7%)	3 (27.3%)	11 (100.0%)
Other	1 (10.0%)	9 (90.0%)	10 (100.0%)
NZPA	9 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	9 (100.0%)
KRT	8 (88.9%)	1 (11.1%)	9 (100.0%)
AAP	5 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	5 (100.0%)
The Age	2 (50.0%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (100.0%)



Newsweek	1 (25.0%)	3 (75.0%)	4 (100.0%)
Bloomberg	2 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (100.0%)
Agencies	1 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (100.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>362 (74.5%)</b>	<b>124 (25.5%)</b>	<b>486 (100%)</b>

$\chi^2=126.031$   $df=22$ ,  $p<.05$

More than 51 percent of the content from *The Independent* was thematic, while the figure for *The Observer* was 60 percent followed by *The New York Times* (32.4%), *The Telegraph* (30%), *The Washington Post* (27.3%), *The Los Angeles Times* (25%) and *The Times* of London (13.2%).

However *The New Zealand Herald* (58.1%) carried significantly more thematic items, while the figures for *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* were 37.5 percent and 42.1 percent. The difference by news agencies was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=126.031$   $df=22$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

Among the three newspapers, *The New Zealand Herald* carried more thematic items compared to *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*. *The New Zealand Herald* published 76 thematic items, which is 15.6 percent of the sample ( $n=486$ ), while the figures for the other two newspapers were significantly lower (Table 9.7), at 5.1 percent for *The Dominion Post* and 4.7 percent for *The Press*.

Table 9.7 Episodic/thematic coverage by newspapers ( $n=486$ )

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	Total
Episodic	109 (22.4%)	130 (26.7%)	123 (25.3%)	362 (74.5%)
within category	30.1%	35.9%	34.0%	100.0%
within newspaper	58.9%	83.9%	84.2%	74.5%
Thematic	76 (15.6%)	25 (5.1%)	23 (4.7%)	124 (25.5%)
within category	61.3%	20.2%	18.5%	100.0%
within newspaper	41.1%	16.1%	15.8%	25.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>185 (38.1%)</b>	<b>155 (31.9%)</b>	<b>146 (30.0%)</b>	<b>486 (100.0%)</b>
within category	38.1%	31.9%	30.0%	100.0%
within newspaper	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$\chi^2=38.092$   $df=2$ ,  $p<.05$

However, all the newspapers carried more episodic items than thematic, with *The Press* publishing 123 episodic items, followed by *The Dominion Post* (130) and *The New Zealand Herald* (109). In terms of the total coverage by the newspapers ( $n=486$ ), 84.2 percent of the items in *The Press* were episodic, followed by *The Dominion Post*

(83.9%) and *The New Zealand Herald* (58.9%). The difference by newspapers was statistically significant ( $\chi^2= 38.092$   $df=2$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

## 9.6 Discussion

With the start of Iraq War II, the New Zealand press prioritised the war coverage, moving the war news to the front page and main section. From March 21 to 16 April, Iraq dominated the front pages and main sections of the three newspapers. *The New Zealand Herald* promised its readers on March 20, 2003 that they would be given the “most comprehensive coverage available in New Zealand” and *The Dominion Post* pledged that it would bring an “outstanding variety of news sources” from anywhere the news was breaking. Each newspaper used special logos to represent conflict in their coverage of the war, calling it “attack on Iraq” (*The New Zealand Herald*), “war in Iraq” (*The Dominion Post*) and “war on Iraq” (*The Press*). There were 81 items related to Iraq War II in the three newspapers on March 21, with most of the items being carried in Section A. The saturation of news space in New Zealand newspapers by war journalism discourse reflects the high news values of conflict-oriented news. The empirical findings of this research substantiate earlier research that in international news coverage, news media place importance on military conflicts (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Nam, 1970).

However, the war journalism discourse lacked local input, as the economic costs of sending reporters to the fronts outweighed commercial benefits. For the three newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – all owned by foreign media companies, sourcing content from sister publications was a better economic choice in the market driven media industry. *The New Zealand Herald* extensively used content from Dublin-based Independent News and Media affiliates, while *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* relied on the publications of Australian-listed company Independent Newspapers Limited for content (Interview with Paul Thompson, 2006). The Australian company Fairfax bought all INL publishing assets in New Zealand for NZ\$1.2 billion in June 2003. Hence, during the period of this research *The*

*Dominion Post* and *The Press* were under the ownership of INL, 45 percent of which was controlled by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp (Louisson, 2003).

The attempts by the newspapers to widen the scope of coverage within the economic limitations and despite market forces was noted by Tully when he said that "some have made a serious attempt to recognise that we're usually heavily reliant on the western news agencies and have sought to widen the lens a bit" (Cited in Hill, 2003). However, the empirical findings in this research show that despite the attempts by the newspapers to source content from many sources, there was in fact, no diversity, as the alternative voices in the conflict were given little coverage by the news agencies and other content providers. The mainstream news agencies or the 'Big Three' relied heavily on US and Coalition officials and thus to a large extent set the media agenda for the New Zealand press.

The fact that more than 38 percent of the items that originated from New Zealand were unfavourable to the US and Coalition, is an indication of the editorial position taken by the newspapers. The findings show that when the newspapers are able to develop content, which may be opinion or news analysis or features, the perspectives are comparatively different from that of content coming from news agencies and other news services. These findings are also similar to those of Comrie and Fountaine, who found that editorial and commentary originating from New Zealand were unfavourable towards the US and "overwhelmingly critical" of US President George W Bush (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005, p 248).

Iraq War II was a heavily 'mediated war', but the high intensity of the coverage declined with the fall of Baghdad on April 10. Conflict is always a high news value event, however the extensive coverage was also a reflection of concerns that Iraq War II would have an economic and social impact on New Zealand. The empirical findings show that there is a relationship between newspaper circulation, and amount of coverage. *The New Zealand Herald*, which is the largest newspaper in terms of circulation accounted for 41 percent of the total sampled items (n=600), followed by *The Dominion Post* (31 percent) and *The Press* (28 percent).

The coverage also differed in terms of how the newspapers put the conflict into context. *The New Zealand Herald* used more news analysis and features compared to *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*. In *The New Zealand Herald* straight news represented 15.3 percent of the items, while the figures for *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* were 20.3 percent and 19.3 percent respectively. More than 59 percent of the news analysis was carried in *The New Zealand Herald*, while the figure was low for both *The Dominion Post* (22.2%) and *The Press* (18.5%). *The New Zealand Herald* coverage was more context-oriented and thematic than the other newspapers. Of the thematic content, 15.6 percent was carried in *The New Zealand Herald*, and the figures were relatively low for *The Dominion Post* (5.1%) and *The Press* (4.7%). Among the three newspapers, thematic coverage was 25.5 percent, while episodic items accounted for 74.5 percent (n=486).

On the other hand, event-oriented or episodic coverage was higher in the *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* compared to *The New Zealand Herald*. Thematic coverage of conflicts is important as it helps the audiences decode the messages and understand the complex issues. Thematic coverage helps to explain the news events. The attempt by *The New Zealand Herald* to give a more focussed coverage of the war can be seen by this newspaper's use of thematic framing when presenting stories of the conflict. As thematic coverage gives "in-depth, interpretive analysis" (Iyengar, 1991, p 14), it was important for the New Zealand press, given the public and government attitude towards the war, to focus on a more thematic approach to the coverage.

A look at the topics of coverage shows that the debate about the war was high in the three newspapers, covering aspects such as anti-war demonstrations and criticisms of the US, Coalition and Iraq. Such debate accounted for 18.9 percent of the total sample (n=600). Of these *The New Zealand Herald* accounted for 5.5 percent followed by *The Dominion Post* (4.8%) and *The Press* (3.2%).

The coverage of the impact of the war stood at 10.7 percent, while coverage of the military and civilian casualties of the conflict were reported at 4.6 percent. All the newspapers focused on the humanitarian impact, followed by the economic impact. On the casualties of the war, the highest category of coverage was Iraqi civilian casualties

(2.7%), compared to US military casualties (.7%), Iraq military casualties (.5%), Coalition military casualties (.5%) and Coalition civilian casualties.

In military confrontations involving major powers such as the US, news values become higher and Iraq War II was no exception. In the post 9/11 world, the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq were seen in the context of the 'war on terror' and this further increased the news values. The globalisation of media, and economic interdependence were also reasons for people in New Zealand to follow the military and political developments more than 1500 kilometres away in the Persian Gulf region. New Zealand was economically impacted by the conflict in Iraq, like most other countries in the world. The Middle East is a key export market for New Zealand dairy and meat products, and the country depends on oil from the region. Any impact on the supply and price of oil would be of concern to New Zealanders.

Thussu and Freedman (2003) identified three key roles of the news media in war journalism, was seen as a critical observer, publicist and a battleground where "war is imagined and executed" (p 5). The war coverage in New Zealand was, however, distinct despite the country's cultural and socio-economic ties with the US, Britain and Australia -- the key allies in the 'Coalition of the Willing' to oust Saddam Hussein. The war journalism discourse in New Zealand focused on the impact of the conflict and the humanitarian crisis. In the content that originated from New Zealand, written by newspaper staff, The New Zealand mainstream newspapers were to a certain extent 'critical observers'.

However, in their use of foreign news reports the New Zealand newspapers were not 'critical observers', partly because the editorial content was mainly sourced from news agencies and US and UK newspapers, which relied heavily on official sources. Nonetheless, the New Zealand newspapers were not 'lap dogs' in the coverage of the 'war on terror', as they focused much on the humanitarian impact of the conflict.

The degree of criticalness in the newspapers was, however, very low, which may have been the result of the heavy reliance on news agencies for war coverage. Although for international news coverage New Zealand newspapers usually rely on only a few news

agencies, notably Reuters, AP, AFP and AAP, more diverse sources were used during Iraq War II, it being a major international conflict. In the war coverage the three mainstream metropolitan newspapers used more than 15 different news agencies and newspapers. This gave a greater choice in the selection of content.

In the mainstream discussion of Iraq War II, the ruling Labour Government did not favour the unilateral actions by the US to use force, instead taking a multilateral approach to tackle the Saddam regime through the UN system (Parliamentary Debates, 2003). The main opposition parties, National and Act, demanded that New Zealand side with her traditional allies in the war (Power, 2003; Young & Mold, 2003). Away from the corridors of power, the New Zealand public opposed invasion of Iraq without UN approval (Roy Morgan Research Polls, 2003; Cone, 2003b; Phipps, 2004). An opinion poll conducted a month before the US-led coalition forces attacked Iraq, revealed that 86 percent of the New Zealand public opposed a war without UN sanctions (Cone, 2003b). The editorial content that originated from New Zealand also strongly reflected the opposition to the US-led war. A total of 186 items originated from New Zealand, which included news, opinion and letters to the editor. Of this only 10.2 percent of the items were favourable to the US, while 37.1 percent were unfavourable. More than 59 percent of these were readers' feedback to the newspapers. Of the readers' feedback, 35.1 percent was unfavourable to the US, while only 14 percent favoured the US. None of the six editorials that appeared in the three newspapers favoured the US, while three were unfavourable to the US. And 50 percent of the opinion and comments, written by the newspapers' staff and contributors, were unfavourable to the US, while only 9.1 percent were favourable. This shows that when the mainstream debate on the Iraq War highlighted government and public opposition to the unilateral stance taken by the US and its coalition partners, the news media also reflected a similar line in the content originating from New Zealand.

Perhaps, in a manner explained by the indexing hypothesis, the newspapers were orienting themselves in line with the mainstream debate in which the government and the public had similar views on the war compared to the pro-war policy of some opposition parties. However, the basis of the index hypothesis as proposed by Bennett differed considerably from the New Zealand case. Bennett's model (1990) was based on

the US foreign policy and conduct of military operations in Central America, with oppositional and public consensus. However, although, New Zealand was not involved in any military operation, the government policy on Iraq and the public attitude to the war were similar.

## CHAPTER 10: SETTING THE NEWS AGENDA

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### 10.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the empirical findings of the content analysis, and by so doing addresses the research issues such as international news flows and dependence on mainstream news agencies and other content providers by the New Zealand newspapers in Iraq War II coverage. The traditional news agencies and major news services have become the dominant suppliers of news and information content to a large global market of news media. These media institutions have also been key instruments in the globalisation process, first by selling a commodity that enhances the global exchange of news and information, and secondly as part of a global media system.

The discussion of the findings in this chapter includes an examination of the extent of US and Coalition domination of the news through government and military sources. As this research focuses on a major military conflict, the study also aims to explore the extent of source domination in war coverage. As discussed in previous chapters, in routine news production, source-media relations are important and both sectors benefit from one another. Sources, as primary definers of news, need to communicate to the



public through news media, while the information raw materials from the sources are equally important for the journalists and editors. During military conflicts, military and government officials have immediate and compelling reasons to dominate the media agenda, and thus try to influence the communication processes through media management strategies, as discussed in Chapter 2. This empirical chapter will demonstrate to what extent official sources dominated the war journalism discourse in New Zealand.

## 10.2 International news agencies and newspapers as content providers

In the analysis of news content providers, letters to the editors were omitted, as their content did not derive from commercial media entities. Rather these letters comprised reader feedback regarding the news agenda that was being set by the newspapers in the war coverage. The newspapers also used multiple news sources in single items, which meant that content was combined to create concise and comprehensive stories to cover the war-related issues. However such stories were very limited. Of the 486 stories, only 37 items were credited with two news sources and five items with three sources. This shows the relative lack of effort by the newspapers to combine multiple sources in order to make news coverage more comprehensive. Where multiple sources were credited for an item, the first news source was coded for analysis. The main reason for use of the first cited agency was because most of the content came from the source first credited. *The New Zealand Herald* carried 185 items (38.1%), while *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* published 155 (31.9%) and 146 items (30%) respectively (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 News agencies, newspapers

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	<i>Total</i>
Reuters	20 (24.1%)	27 (32.5%)	36 (43.4%)	83 (100.0%)
AFP	4 (15.4%)	13 (50.0%)	9 (34.6%)	26 (100.0%)
AP	13 (20.0%)	34 (52.3%)	18 (27.7%)	65 (100.0%)
AAP	0 (.0%)	2 (40.0%)	3 (60.0%)	5 (100.0%)
NZPA	2 (22.2%)	2 (22.2%)	5 (55.6%)	9 (100.0%)
New Zealand Herald	31 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	31 (100.0%)
Dominion Post	0 (.0%)	24 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	24 (100.0%)
Press	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	19 (100.0%)	19 (100.0%)
Times of London	0 (.0%)	10 (34.5%)	19 (65.5%)	29 (100.0%)
Independent	29 (67.4%)	14 (32.6%)	0 (.0%)	43 (100.0%)
New York Times	34 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	34 (100.0%)
Washington Post	0 (.0%)	3 (27.3%)	8 (72.7%)	11 (100.0%)
Observer	10 (66.7%)	0 (.0%)	5 (33.3%)	15 (100.0%)
KRT	1 (11.1%)	4 (44.4%)	4 (44.4%)	9 (100.0%)

The Age	1 (25.0%)	1 (25.0%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (100.0%)
Telegraph	16 (80.0%)	4 (20.0%)	0 (.0%)	20 (100.0%)
Press Association	1 (7.1%)	7 (50.0%)	6 (42.9%)	14 (100.0%)
Bloomberg	1 (50.0%)	1 (50.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (100.0%)
LA Times	0 (.0%)	5 (41.7%)	7 (58.3%)	12 (100.0%)
Newsweek	4 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	4 (100.0%)
Agencies	1 (100.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (100.0%)
No sources credited	10 (62.5%)	3 (18.8%)	3 (18.8%)	16 (100.0%)
Other	7 (70.0%)	1 (10.0%)	2 (20.0%)	10 (100.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>185 (38.1%)</b>	<b>155 (31.9%)</b>	<b>146 (30%)</b>	<b>486 (100%)</b>

$\chi^2 = 353.332$  df=44,  $p < .05$

Reuters and AP, which are two of the major international news services, dominated the coverage, with 83 items from Reuters and 65 items from AP. Reuters accounted for 17.1 percent and AP 13.4 percent of the total items ( $n=486$ ). As shown in Table 10.1, other news agencies and newspapers whose content was frequently used by the New Zealand newspapers included *The Independent* (43 items), *The New York Times* (34), *The Times* of London (29) and AFP (26).

The use of news sources varied among the newspapers, with *The Press* relying heavily on Reuters for its war coverage. This newspaper used 36 items (43.3%) from Reuters, while *The Dominion Post* used 27 (32.5%) and *The New Zealand Herald* 20 (24.1%). On the other hand, *The Dominion Post* used more AP stories than the other newspapers, publishing more than half of the 65 stories used by all the newspapers. The figure for *The Dominion Post* was 34 items (52.3%), followed by *The Press* 18 (27.7%) and *The New Zealand Herald* 13 (20%).

Thus the use of international news agencies and other news sources varied among the newspapers significantly. *The New Zealand Herald* relied mainly on *The New York Times* and *The Independent* for Iraq War coverage.

*The New Zealand Herald* was the only newspaper to use *The New York Times* stories, which accounted for 18.4 percent (34 items) of sources used within the newspaper. Although the three newspapers used major wire services such as Reuters, AP and AFP, they also relied on content from US and British newspapers, and with some exclusivity, as was the case with the use of *The New York Times* content by *The New Zealand Herald*.

Of the British newspapers, *The Times* of London was used by *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*, while *The Independent* was used by *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post*. *The Press* carried 19 items (65.5%) from *The Times*, while *The Dominion Post* published 10 items (34.5%). *The New Zealand Herald* ran more stories from *The Independent*, with 29 items (67.4%), while the figure for *The Dominion Post* was 14 (32.6%). According to Paul Thompson, editor of *The Press*, the reason for *The Press* not using content from *The Independent*, a newspaper which took a strong anti-war position, was that it did not have clipping rights to the content (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006).

*The Daily Telegraph* stories were published in *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post*. *The New Zealand Herald* carried 16 items (80%), while *The Dominion Post* published only four (20%). Content from *The Observer* was carried by *The New Zealand Herald*, with 10 items (66.7%), and *The Press* five (33.3%). *The New Zealand Herald* gave more Iraq War related local coverage compared to the other two newspapers. *The New Zealand Herald* developed 31 items, while the figure for *The Dominion Post* was 24 and for *The Press* 19. The New Zealand Press Association filed nine items which were carried by the three newspapers.

The content analysis showed that in terms of item origin, more items originated from New Zealand than any other country. This was due to the large number of letters (114) that were published in the newspapers (Table 10.2). Of the 186 (31%) items that originated from New Zealand, 42 (22.6%) were news items, one news analysis (.5%), four features (2.2%), six editorials (3.2%), 22 opinion or comments (11.8%) and 111 letters (59.7%).

Table 10.2 Item origin

	<i>NZ Herald</i>	<i>Dominion Post</i>	<i>Press</i>	<i>Total</i>
New Zealand	87 (14.5%)	56 (9.3%)	43 (7.2%)	186 (31.0%)
Iraq	66 (11.0%)	58 (9.7%)	53 (8.8%)	177 (29.5%)
US	34 (5.7%)	19 (3.2%)	15 (2.5%)	68 (11.3%)
Unclear	19 (3.2%)	22 (3.7%)	27 (4.5%)	68 (11.3%)
UK	14 (2.3%)	11 (1.8%)	8 (1.3%)	33 (5.5%)
Front-line nations	14 (2.3%)	11 (1.8%)	6 (1.0%)	31 (5.2%)
Australia	5 (.8%)	4 (.7%)	4 (.7%)	13 (2.2%)
Other	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	5 (.8%)	7 (1.2%)
Middle East	3 (.5%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	5 (.8%)

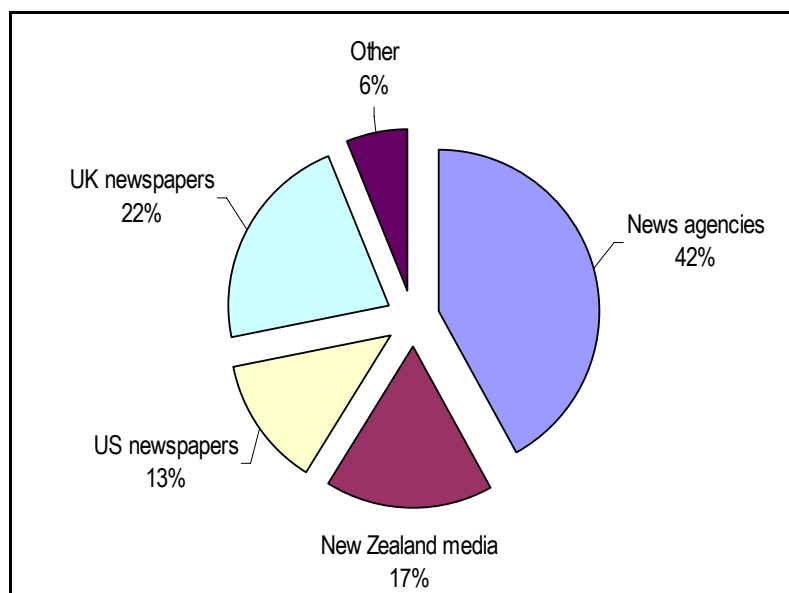
UN	0 (.0%)	2 (.3%)	3 (.5%)	5 (.8%)
Europe (non-Coalition)	2 (.3%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.3%)	5 (.8%)
Other Coalition nations	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
Asia	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>246 (41.0%)</b>	<b>186 (31.0%)</b>	<b>168 (28.0%)</b>	<b>600 (100.0%)</b>

$\chi^2 = 30.001$   $df = 24$ ,  $p > .05$

As shown in Table 10.2, 177 items (29.5%) originated from Iraq, followed by the US with 68 items (11.3%). The UK and Australia accounted for 33 items (5.5%) and 13 items (2.2%) respectively. Very few items originated from Asia, the UN and the Middle East. Most of the stories originated from the key players in the war – the US, UK, Australia and Iraq – with 291 items (48.5%) originating from these regions ( $n = 600$ ).

Of the 68 items originating from the US, 23 items (33.8%) were favourable to the US, 18 unfavourable (26.5%) and 16 neutral (23.5%). Amongst the items originating from most of the other regions, there were more unfavourable items to the US than favourable items. Of the 177 items originating from Iraq, 40 items (22.6%) were unfavourable to the US, while 16 items (9%) were favourable and 83 items (46.9%) neutral. Of the 12 items favourable to Iraq that were carried in the three newspapers, five items originated from Iraq, and none came from any of the Coalition countries. The difference by newspapers was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 30.001$   $df = 24$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

Figure 10.1 Composition of different news content providers in the New Zealand newspapers

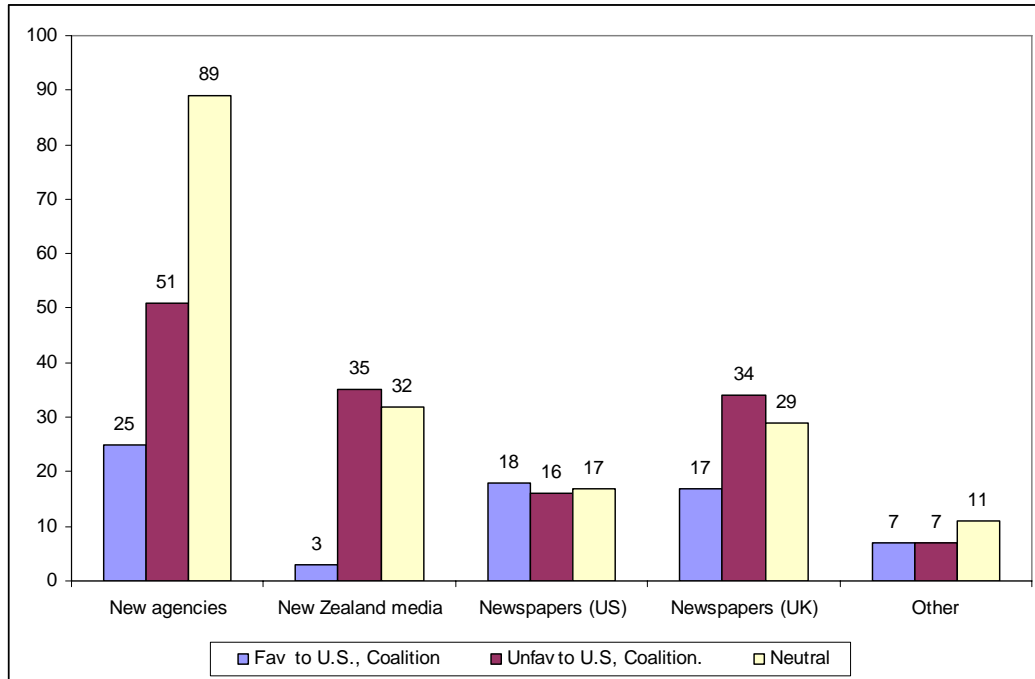


The direction of news from news agencies and other content providers, which included newspapers from the US and UK, was analysed to ascertain how *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* oriented their war coverage. The news agencies – Reuters, AP, AAP, Press Association, Bloomberg and KRT – accounted for 41.98 percent (204 items) of the 486 items (Figure 10.1). Newspapers from Britain accounted for 107 items (22.02%), while the figure for the US newspapers stood at 61 items (12.55%). The New Zealand newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – including content from New Zealand Press Association, accounted for 83 items (17.08%). Other sources accounted for 31 items (6.38%).

The direction of items varied amongst the news agencies, and newspapers from the UK and the US, with news agencies illustrating a more unfavourable view of the US and its Coalition. As shown in Figure 10.2, of the 204 items credited to news agencies, 51 items (25%) were unfavourable to the US and Coalition, while 25 items (12.25%) were favourable towards them. However, 89 items (43.63%) were neutral, while 31 items (15.20%) were unfavourable towards Iraq.

Newspapers from the UK appear to have taken a more critical view of the war with regard to the US and Coalition forces. Of the 107 items there were 34 items (31.78%) that were unfavourable to the US and the Coalition, while favourable items accounted for only 17 items (15.89%). Neutral items stood at 29 (27%). Items that were unfavourable to Iraq accounted for 22 (20.56%), while five items (4.67%) were favourable.

Figure 10.2 Direction of items towards the US and Coalition, and neutral items



The content from US newspapers depicted a different direction, from that of other sources, with more items that were favourable to the US than unfavourable items. Of the 61 items attributed to US newspapers, 18 items (29.51%) were favourable to the US and Coalition, while 16 items (26.23%) were unfavourable. The number of neutral items was 17 (27.87%). There were 10 items (16.39%) that were unfavourable to Iraq, yet not a single item favoured Iraq.

The New Zealand media were more critical of the war, with nearly half of the 83 items taking an unfavourable direction towards the US and Coalition. There were 35 items (42.17%) that were unfavourable to the US and Coalition against a mere three items (3.61%) that were favourable. Neutral items accounted for 32 (38.63%).

The categories that are prominent in the findings, in terms of their direction and frequency, include neutral items and items that were unfavourable and favourable towards the US and Coalition. Of the 486 items, neutral items accounted for 180 (37%), followed by items unfavourable to the US and Coalition (29.4%) and favourable items (14.4%). Although among news agencies the highest figure was for neutral items (89), in content attributed to New Zealand news media and UK newspapers, items

unfavourable to the US and Coalition were most numerous. There were 35 items (42.17%) that were critical of the US and Coalition in the New Zealand newspapers while favourable items accounted for three (3.61%). Of the content from UK newspapers, 34 items (31.78%) were unfavourable to the US and Coalition, while 17 items (15.89%) were favourable. Regarding the US newspapers, by a slight margin there was more content favourable to the US and Coalition were higher than that of unfavourable content. There were 16 items (26.3%) that were favourable to US and Coalition against 18 items (29.51%) that were unfavourable.

### 10.3 Major news sources

In military conflict coverage, especially larger regional conflicts involving major powers such as the United States and Britain, there are well organised media management practices to turn military and government sources into principal actors in the news. Primary sources were analysed from news, features and news analysis, which accounted for 401 items (66.8%) of the total sample (n=600). There were also some news items that did not use any sources or make an attribution to any institution. Such items were not included in the analysis, as the research explores the extent of source usage in the editorial content.

To assess the extent of media agenda domination by news sources, news, features and news analysis were coded, generating a sample of 401 items, which is 66.8 percent of the total sample of 600. As expected, the US and Coalition sources dominated as primary sources. The study reveals that more than 55 percent of the primary sources in the sampled items (n=401) were US and Coalition sources. Of this, 21.9 percent were attributed to US military sources and 13.2 percent to the US government (Table 10.3). The relationship between primary sources and news, news analysis and features was statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 127.937$  df=84,  $p < .05$ ).

The use of British government and military sources in the news followed a similar pattern. The British military was used as a primary source in 20 items (5%), while the government was acknowledged in three items (.7%) as the main news source.

Table 10.3 Primary sources used in news, news analysis and features (n=401)

	<i>News</i>	<i>News analysis</i>	<i>Features</i>	<i>Total</i>
US, Coalition	176 (43.9%)	18 (4.3%)	33 (8%)	227 (56.1%)
-US Military	69 (17.2%)	7 (1.7%)	12 (3.0%)	88 (21.9%)
-US Government	46 (11.5%)	3 (.7%)	4 (1.0%)	53 (13.2%)
-UK Military	19 (4.7%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	20 (5.0%)
-US Academics, experts	6 (1.5%)	4 (1.0%)	7 (1.7%)	17 (4.2%)
-US Soldiers	8 (2.0%)	0 (.0%)	4 (1.0%)	12 (3.0%)
-US Ordinary citizens	3 (.7%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.5%)	6 (1.5%)
-Coalition Government	6 (1.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	6 (1.5%)
-UK Academics, experts	3 (.7%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	5 (1.2%)
-UK Soldiers	3 (.7%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	4 (1.0%)
-UK Government	3 (.7%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.7%)
-UK Opposition	1 (.2%)	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.7%)
-UK Ordinary citizens	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)
-Coalition Military	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)
-US Opposition	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-US Other	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-UK Other	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Coalition Opposition	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)
-Coalition Academics, experts	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Coalition Ordinary citizens	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
Iraq	48 (11.8%)	3 (.7%)	25 (6%)	76 (18.8%)
-Iraq Ordinary citizens	29 (7.2%)	3 (.7%)	17 (4.2%)	49 (12.2%)
-Iraq Opposition	9 (2.2%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.7%)	12 (3.0%)
-Iraq Government	7 (1.7%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.7%)	10 (2.5%)
-Iraq Military	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)
-Iraq Soldiers	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Iraq Academics, experts	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)
-Iraq Other	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)
New Zealand	36 (8.9%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.7%)	39 (9.6%)
-NZ Academics, experts	14 (3.5%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.7%)	17 (4.2%)
-NZ Government	12 (3.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	12 (3.0%)
-NZ Opposition	5 (1.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	5 (1.2%)
-NZ Ordinary citizens	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)
-NZ Other	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)
-NZ Military	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
Arab, Muslim countries	6 (1.4%)	1 (.2%)	1 (.2%)	8 (1.9%)
-Muslim Government	4 (1.0%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	4 (1.0%)
-Arab Ordinary citizens	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.5%)
-Arab Government	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
-Arab Academics, experts	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)
UN, NGOs	10 (2.4%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.4%)	12 (3%)
-UN	7 (1.7%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	8 (2.0%)
-Red Cross	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.5%)
-NGOs Other	2 (.5%)	0 (.0%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)
News media	16 (3.9%)	0 (.0%)	3 (.6%)	19 (4.7%)
-News Media (Western)	9 (2.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	10 (2.5%)
-News Media (Arab)	6 (1.5%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	7 (1.7%)
-News Media (Other)	1 (.2%)	0 (.0%)	1 (.2%)	2 (.5%)
Other (all)	18 (4.5%)	0 (.0%)	2 (.5%)	20 (5.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>310 (77.3%)</b>	<b>22 (5.5%)</b>	<b>69 (17.2%)</b>	<b>401 (100%)</b>

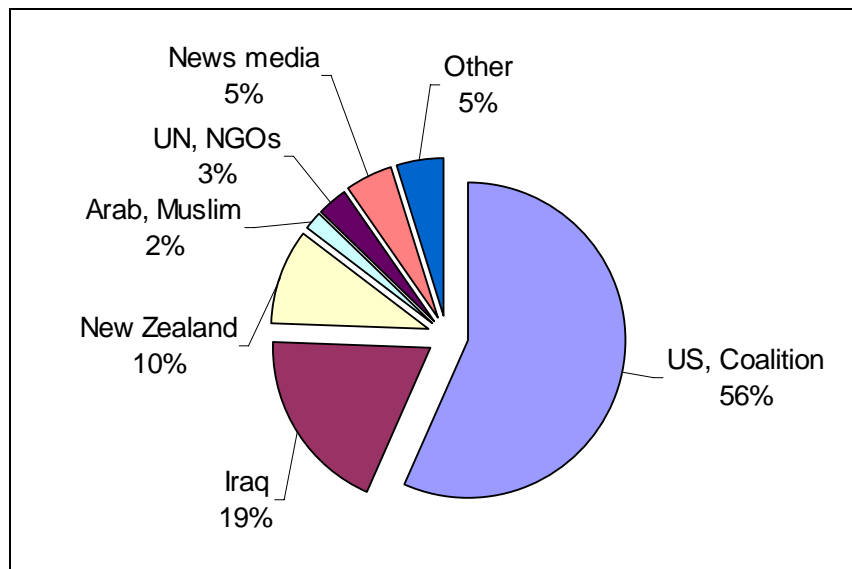
$\chi^2 = 127.937$   $df = 84$ ,  $p < .05$



Although Iraq was a key coefficient in the news equation, it was sidelined, having only minimal access to the global mainstream media output. Iraqi sources were used in only 18.8 percent of the items, of which the military (2.5%) and the government (.5%) were far behind Iraqi ordinary people, who accounted for 12.2 percent of the primary sources. The UN, although a key institution, was only cited in 4.7 percent of the items as the main source.

The total outlook of the war reporting clearly demonstrates not only that the US and Coalition dominated the media agenda, but that Iraq was marginalised on the media front – US and Coalition sources were used in 56 percent of the items, while Iraq fared at a mere 19 percent (Figure 10.3). Arab and Muslim sources accounted for two percent, while UN and other NGOs stood at three percent. New Zealand sources accounted for 10 percent.

Figure 10.3 Primary sources in news, news analysis and features (n=401)

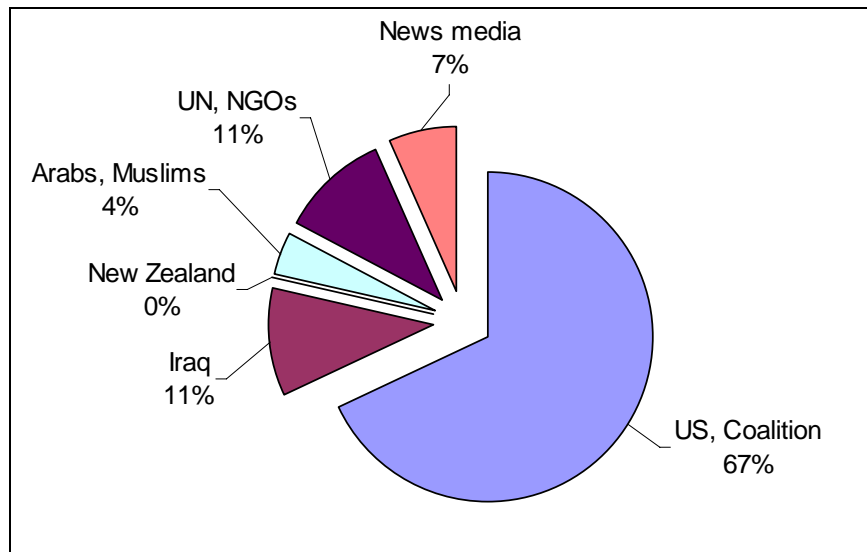


Despite the institution of the UN being an important source, as the Iraq issue was debated at the General Assembly and Security Council long before the war and during the conflict, the news agencies and newspapers did not generate much content using this world body as a primary source. There were only eight items attributed to the UN. Most

of the Arab and Muslim countries were critical of the invasion of Iraq, and due to their cultural and geographic proximity their reactions to the war were immediate and extensive, yet only eight items (2%) were attributed to them.

Major news agencies such as Reuters and AP primarily relied on US and Coalition sources for coverage of the Iraq War, and the US military and government dominated as primary sources in the news.

Figure 10.4 Use of primary sources in Reuters



Reuters attributed more US and Coalition sources as its primary sources than any other news agencies or newspapers. More than 65 percent of the 75 Reuters items used the US and Coalition as primary sources (Figure 10.4). Of this, 38 items (50.7%) used the US military or government as primary sources. US military sources accounted for 38.7 percent, while the US government represented 12 percent of primary sources. The news agency used the Iraq government, military or other Iraqi sources as primary sources in only 11 percent of items, while the same figure stands for the use of the UN and other international organisations and NGOs.

The US-based Associated Press also depended on US and Coalition sources for news, relying heavily on the US government and military. Of the total 61 AP items, the US

and Coalition were primary sources in 40 items. The US military was the main source in 37.7 percent (23 items), while the figure for the government was 13.1 percent (8 items).

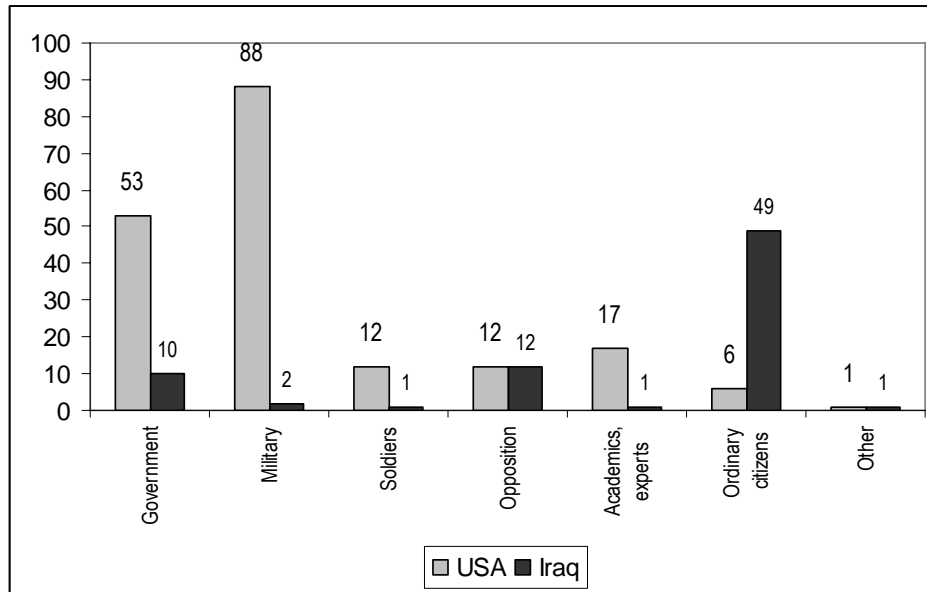
The French news agency Agence France-Press used US and Coalition sources in 13 of their 24 items. The agency relied less on the US military for information than the government. In four items the primary source was the US government, while the figure for the military was only one.

Of the 401 items, 227 items attributed the primary source to US or Coalition sources, while the figure for Iraq was 76. None of the three agencies – Reuters, AP and AFP – used the Iraqi military as their primary source. There were four Reuters' items using the Iraqi government as the main source, while the figure for AP was one. Reuters, AP and AFP used Iraqi sources in eight, 14 and three items respectively. The London-based *The Independent* was the only media to make more use of Iraq sources as their primary sources. Of the 32 items attributed to *The Independent*, 16 used Iraqi sources, while US and Coalition sources were used in 14 items.

A comparison of the usage of US and Iraqi sources illustrates the extent to which the news agencies and newspapers depended on the US military and government for information. It also indicates that the media management efforts by the US and Coalition successfully resulted in their sources dominating the stories about the conflict.

The news agencies and newspapers used fewer Iraqi government and military sources but more ordinary Iraqi people as their main source. Of the 76 items attributed to Iraq, the Iraqi government was used in 10 items and the military as a primary source in only two items. However 49 items used Iraqi people as the primary source.

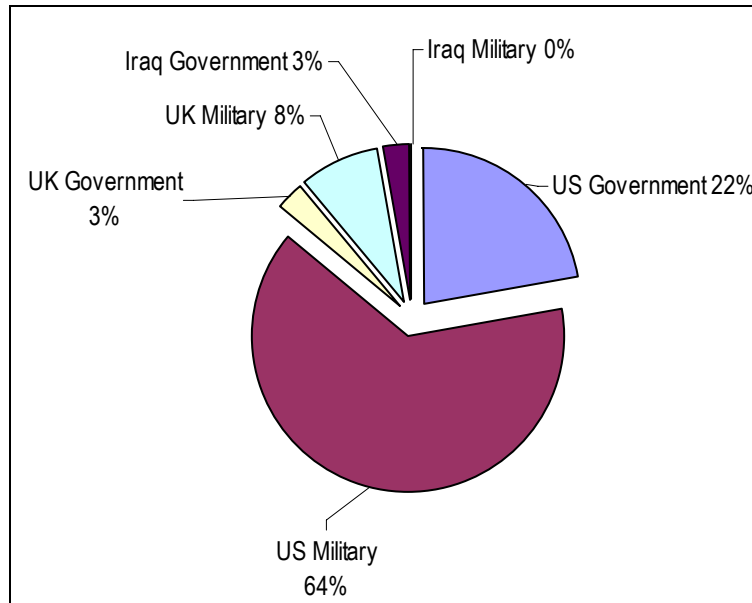
Figure 10.5 Comparison between the use of US and Iraq primary sources



Against 10 Iraqi government sources there were 53 US government sources, while the disparity was wider regarding military sources, with only two Iraqi sources against 88 US military sources (Figure 10.5). One explanation for the relative lack of Iraqi government and military sources being used as primary sources in the news could be the media restrictions imposed by the Iraqi government and the difficulty in accessing sources in Iraq. The use of Iraqi people as the main source in 49 items indicates that the media had easier access to the Iraqi people.

In military conflicts, attempts by the major official sources – government and military – to dominate the news agenda are part of the larger strategic goals of attracting favourable coverage, mobilising the home front and global support for the wars, and demoralising and weakening the enemy through propaganda. The content analysis shows that major news agencies were heavily dependent on US military and government sources compared to the Iraqi official sources. As shown in Figure 10.6, of the AP stories in which the primary source was the military or government, 64 percent were attributed to the US military and none to the Iraqi military. US government sources accounted for 22 percent while the figure for Iraq was only three percent.

Figure 10.6 Use of military and government sources as primary sources in AP stories



The other major news agency, Reuters, has similar figures in terms of military and government source usage. Like AP, none of the Reuters stories used any Iraqi military source as a primary source, while the figure for the US military was 64 percent. US government sources accounted for 20 percent, while the figure for Iraq was only nine percent. Even major coalition partners such as the UK were not widely used as main sources, indicating that the US dominated and were successful in occupying most of the media space.

The findings show that the US military and government were setting the media agenda, as they were given prime space in the news media. Previous studies have shown that during military conflicts, the US military and government have determined how the conflicts were covered (Lent, 1977; Marchetti & Marks, 1974), using various media management techniques, one of which in Iraq War II was *embedding* of reporters with troops.

## 10.4 Discussion

The findings in this chapter have demonstrated that *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* relied mainly on two types of content providers – the traditional news agencies and some US and UK newspapers. In the content generated by the newspapers, the respective publications attempted to localise war-related developments, for example interviewing Iraqis living in New Zealand about the impact the invasion was having on their families back in Iraq and by publishing New Zealand political debates, opinions and reader-feedback about the US-led invasion of Iraq. Without any New Zealand journalists based in the war zone, the bulk of coverage came from news agencies and foreign newspapers, who, as discussed in Chapter 4 and 5, gather and process news based on their news values framework, and ‘constructed’ the coverage for a diverse global news retail audience. New Zealand newspapers represented only a tiny fraction of the customers or retailers for whom this news was constructed.

In international news coverage, the New Zealand newspapers usually rely on few of the well-known news agencies, most notably Reuters, AP and AFP. However for Iraq War II coverage, the newspapers sought content from more news agencies and from US and UK newspapers. News content was credited to more than 16 news agencies and newspapers. The news agencies included Reuters, AP, AFP, AP, KRT, Press Association, and Bloomberg, while the main newspapers were *The Times* of London, *The Independent*, *The Observer*, *The Telegraph* from the UK and *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Newsweek* from the US. The news agencies – Reuters, AP, AAP, Press Association, Bloomberg and KRT – accounted for 41.98 percent of the 486 items, with UK newspapers at 22.02 percent and US newspapers at 12.55 percent. The New Zealand newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – including content from the New Zealand Press Association, accounted for 17.08 percent. Other sources accounted for 6.38 percent.

News agencies were more neutral in their coverage, and this may be due to the editorial positions taken by them in order to appeal to a wide variety of media clients. Unlike newspapers which have specific audiences within certain geographic boundaries (online

versions of the newspapers being the exception), news agencies have to consider their diverse markets and thus, it was in their interests to take a cautious approach to the war reporting. However, even then their coverage was heavily influenced by Coalition official sources.

The three New Zealand newspapers did not send journalists to cover the war, mainly because of economic reasons – it was cheaper to source from news agencies and newspapers than send journalists. Furthermore, as New Zealand was not involved in the conflict, sending journalists to the conflict zone was not considered an important consideration (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007). This does not, however, mean that the news values of the event was low, but that given the lack of direct local involvement in the conflict, re-locating journalists at an enormous cost was not economically worthwhile. Instead of accessing only the usual ‘Big Three’ news agencies, the newspapers sought more news sources such as US and UK newspapers and other news agencies. It is usual for newspapers to rely on a few news agencies, normally the main international wires. A 2002 study showed that Reuters, AP, AAP and AFP accounted for nearly 70 percent of the international news in the five New Zealand metropolitan newspapers. News content from Reuters, which is one of the largest news agencies, accounted for 35.7 percent (Taira, 2003). However, when major world news events break, such as Iraq War II, newspapers source content from additional sources such as news services of major US and UK newspapers. However, their reliance on Anglo-American media outlets for international news limits the diversity of views presented in the media discourse. Given the nature of Iraq War II, there were many alternative news sources, available, including national news agencies from the Gulf and Middle East countries, and blogs providing extensive alternative coverage. The New Zealand newspapers’ reliance on the more established news services within the Anglo-American media system may be due to their sharing of similar news values and journalistic frameworks.

There is a big difference between news agency or foreign newspaper copy and stories filed by newspaper staff reporters from the front. Both organisational and journalistic values play a significant role in the process of news gathering and writing. For a news

agency journalist, in selecting a news story and an angle to take, a global audience has to be considered, as the copy will be used by newspapers from different countries with conflicting interests in the news event. However, for journalists of a newspaper, in writing the item the main concern is making it more relevant, where possible, to the newspaper audience. A newspaper that subscribes to Reuters, for example, cannot ask a Reuters correspondent in Baghdad to cover a certain event from a news angle that suits the newspaper. When newspapers rely on news agencies, the opportunity to influence coverage according to the interests of the audiences is limited, thus foreign news agencies to a large extent determine the coverage and construct the global news events for the local audiences.

In Iraq War II coverage, the major news agencies determined the coverage in New Zealand, with 77 percent of the items attributed to Western news agencies, and US and UK newspapers. According to Thompson, the New Zealand newspapers “republished whatever information had been supplied to them off the satellite and over the wires from what are almost exclusively US and UK news sources” (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006) in the coverage of Iraq War II. This dependence of the New Zealand news media resulted in foreign news sources determining what local audiences were given for news gratification.

By exposing newspaper editors to a wealth of agency news, where certain events have been given prominence according to the news values of the news agencies and newspapers, “the wire services set the media agenda by telling local editors (and their readers, in turn) what parts of the world and what issues they should think about” (Stevenson & Cole, 1984, p 48). By dominating the reporting of news globally, the few news agencies are in a position to “shape the wider view of a war” (Thussu, 2002, p 205) such as the conflict in Iraq.

The dependence on external news agencies and the reluctance to use alternative sources in Iraq War II coverage has made the New Zealand newspapers and thus their audiences vulnerable to propaganda from the primary sources of the news. Given the nature of the conflict, news management and propaganda were institutionalised by the key actors such as the US and UK, and the global media were exposed to perception engineering.



Despite attempts by local gatekeepers to frame the coverage in a context that was in congruent with New Zealand public opinion about the war in Iraq, the reporting was heavily mediated, and by the elite actors in the war. Thus as noted by Boyd-Barrett, during major military conflicts “news agencies are vehicles for dissemination of state information and propaganda to national and international audiences” (Boyd-Barrett, 1997, p 132).

As Iraq War II was a major conflict involving leading world powers, journalists in the conflict zone were exposed to media management strategies aimed at manipulating the war journalism discourse in favour of the dominant powers – the US and UK. The journalists – both embeds and unilaterals – had to work in an environment of media management, restricted access and logistical issues (Tumber & Palmer, 2004). The ideological issues also shaped how different media outlets approached the coverage.

The comparison of the usage of the US and Iraqi sources illustrates the extent to which the news agencies and newspapers depended on the US military and government for information. It also indicates that the media management efforts by the US and Coalition successfully resulted in their sources dominating the stories about the conflict.

The study also shows that the US and Coalition primary sources favoured the political and military strategies of their governments. More than 56 percent of the US government sources were favourable to the US government, while the figure for the military was 61.6 percent (n=399). None of the US government sources was unfavourable towards the US government, while only one military source (1.2%) was unfavourable to the government. When both categories – the government and the military – were combined, 60 percent were favourable to the US, while 22 percent were neutral and 15 percent unfavourable to Iraq.

The findings show that the US military and government were setting the media agenda, as they have been given prime space in the news cycle. Previous studies have shown that during military conflicts the US military and government determined how the conflicts were covered (Lent, 1977; Marchetti & Marks, 1974), through various media

management techniques, one of which in the Iraq war was *embedding* of reporters with troops. When the news media select and publish content that is heavily influenced by military and political officials, coverage of events can be biased or unfair to others on the other side of the news events. As Goldman (1999) pointed out, military and government officials can exploit the news media through news management strategies when the news media are dependent on official sources.

One of the most successful PR victories in Iraq War II for the US authorities was that of the rescue of a US soldier from behind the enemy lines. The story drew not only widespread coverage in the US but elsewhere, due to the human interest nature of the story. The rescue of Jessica Lynch was prominently played in the New Zealand media, with the three leading daily newspapers – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* giving it front-page treatment. The headline writers of the *Press*, on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003, opted to use the US Central Command spokesman Jim Wilkinson's carefully phrased "America doesn't leave its heroes behind" as its headline. *The New Zealand Herald* headline was "Daring raid brings joy to mother", while *The Dominion Post*, declared "Daring POW Rescue". All the newspapers carried the story on the front page, and for *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion Post*, it was the main story on the front page on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003. All the newspapers carried photos of Jessica Lynch along with the story (*The New Zealand Herald*, *The Press*, *The Dominion Post*, 3 April 2003). The rush for 'heroic' stories by newspapers at a time when media were managed by dominant sources also reflects the vulnerability of the media for propaganda from the primary definers. As the case clearly illustrates in the three New Zealand newspapers, the military sources were the agenda setters. While one of the US newspapers that prominently covered the Lynch story, *The Washington Post*, later expressed regret for its uncritical acceptance of information from institutional sources (Cohen, 2003), there were no such acknowledgements from the New Zealand newspapers. Like many media outlets, the New Zealand press were caught in the 'fog of war'. Furthermore, the newspaper's dependence on external news agencies limited their ability to verify and challenge the information, while other logistical and organisational factors might have prevented them from critically evaluating the Lynch story.

Heavy reliance on news agencies, especially during military conflicts, can influence the direction and orientation of coverage (Pauling, 1996), and the impact on news content in Iraq War II coverage was unsurprising given the high dependence on the wires and US and UK newspapers. When news agencies, elite newspapers and networks depend on official sources, then smaller newspapers around the world tend to view conflicts from a similar perspective. In the case of New Zealand newspapers that relied heavily on Western news sources, “the wire services set the media agenda” (Stevenson & Cole, 1984, p 48). When journalists, whether from news agencies or newspapers, depend on official sources, the sources, who as Shoemaker and Reese term ‘eternal suppliers of raw materials’ (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991) can influence the way the news events are reported (Palmer, 2000). However, the preponderance of news items acknowledging US and Coalition official sources, is not an indication of the New Zealand newspapers’ favourable editorial stance towards the US and Coalition. Given the general direction of coverage, where 30.6 percent of the items were unfavourable to the US and Coalition, against a favourable 14.3, then it can be argued that the content providers – news agencies and newspapers – were dependent on official US and Coalition sources. The New Zealand newspapers were simply picking up and selecting stories from a ‘basket’ of foreign news, supplied to them by news wires.

The study shows that there was a high degree of US and Coalition government and military sources being used as primary news sources in the editorial content published in the New Zealand newspapers. First, the news agencies relied on the official sources and this dependency resulted in a pattern of news coverage that reflected successful media management at source, by US and Coalition officials. Source-media interactions during military conflicts are usually dominated by the ‘primary definers’, as they control news raw material. Thus, owing to the dependency of the news media on the sources, the military sources have the upper hand and lead the news discourse (Gans, 1980).

Although ideally the role of the war journalist is ‘to cut through the propaganda, spot the spin and uncover the truth’ (Jukes, 2004, p vii), journalists reporting from the war zone, provided opportunities for elite sources to manufacture consent. Through news management strategies, the US and Coalition sources were able to dominate the news

agenda of the wire services. And the dependency on news agencies for war coverage by newspapers in New Zealand resulted in the US and Coalition sources saturating the news space and setting the local news agenda.

## CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

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### 11.1 Introduction

This thesis has addressed key issues such as the orientation of war coverage, news flows in the context of globalisation of news, and source domination in war journalism discourse. Several theoretical issues related to these topics have been explored in previous chapters and in this concluding discussion the empirical findings are discussed with reference to theoretical issues. This study illustrates the dominance of global news agencies and reinforces the media imperialism thesis, in that news wholesalers are able to dominate news space in the mainstream newspapers of New Zealand. Although at the outset of Iraq War II, newspapers claimed that they would give in-depth coverage of the war, the reporting exclusively relied on Anglo-American news sources. This also reinforces the media hegemony theory, given the domination of the war coverage by US, UK and Australian news sources. Within this hegemonic environment, however, the New Zealand newspapers attempted to frame the coverage in a way that was sympathetic to the strong anti-war discourse in the country. However, the newspapers were not very vehement in their anti-war stance.

Furthermore, the thesis also shows that, in the globalised world, coverage of international conflicts such as Iraq War II is necessitated by the need for understanding an event that has implications globally. No matter how far New Zealand is geographically from the conflict zone, economic and political implications of the war made widespread coverage relevant. Moreover, the news values such as drama and

human interest, which are associated with a major military conflict involving world powers, also added to the importance of giving such as conflict prominence in the mainstream print media in New Zealand. Based on the empirical findings of the research, it can be concluded that *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* relied heavily on international news agencies and other Western news content providers for war coverage; the primary sources most frequently used in content sourced from news agencies and other content providers were US and Coalition officials.

New Zealand news media gave extensive coverage to Iraq War II during the initial phase of the conflict and the nature of war journalism discourse appears to reflect several underlying factors. As has been discussed earlier, the globalisation of news, international news flows and market forces are key dimensions that affect the intensity and orientation of war coverage. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 5, Iraq War II coalesced two key news values – elite actors and conflict (Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Harcup & O’Neill, 2001; Musa, 2007). The involvement of two influential world military and economic powers – the US and UK – including New Zealand’s closest neighbour, Australia, raised the news values of the Iraq conflict. The media attention to conflicts such as the Iraq War II is also due to the compelling nature of war as “War is dramatic, attention-grabbing” (Webster, 2003, p 58).

This research has shown how the three largest metropolitan newspapers of New Zealand – *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* – largely used news agency copy and content from elite US and UK newspapers in the coverage of Iraq War II. The editing of the content was minimal, and mainly focused on the re-writing of headlines, the occasional change of lead, and the combining of several different sources (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007).

This in itself confirms that New Zealand audiences are part of the single global market that news agencies are marketing to. It also confirms the globalisation of news practices through the emergence of global news values. That a news agency headquartered in London or New York can write stories that New Zealand editors are able to publish

virtually unchanged indicates the subscription to some common working assumptions, principles and news values.

The research has contributed to theory, notably news flows, globalisation, propaganda and news management. The findings of this thesis reinforce those theories. Following is a summary of the key findings of the research:

1. The New Zealand newspapers relied heavily on international news agencies, and elite US and UK newspapers for Iraq War II war coverage.
2. The primary sources most frequently used by the news agencies and newspapers were US and Coalition officials.
3. The war coverage was unfavourable towards the US and Coalition.
4. The New Zealand newspapers focused on the humanitarian impact of the war.
5. The war coverage in the three largest New Zealand newspapers reflected public opinion and the foreign policy of the Labour-led government on the Iraq conflict.
6. The war coverage did not put the issues of the conflict into context and was event-driven and framed episodically.
7. The war coverage would have shown more New Zealand perspectives if local journalists were assigned to cover the war from the conflict zone.
8. The extensive use of news content from mainly US and UK news agencies and newspapers, indicates the existence of 'shared values' between media professionals in New Zealand and overseas.

The study shows that the New Zealand newspapers relied heavily on foreign news agencies for Iraq War II coverage, and the content from these agencies was dominated by US and Coalition military and government officials. The newspapers analysed in this research did not send reporters to cover the conflict and staff input on the war coverage was minimal, with occasional opinion pieces and columns. If there were New Zealand journalists in the conflict zone, coverage would have been different (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007), as they would have considered news values more specific to New Zealand. The thesis shows that there is dependency on major news agencies, and since Iraq War I, the New Zealand newspapers have been using additional news sources

such as US and UK newspapers. This again illustrates and supports the media imperialism model, as the flow of news and information is from the periphery, where the mainstream news agencies and other news media are Anglo-American. During the Vietnam War, for example, the New Zealand newspapers used two news agencies – Reuters and NZPA – and the number of news sources increased to seven in Iraq War I, in 1991. During the invasion phase of Iraq War II, *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* used 17 different news sources, which included mainstream news agencies and major US, UK and Australian newspapers. While there was diversity in the number of news sources, the fact that these news sources shared a common cultural outlook and values, and the lack of use of alternative news sources in the war coverage show the further reinforcing of an international news dependency model. During military conflicts, where the principal actors are major powers, such dependency leads the way for the flow of propaganda and mediated communication. This thesis, for example, has shown that the US military and government officials dominated as primary sources in the news content.

News agency content, received by the newspapers and selected for publication based on a set of news values, was not re-written to accommodate any particular world view or local perspective. Thus, what appeared in the newspapers in New Zealand reflected what really came out of the news agencies and other US and British newspapers. During the initial phase of the war, the newspapers saturated the news space with extensive coverage, often allocating the front page and Section A for war coverage. Nearly 40 percent of the sampled items appeared on the front page and Section A. With the takeover of Baghdad on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2003, coverage gradually declined.

The extensive coverage given to Iraq War II not only reflects the importance of ‘conflict’ as a high news value, but also shows the extent of globalisation, and of media. News and information have become important for decision making, policy formulation and other social, political and financial transactions. Although geographically distant from the Middle East and the Gulf region, New Zealand was concerned about the war in Iraq as the conflict would adversely affect the economy. In the globalised world, most countries are, like New Zealand, linked with others. And the involvement of the major



super power – the US – in the Iraq conflict meant that public diplomacy, propaganda and media management strategies were in top gear saturating the global media space.

The “intensification of world-wide social relations” (Giddens, 1991, p 64) has made distant events local, given the impact such events have on societies. This intensification of globalisation has been largely due to modern communications technology, transportation and international commerce. The three largest newspapers in New Zealand at the centre of this research are owned by two foreign companies, and only one out of the major eight newspapers – *The Otago Daily Times* – is owned locally. This is a fitting example of the extent of the globalisation of media. International news flows have also increased with the intensification of global relations. All these factors have shaped and oriented Iraq War II coverage in New Zealand.

In the coverage of distant events for domestic audiences, the news media attempt to localise events. At a very basic level in Iraq War II coverage, the New Zealand newspapers focused on Iraqis living in New Zealand, political debate on the war and how it impacted the local people. And in an effort to frame the stories and make them more relevant, editors also re-wrote headlines and occasionally changed the story lead.

In the localisation of foreign events, newspaper editors select the news and present it from a perspective that is deemed relevant to their audiences. As Jinquan et al (2002) state, the gatekeeper “starts out with selective framing of issues or topics through the lens of professional norms, national interest, cultural repertoire, and market dynamics” (p 17) to make global events local, or give some relevance to events in the context of localisation for domestic media consumers. As noted by Skurnik (1981), “newspapers select information in accordance with their nation’s interests ... [and in the selection process] concentrate on the more salient aspects of foreign developments, usually those which affect them most” (p 101). The coverage in New Zealand, however, did not very strongly reflect the wider political and public views on the war. The coverage was more balanced, with positive and negative articles on the war. Given that the newspaper editors had numerous news sources to choose from in the war coverage, they had the options of becoming very pro or anti war or taking just one side of the conflict. However, *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* did consider

local factors such as political and public debates and opinion in the framing of Iraq War II.

Although Britain, Australia and the United States are traditional allies of New Zealand, the mainstream newspapers' coverage in this country showed a remarkably stronger anti-war stance, in harmony with public opinion and the government's stand. Given the political debates that were not favourable to the 'Coalition of the Willing', it is not surprising that the major newspapers opted to view the war critically. The newspapers framed the war negatively towards the US-led Coalition. Perhaps the direction of coverage would have been different if the New Zealand government had supported the invasion and become a member of the US-led Coalition.

Analysis of the coverage of Iraq War II reveals that how the war was framed in New Zealand was different from the framing by countries such as the US, UK and Australia, partly due to the political debates and public opinion in New Zealand.

## 11.2 Orientation of Iraq War II coverage

As discussed in Chapter 9, the largest three newspapers of New Zealand oriented their coverage of Iraq War II in such a way that reflected public opinion and the government stance on the conflict. Although content for coverage was sourced from foreign media outlets, there were attempts by editors to frame the war in the context of local debates. Their approach to the war was also reflected in the logos used with war coverage reports, such as "Attack on Iraq" (*The New Zealand Herald*), "War in Iraq" (*The Dominion Post*) and "War on Iraq" (*The Press*). The newspapers emphasised the humanitarian impact of the conflict and attempted to be 'critical observers' (Thussu & Freedman, 2003), especially in the content they manufactured. However, as the bulk of items on the war were provided by major news agencies and US and UK newspapers, the New Zealand newspapers' ability to be highly critical was limited. This was indeed a limitation and a shortcoming of the New Zealand press, given the demand for a stronger anti-war voice from the public and the government. The newspapers, as acknowledged by their editors, were vulnerable to propaganda and biased reporting. If

media consumers in New Zealand were to be served a ‘fair and balanced coverage’, then news content from diverse news sources would have had to be procured. In addition, the newspapers should have invested in stationing their own journalists in the Gulf region or Iraq.

Not every major military and humanitarian conflict gets the same treatment in the world newspapers. Guided by news values specific to cultures, countries and audiences, journalists and editors decide on what events to cover. The same framework is used in the coverage of international issues. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was not reported widely in the world media, although it was one of the worst humanitarian conflicts in recent times (Pottier, 2002). Africa accounted for nearly 60 percent of the world conflicts, yet coverage of events in this region is less prominent than coverage of events where the key actors are elite nations (Musa, 2007). However, the war in Iraq attracted more extensive coverage in the global news media and the reasons for this news saturation are clear: the key actors in the conflict were major Western powers such as the United States and Britain; the extensive public diplomacy and propaganda campaigns waged by the US and UK; and the potential impact of the conflict on world economy.

It emerges from the research that several factors shaped the way Iraq War II was reported in the three newspapers of New Zealand. The high news values associated with conflicts made extensive coverage justifiable for editors. For more than a month, beginning with the start of the war, the three largest newspapers of New Zealand used the first few pages in Section A for international news coverage, which is unconventional given that newspapers reserve that section for major local or national news. One explanation for making war coverage so prominent by allocating prime spaces for it, is that military conflicts have high news values and in international news coverage global conflicts and disasters are important features (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Nam, 1970). As media coverage of wars provides “dramatic and attention-grabbing” (Webster (2003, p 58) discourse, it was natural that *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* attempted to give Iraq War II extensive coverage. The coverage also shows the competition in the newspaper industry with some newspapers marketing and promoting their coverage with, for example, the promise to give the

“most comprehensive coverage in New Zealand” by *The New Zealand Herald* and the pledge by *The Dominion Post* that “Anywhere the news is breaking ... *The Dominion Post* readers will have up-to-date coverage, backed by expert analysis” (*The Dominion Post*, March 21, 2003, p 1).

As discussed in Chapter 5, the news values associated with conflicts are high and the involvement of elite nations in Iraq War II made the war a major news event for the global media. Due to the high news values of the war in Iraq, media attention was at its highest, with thousands of journalists and support personnel mobilised by news agencies and some leading media outlets to report the conflict. These media companies, who were involved at the first stage of news production, fed the world frenzy for conflict news consumption, and the New Zealand newspapers were no exception in the packaging and provision of conflict news. Although the coverage of Iraq War II did not increase the circulation of newspapers, in the short term war is always “commercially rewarding for the media, since its threat and unfolding ignite insatiable audience appetite for news” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 26). Moreover war coverage is “high in tension and drama, with complex main plots and sub-plots played out within traditionally binary oppositions of aggressor and victim, winner and loser” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 26). With the take-over of Baghdad on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2003, coverage and prominence given to the conflict declined, indicating the presence of a somewhat ‘winner and loser’ style of journalism in the New Zealand newspapers. When Saddam was symbolically and technically toppled, the war was over and so was the coverage. The conflict, though, continued, with new and equally bloody episodes emerging, yet once the war was superficially declared over on 1<sup>st</sup> May by the US, so the coverage almost ground to a halt. This again shows that external factors were decisive in the coverage of the war. Firstly, when the US declared that the war was over with the capture of Baghdad, the newspapers in New Zealand found that with the Coalition ‘victory’, the war coverage did not warrant much prominence. The inter-media agenda setting may have also influenced the change in coverage, given that mainstream news media in the West also viewed the war ‘game’ as over. In the light of the three aspects of war journalism orientation – violence oriented, propaganda oriented, and victory oriented (Galtung, 2002) – the reporting in New Zealand was more victory and propaganda oriented.

### 11.3 International news flows and globalisation of news

The military conflict in the Gulf was turned into a global news event with the extensive media attention, and the direct involvement of several countries in the much labelled 'war on terror' drew great news interest. Although New Zealand had no direct involvement during the initial phase of the conflict, as in most countries the New Zealand press paid particular attention to the war, relying on numerous news media sources, such as Reuters, AP, AFP and some leading US and UK newspapers. The global news agencies mobilised to give Iraq War II extensive coverage, and thus their subscribers around the world were deluged with war-related news. Coverage in different countries, however, was oriented based on their political and cultural environment and attitude towards the conflict (Lee, 2004; Norris et al., 2003; Zaman, 2004). The direction and framing of coverage also changed with time, reflecting the dynamics of public opinion and foreign policies of countries (Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001; Chyi & McCombs, 2004; Hallin, 1986).

During the initial phase of the war coverage, Iraq War II dominated the front pages of *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press*, and Op-Ed pages were occupied with opinion and public reaction. On the first day of coverage, 21 March 2003, the three newspapers carried more than 80 items that were related to the war, most of them appearing in the main section, usually reserved for top local and national events. The intense initial coverage of the conflict shows that globalisation has made conflicts of this nature important enough to warrant distinct prominence in the local newspapers. The coverage was more episodic and event-oriented and demonstrated the dramatisation of the conflict with war as a 'media spectacle'. The extensive coverage was facilitated by a steady stream of content from several news agencies and news services who were aggressively marketing their products through the mobilisation of resources for coverage from the conflict zone. News agencies and major newspapers stationed more than 3,000 correspondents in seven countries in the Gulf, with news agencies such as Reuters relying on more than 140 journalists, while *The New York Times* sent 30 journalists to the region (Leaper et al., 2003).

Thus with a steady supply of news raw material from news agencies, the New Zealand newspapers were well placed to cover Iraq War II. There are several key issues that appear to influence the extent of coverage – the impact of world events, such as the conflict in Iraq, on New Zealand; the globalisation of media and cultural products, and news values. But the heavy reliance on foreign content providers, who process and manufacture media products based on similar news values and professional frameworks, puts New Zealand in a position of complete dependency.

Figure 11.1 Flow of international news through different stages of news selection and production

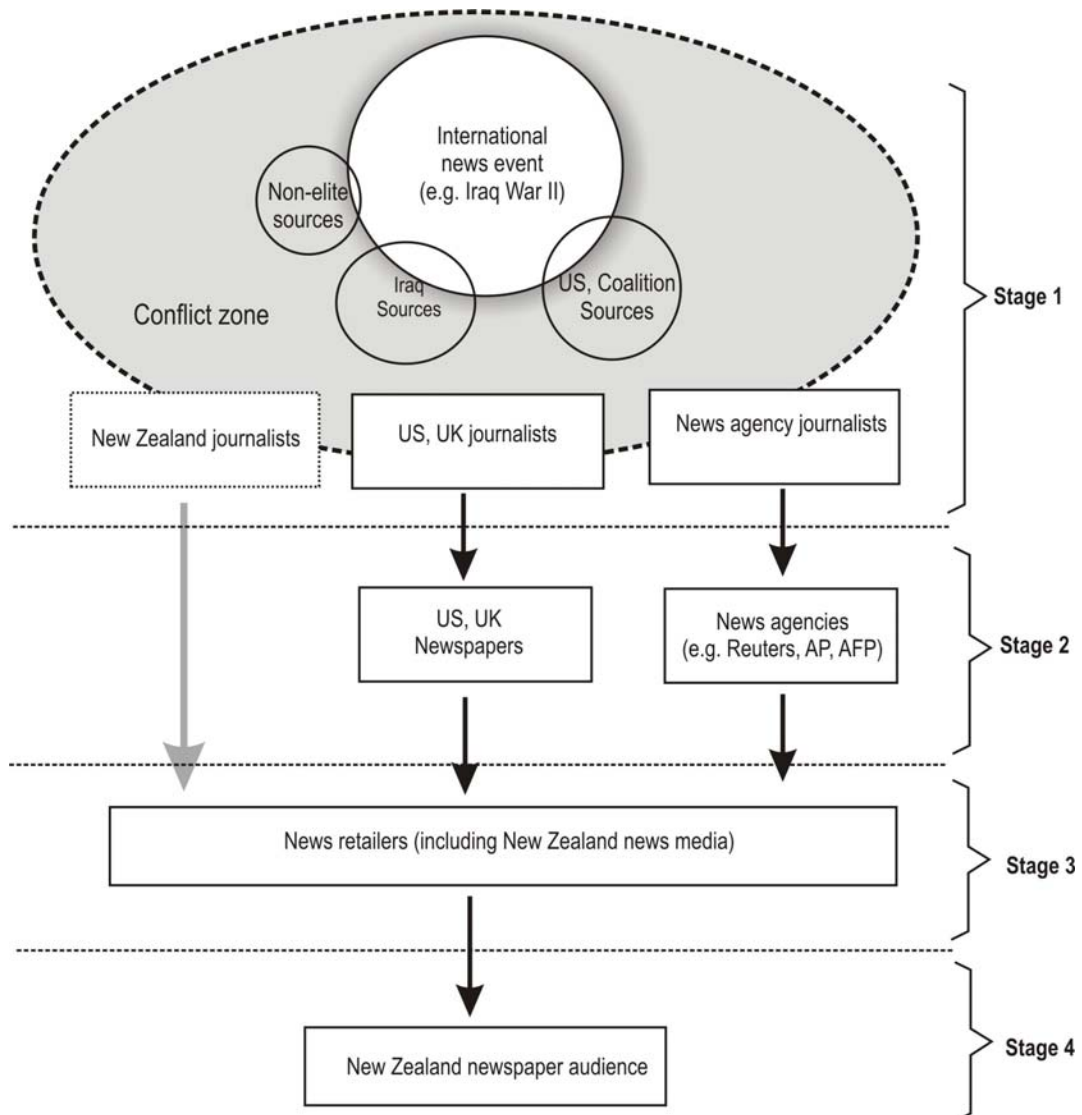


Figure 11.1 shows the flow of news from news agencies and other content providers to New Zealand news media, who retail the news back to their audiences. As shown in the above diagram, news passes through several stages in which content is selected and edited based on the specific news values frameworks in each stage of production and transmission. The more stages there are between news sources and the New Zealand audiences, the more likely it is that the stories are shaped by more layers of foreign input. Thus, relevance of the content to New Zealand audiences will become less. In other words, Iraq war coverage that was shaped for audiences elsewhere, was consumed by New Zealand newspaper readers. This led to the news providers setting the news agenda, as they controlled the news selection and orientation of coverage.

If New Zealand newspapers had posted journalists to the war zone (as shown in the diagram by a grey arrow), the flow of news would have been more direct, bypassing several gatekeeping stages. Furthermore, in sending journalists on assignment, local editors would have had a say what aspects of the conflict to focus on. These decisions are made by editors based on audience and market considerations.

Another important aspect of international news flows that needs to be examined is the nature of news that comes from major US and UK newspapers. What appears in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* is written for audiences in the US, and more specifically the readership in the area of circulation – the financial hub and the political ‘beltway’ of the US. Similarly, what is reported about the war in Iraq in *The Times* of London or *The Independent* is shaped for audiences in the UK. Although some news stories may have common relevance to audiences in all geographic and political locations, content such as editorials, opinion and features is likely to be written based on specific audience considerations. The publication of news content, which has been manufactured and framed for audiences in the US and UK, in New Zealand newspapers is evidence of both shared cultural values and the globalisation of news. However, given the political debates and public opinion regarding the Iraq conflict in New Zealand, the republishing of content from foreign newspapers also shows that media consumers in New Zealand were exposed to mediated messages from countries which

were key actors in Iraq War II. As long as a high dependency on Western news sources exists, and New Zealand newspapers do not put great effort into re-orienting the coverage, the newspaper-reading public will be served with international news coverage mainly constructed by external actors according to their own news judgements and news value criteria.

In the news production process, copy passes through various editorial stages according to the news values and newsworthiness framework of the specific organisation (Knight, 1982; Taylor, 1992a). These editorial changes shape stories to support the interests of the media outlets: “Media organisations tend to reproduce selectively according to criteria that suit their own goals and interests” (McQuail, 2005, p 329). Thus, the more gates news stories pass through to reach New Zealand newspapers and their audiences, the greater the implications of different editorial decisions are likely to be on the media consumers, since cultural and ideological biases would have affected the stories.

Reliance on mainstream news agencies leads to them dominating and dictating the media agenda as they make the initial news selection and processing decisions (Whitney & Becker, 1982). The elite news agencies, through their domination of the global news retailing business, are in a position to “shape the wider view” of military conflicts (Thussu, 2002, p 205).

As for the use of news agencies and news services by New Zealand news media, there was a marked increase in the number of media outlets providing international news. During the Vietnam War the main sources were Reuters and NZPA, while in Iraq War II coverage more than 15 different content providers were used for reporting the conflict. The ‘Big Three’ and AAP news agencies accounted for about 70 percent of world news content in five New Zealand metropolitan newspapers in 2002 (Taira, 2003). This again shows not only the globalisation of news, but also the dominance of mainly Anglo-American media companies in the global news production.

The greatest implication of dependency is that the news agencies are able to set the media agenda for New Zealand news media, as they are able to select what news events to cover and in which ways to frame them at the initial stage of news gathering and



processing, as shown in Figure 11.1. Through these news production choices and their ability to extensively report world news, news agencies are able to set the global media agenda (Paterson, 1998; Stevenson & Cole, 1984; Wanta et al., 2004). Given the dominance of a global news retail market by the few news, news agencies and news services play “an important agenda-setting function” (Wanta et al., 2004, p 367). The extensive coverage given to military conflicts is also due to the globalisation of media systems which has increased news supply and reflects “the power of global news to set the agenda for news around the world” (Rantanen, 2004, p 302).

The implications of news agency-dependence are more serious during military conflicts when major powers with stronger ‘information capital’ attempt to influence news. The impact of media management and propaganda is eventually felt by media consumers, as the messages are channelled via news agencies, news services and newspapers to media consumers. The New Zealand news media, like many others in the world, also felt the negative implications of heavy reliance on the mainstream news agencies during Iraq War I and II (Comrie & Fountaine, 2005; Robie, 2003; Pauling, 1996; Shulman, 1994), and as noted by Tully with regard to Iraq War I coverage “our view of the world is narrowed by the fact that we rely for our international news on three or four main news agencies” (Cited in Pauling, 1996, p 6). A similar observation of Iraq War II coverage in Northern Ireland was made by Rolston and McLaughlin (2004) in their study of Belfast dailies, when they noted that “much of the coverage of the war in Iraq was determined from outside the local society” (p 200). While sourcing world news content from news agencies is economically logical, the negative implication is that the news suppliers are able to determine to a great extent what stories and what parts of the world to cover (Stevenson & Cole, 1984), thus influencing the foreign news agendas in various countries.

As news and information suppliers to a growing worldwide market, the mainstream news agencies and other major media outlets syndicate content to world news media, and in so doing also promote their world views. In fact, news agencies were one of the first institutions that ‘exported’ commodified news and thus stimulated the globalisation of news (Boyd-Barrett, 1997). As noted by Boyd-Barrett (1997), the major news agencies “contributed to internationalization” of news (p 143). In this process of

mediating the global news content, news agencies have also become key actors, as press organisations, governments and individuals depended depend on them for news (Ossokina, 2003).

As noted earlier, the increase in the number of news agencies and news services being used by the New Zealand news media is an indication of the growing demand for global news and information, and the globalisation of news agencies and news services. News ‘wholesalers’ contribute to the “intensification of world-wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1991, p 64). In facilitating the intensification of global relations, “News agencies contribute to the homogenisation of global culture in their distribution of certain influential kind of political, economic, and sports discourse” (Boyd-Barrett, 1999, p 301).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the current state of media the system in New Zealand is the result of neoliberal policies that were promoted, through global institutions such as WTO and IMF, in the early 1980s in Western Europe and North America (Castells, 1997; McChesney, 2002). Today the media in New Zealand is highly commercialised with media concentration and foreign ownership, and, the print media is dominated by a duopoly of two foreign firms – Fairfax and APN News & Media (McGregor, 1992; Norris, 2002; Rosenberg, 2004).

The implication of media concentration is that content is likely to be affected, since as profit maximising firms, these media organisations are bound to take cost-cutting measures. In the coverage of Iraq War II, the main reason cited by editors for not assigning own staff to cover the conflict from the Gulf region, was economic considerations. The editors, while acknowledging that coverage could have been enhanced if their own staff had covered the conflict, opted, however, to use news agencies and news services for Iraq War II coverage (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006). This research has shown that content written by the newspapers reflected a different perspective than news coming from foreign locations. Research by

Comrie and Fountaine (2005) has also shown that content originating from New Zealand was “overwhelmingly critical” of the US (p 248).

The consequence for media consumers of the media concentration in New Zealand is that the diversity of opinions is being narrowed. As noted by Starke (2004), one of the concerns is “the risk of impacting negatively on the content of newspapers and the quality of information, by reducing its diversity, reliability, accessibility and meaningfulness” (p 15).

#### 11.4 News sources setting the news agenda

As discussed in Chapter 10, major news sources such as the US government and military dominated the war coverage, and as primary definers of news were able to mediate their messages to global audiences through indirect channels such as news agencies and other news and information ‘wholesalers’. During Iraq War II, the US-led Coalition managed the media through carefully coordinated press conferences and media management strategies such as embedding and public diplomacy initiatives. The success of modern military engagements depends on the ability to affect perceptions and attract the ‘hearts and minds’ of national and global audiences. Tactical success in the battlefield is not enough, for public opinion also needs to be won. Given these dynamics, it is not surprising that the news media have become an integral “part of modern warfare and that public relations is a primary weapon of war” (Hiebert, 1993, p 30).

As discussed in Chapter 10, the US and Coalition sources dominated the news, features and analysis as primary sources. In over 55 percent of the items the US and Coalition were the main sources. Twenty-two percent of these were US military sources, while 13 percent were the US government (n=401). The trend in source domination was similar regarding news agency copy, such that from Reuters and AP with 51 percent of Reuters copy attributed to US military or government sources, while 64 percent of AP copy used the US military or government as primary sources. Other key actors such as Iraq

and the UN were used far less, indicating the successful media management strategies of the US and Coalition countries.

As discussed earlier, news and information have become so important for winning wars, military and government sources, as primary definers of news, attempt to weaponise information. As Jeffords et al (1994) argue, “the media can shape the ways in which war itself is waged” (p 11) and thus it is important for actors in military conflicts to dominate the media coverage. Through PR strategies, “the military and government sources set the agenda [in the battlefields] and help frame the issues from which the news is constructed” (Schechter, 2003, p xxvi). In the coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, journalists oriented the coverage towards “Western political and military sources, mainly about Western military personnel, strategies, successes, and, less often, backed with comments from (often vetted) Western military ‘experts’” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004, p 29-30). The study also supports Herman and Chomsky’s (1988) propaganda model, as the government and military in the US and UK dominated the coverage, and oppositional views were not given prominence in the mainstream news sources. The ‘war on terror’ was seen by the media as a worthy cause for tackling ‘Islamic extremism and terrorism’ and the alleged threat of Iraq’s WMD.

The findings of this research have proven that the ‘authorities’ were able to dominate news as primary sources while the ‘challengers’ were virtually sidelined from the mainstream media reporting. However, this does not mean that other and alternative sources with a non-elite perspective were not available. The dominance of Anglo-American media systems globally, through news agencies and other content providers, means that these sources are considered to be meeting the standard of professional journalism, news values and thus high integrity. The infrequent use of alternative sources in New Zealand newspapers is an indication of this line of thinking.

The implications of official sources dominating media discourses in military conflict are great, given the ramifications that framing can have on audience perceptions. Studies have shown that during wars, military and government sources use disinformation and propaganda to dominate the media space. When official and authoritative sources dominate, in a kind of evolution of news, the alternative sources become less significant

and thus facilitate the survival of the strongest sources. And by managed and mediated selection, non-elite viewpoints are excluded from mainstream news discourse (Stech, 1996).

### 11.5 Directions for further research

This research looked at the news content that has been published by the newspapers to determine the news sources and direction. It was not within the purview of this research to analyse how newspaper editors chose certain news items from a myriad of sources. An organisational and sociological approach to the analysis of news selection and processing is an area for further research. The newspaper editors have before them sorties on the same issue or incident from several sources with different news angles, and why a certain story gets selected for coverage is an important question. Such a study would need to examine all the news agency feed and other content available before editors, and the final media product carried in the newspapers.

Coverage of military conflicts such as Iraq War II is mainly event-driven, and with news events developing by the hour, people do not always want to rely on the newspaper that gives an update only once in 24 hours – and with news that may have been written 24 hours earlier. News consumers use other sources such as TV and the internet for updates. An interesting area of research would be an audience-centred analysis of how people use different media in their own construction of the conflict.

### 11.6 Discussion

The thesis shows that Iraq War II coverage in New Zealand mainstream newspapers is unique in that it has given the opportunity for studying newspapers from a country that is not a direct participant in the war. But in this globalised world, distant events such as Iraq War II matter for several reasons – economic, political and cultural. The intensive but short-lived coverage in *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* illustrates that the conflict in the Gulf also mattered to the public in New Zealand. The

larger public and the government were vociferous in their opposition to unilateral military action by the US-led Coalition against Iraq. Thus there was no pressure on the newspaper editors to support the war and approve the stand taken by New Zealand's traditional allies – Australia, Britain and the United States. The newspapers were uniquely placed to be either critical observers of the war or publicists favouring the Coalition countries. It is interesting that, as the findings of this research reveal, the three newspapers attempted to balance the coverage with negative and positive stories. They were neither critical observers nor publicists.

What kind of war journalism discourse did the largest three New Zealand newspapers pursue in their Iraq War II coverage? When sampled newspaper content for this research was viewed through the lens of the three models of communicating conflict – media as critical observer, publicist, and the surface on which war is imagined and executed – proposed by Thussu and Freedman (2003), aspects of each narrative were apparent. Given the strong opposition in New Zealand to the invasion of Iraq without a UN mandate, one would have expected the media to be adversarial. However the coverage was more cautious, with attempts to balance the war journalism discourse with criticisms of the US and the highlighting of humanitarian issues, while also giving opportunity to official sources to dominate the war coverage. The newspapers were trying to balance the coverage, perhaps to appeal to local audiences and the government. Considering the public's disapproval of the invasion of Iraq and the strong anti-war stance of the New Zealand government, the mainstream newspapers could have been more critical in their observations. However, it appears from this research that the three newspapers opted to give event-oriented coverage, with blow-by-blow accounts of the invasion, battlefield successes, casualties and the take-over of Baghdad. Coverage was within a winner-loser dichotomy, and there was little context provided. The newspapers instead capitalised on drama and tragedies to appeal to readers. Given the extensive media management strategies by the US, Britain and Australia, the reliance on Anglo-American news sources by the New Zealand metropolitan press exposed local audiences to mediated communication from the Coalition military and government sources. By relying on elite US and UK newspapers for coverage in New Zealand, the newspaper editors were subscribing to war journalism frames that were relevant to US and UK audiences. And thus, in New Zealand where the public consensus and political

debates about the conflict in Iraq were different, the metropolitan press were unable to take a much stronger line that would have put the coverage in the local context.

Although there were attempts by New Zealand editors at the 'general level' and 'second level' of framing to orient coverage to reflect discussions and debates in New Zealand, the heavy dependence on Western news agencies minimised their efforts. Furthermore, the few framing choices available to New Zealand editors show the vulnerability of media consumers in New Zealand to mediated messages issuing from key actors in Iraq War II.

In military conflict coverage these issues of media biases become more common, given the ideological and political issues affecting media practitioners and media organisations. But the news media's responsibility is to provide a 'marketplace of ideas', and this can be provided by not exclusively relying on mainstream news agencies and elite US, UK news media. Alternative news sources can be used to provide diversity. For example, content from the national news agencies of countries such as Kuwait, Iraq or Iran could be monitored and used in stories, perhaps to provide more background, or to substantiate or refute claims from various sources. Given the options available to media consumers to access many different sources for news, the newspapers need to look into addressing the issue of content plurality. Otherwise, when major conflicts begin, people looking for different perspectives will seek gratification from alternative sources.

World news media coverage of military conflicts, in which the principal actors include major Western powers, is influenced by several factors, such as the scale of coverage given by the news or content providers (news agencies), the scale and impact of the conflict on countries and audiences, and public diplomacy and propaganda campaigns carried out by the countries involved in the conflict.

New Zealand's war coverage did not put the conflict into context and was episodically framed. A key issue that was raised as the reason for invading Iraq was the alleged WMD programmes. However, when the US and Coalition were unable to provide evidence to substantiate the claims, the discussion of this in the press was minimal.

There were only 10 (1.7%) articles in which the WMD issue was reported and discussed (n=600). Research in Britain has also shown similar trends (Tumber & Palmer, 2004).

The purported reason of the 'Coalition of the Willing' for invading Iraq, according to the US, was that Iraq was producing WMD and had links with Al-Qaeda. When the war started the news media did not offer debate about these issues and give more perspective to the underlying reasons for the invasion. There was very little on the two key issues of WMD and Al-Qaeda in the coverage during the sampled period from 21<sup>st</sup> March until 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2003. Of the sampled items only 1.7 percent was related to WMD and .5 percent to the alleged Iraq-Al-Qaeda connection. One explanation of this is that major news agencies and other content providers also did not see the significance of focusing on these issues, as in the 'fog of war' other aspects of the conflict had become more prominent partly highlighted by the news management strategies of the US. Furthermore, US and Coalition sources would not be forthcoming in providing any information that would undermine their tactical and strategic goals. The claims about WMD and Iraq-Al Qaeda links were made by the US government. For Western newspapers to reproduce this perspective of 'truth' points to the symbiosis between state and mainstream news media in times of military conflict. No doubt the newspapers in New Zealand were also short of content about those issues, or they may have preferred more dramatic and sensational news than the issue of whether WMD were found in Iraq or not. The lack of context in the war coverage is very clearly exemplified by the inattention to the larger issues of the conflict. Like most Western newspapers, the New Zealand press failed to highlight the issue of WMD and the inability of the Coalition to show evidence of WMD in Iraq. The failure of the New Zealand newspapers to focus on issues rather than events shows, among other things, that the Anglo-American media hegemony dominates and that it dictates the war journalism discourse in New Zealand.

The extensive coverage given to the rescue of Jessica Lynch also illustrates that the New Zealand newspapers were predisposed to sensational and dramatic journalism. Furthermore, it is a clear example of the extent of propaganda and mediated communication originating from the dominant military action in Iraq War II. The lack of adversarial or critical journalism may also be due to the reliance on external sources,



who were much more interested in the dramatic aspects of battlefield victories. The news media, from wholesalers to retailers, appear to see “conflict as a battle and the battle as sports arena and gladiator circus” where the focus is on winning (Galtung, 2002). When coverage is geared towards ‘war as spectacle’ contextualisation and critical evaluations of the causes of war become insignificant, as has been shown in this research. Although the newspapers focused on the impact of the war, notably the humanitarian issues, the justifications given for the invasion of Iraq were not critically analysed. Interestingly, content that originated from New Zealand was more critical of the US.

The commodification of news and cultural products by the news agencies, and the flow of these products, is advancing the process of globalisation. Aided by communications technology, the “globalisation of news is having far reaching effects on the news gatherers and the news disseminators” (Herbert, 2001, p vii), while the globalisation of the media is impacting the content and directions of coverage.

The coverage of Iraq War II in the New Zealand newspapers was also determined by market forces. As profit-motive enterprises the newspapers relied on more economical sources to cover foreign news – news agencies – instead of sending their own journalists to cover the conflict. The consequence of this was that the newspapers got few opportunities to frame the war coverage within a local context. The newspapers were not able to directly relate to the political debates in New Zealand about the social and economic implications of the war in Iraq. The dependence on foreign news providers also demonstrates the media hegemony of the Anglo-American news practices. While larger and more established newspapers such as *The New York Times* could generate content from their staff reporters, smaller newspapers had to rely on news wholesalers (Lee, 2004). In Iraq War II coverage, for example, the *Arab News* and the *Middle East Times* relied heavily on news agencies, while in the Iraq War I coverage the Saudi Arabian press also depended on wire services (Al-Kahtani, 1999). This thesis has also shown that international news is exclusively supplied by the mainstream news agencies and that in the reporting of Iraq War II these news sources dominated the coverage. The immediate need for New Zealand journalists to cover the war was not there for two reasons. First, the war was not a conflict involving New

Zealand troops and thus there was no need to localise the conflict. Second, news agencies and US and UK newspapers were cheaper sources for reporting the war to New Zealand audiences.

As New Zealand was not involved in the war, there was no opportunity for coverage from the front. Had there been New Zealand troops involved in the war, the newspapers would have sent journalists or assigned stringers to cover, with local angles for the audiences in New Zealand (Interview with Thompson, February 23, 2006; Interview with Gardner, March 8, 2006; Interview with Piercy, February 13, 2007). Thus, without the need for 'localisation' in the war journalism discourse, *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* depended on foreign content providers in the construction of the Iraq War for local audiences.

Through news selection processes the New Zealand newspapers attempted to frame Iraq War II coverage in a context that reflected the public opinion and foreign policy of the government. This partly supports the indexing hypothesis (Bennett, 1990), and in New Zealand's case, the government and the public had largely similar views on the war and thus the newspaper coverage also followed that line. However, despite the orientation of the coverage to reflect a more unfavourable view of the US-led invasion, exclusive reliance on a few mainstream news agencies and Anglo-American newspapers made the news media vulnerable to propaganda from the primary definers. The institutional sources – the military and government – of the 'Coalition of the Willing' were able to channel propaganda and dominate war journalism discourse in New Zealand. The case of Jessica Lynch illustrates, how effective and instantly the US propaganda could work, by getting prime space not only in the mainstream New Zealand press but even in newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* (McQuail, 2005). The latter two newspapers acknowledged the flawed coverage in the Jessica Lynch story, but self-criticism was not forthcoming from the New Zealand newspapers.

Since World War II, war coverage has undergone dramatic changes, influenced by technology and the media management and public relations strategies of the key actors in conflicts. Global news agencies have become stronger, as a handful of them control the global market for news and information. Driven by the commercialisation of media

firms and the need for profit maximisation in the neoliberal globalisation era, the news media in most countries find it feasible to rely on the mainstream news agencies. Within this environment of dependency, propaganda, and news management by powerful actors in military conflicts, the public are not best served by the news media, as was the case in New Zealand during the invasion phase of Iraq War II. Although since Iraq War I the use of more news sources has increased, this has not in fact increased the diversity of views. Rather, the perspective has become parochial, as shown in the coverage of Iraq War II. Three reasons could be advanced for the approach taken by the newspapers in New Zealand to cover the war. First, as New Zealand was not involved in the conflict, there was no economic value in sending reporters to the front. Second, New Zealand newspapers therefore end up relying on sources whose countries are direct participants in the war and who are therefore not detached from the mainstream discourse about the war. Third, the globalisation of news values has made such news agency and foreign news media content useable with little or no alteration by New Zealand newspapers.

Although the New Zealand newspapers were not able to serve news consumers with a diverse mix of news content, or give context to the coverage, the news reading public have at their disposal other media choices. The enormous range of alternative news media outlets in the public sphere and the immediacy of information available on the internet have empowered individuals. While such choices would have been limited to the mainstream news agencies in the 1960s and early 1970s, the emergence of alternative media on the internet has given media choices to the public. While New Zealand newspaper readers were vulnerable to heavily mediated messages during Iraq War II, the availability of alternative views on the internet lessens the impact of propaganda and news management from the primary definers.

This study of Iraq War II coverage by *The New Zealand Herald*, *The Dominion Post* and *The Press* has supported the existing theories of media hegemony, dependency, propaganda and public relations. The study also reveals that, through the gatekeeping processes such as news selection, the New Zealand editors attempted to orient the coverage to reflect the views of the readers and the government. However, the coverage was not critical, but more a balanced discourse of events unfolding in the Gulf region.

In conflicts where New Zealand has been involved, most newspapers in this country have taken much stronger positions, as during the coverage of the Vietnam War. As casualties mounted, the mainstream New Zealand newspapers became more critical of the government and the country's engagement in Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s (Witte, 1990; Rabel, 2005). The newspapers that strongly supported New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam conflict were *The Dominion*, *The Otago Daily Times*, *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Evening Post* (Rabel, 2005).

During that period, the newspapers in New Zealand were wholly local enterprises and thus they were likely to promote and defend New Zealand interests. During the Vietnam War, the newspapers were under contesting pressures – from the government, political elites and the public – to take a certain position or emphasise some aspects of the conflict. The news media during Iraq War II, however, were not under such strong pressure, as the country had no direct involvement in the conflict. Within the limited debates, the newspapers played safe by not leaning to any sides, instead giving a relatively balanced coverage.

Since the 1980s, the media landscape has also changed. With neo-liberal globalisation, the media in New Zealand, as in most Western countries, have also become part of the global media system. Changing ownerships, acquisitions and the integration and commercialisation of media systems globally have also restructured the New Zealand media system with foreign control. Furthermore, the globalisation of news and news values has also remodelled the press system in New Zealand. Thus, it is not surprising that the press in New Zealand followed the dominant perspective and relied on Anglo-American news sources. New Zealand is now part of the global news production machinery, where the main objective is profit maximisation rather than making the medium a marketplace of ideas.

While ownership may have influenced the orientation of Iraq War II coverage in 2003, the globalisation of news media and the shared news values are also key factors that influenced the coverage of the conflict. Given the public and the government consensus on the invasion of Iraq, the newspaper editors were in a unique position to make their coverage more critical, in line with the public and mainstream views of the war.

Considering the newspapers' cautious approach to coverage, and their attempts at balancing negative and positive items, one can argue that, as foreign-owned enterprises, the three largest newspapers were driven by commercial and ideological interests. That is, it was cheaper to source material from the news agencies, and these news agencies, being US and UK based, shared similar ideological perspectives. New Zealand's acceptance of content from these sources is also made easier due to the shared cultural and professional journalistic values. The coverage in the three New Zealand newspapers confirms the observations made in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 that in the globalisation process news values have become homogenised. Thus, editors in New Zealand easily make use of the news content from news agencies and Western newspapers.

If New Zealand newspapers want to provide diversity in coverage they need to take into consideration the need for content from various sources rather than depending on the Anglo-American news agencies and newspapers. News agencies such as Inter Press Service, or national news agencies of countries involved in conflicts can be used to give variety. Diversity of perspectives is also needed during military conflicts as news sources attempt to spread propaganda. As discussed in Chapter 2, during major wars countries such as the US and UK have extensively used strategies to manage news and change the perception of the readers, as winning public opinion, whether national or international, is also important for the strategic victory of the wars (Seib, 2006; Boyd-Barrett, 2004; Knightley, 2000).

In times of conflict, New Zealand newspapers could use the national news agencies of key actors to ensure that viewpoints from contesting sides are covered. This means the editors would have to monitor, re-write and verify the stories coming in from various news sources. However this would be an enormous task as foreign news departments would need additional staff to carry out such work. While the priority is always on the national and local reporting, organisational and structural constraints prevent them from allocating more resources to international conflict coverage. If the New Zealand newspapers want to be more critical observers of conflicts such as the Iraq War II, critical perspectives can be given if the newspapers are willing to use alternative news sources and allocate additional resources to war coverage. In the case of Iraq War

II, the environment existed for the newspapers to be critical observers given the opposition to the war from the government and the public.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: Coding sheet

#### **1. Newspapers**

1. The New Zealand Herald
2. The Dominion Post
3. The Press

#### **2. Headline size**

1. One column
2. Two columns
3. Three columns
4. Four columns
5. Five columns
6. Six columns
7. Banner headline

#### **3. Type of item**

1. News
2. News analysis
3. Feature
4. Letters to editor
5. Editorial
6. Opinion, column, commentary

#### **4. Item origin, location**

1. USA
2. Iraq
3. UK
4. Australia
5. Other coalition nations
6. New Zealand
7. Arab nations
8. UN
9. Europe
10. Non-Coalition
11. Asian nations
12. Unclear
13. Other

**5. Direction of item**

1. Favourable to US
2. Unfavourable to US
3. Favourable to Britain
4. Unfavourable to Britain
5. Favourable to Iraq
6. Unfavourable to Iraq
7. Unfavourable to US and Iraqi
8. Neutral
9. Favourable to coalition
10. Unfavourable to coalition
11. Criticism of NZ Iraq policy
12. Support for NZ Iraq policy
13. Other

**6. Section**

1. Front page
2. Front section (Section A)
3. Editorial, Op-ed page
4. World News section
5. Business
6. Other

**7. Editorial priority of the item on the page**

1. Lead story
2. Second story
3. Third story
4. Other

**8. News agencies/ content providers**

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Reuters            | 13. Washington Post   |
| 2. AFP                | 14. Observer          |
| 3. Associated Press   | 15. KRT               |
| 4. AAP                | 16. The Age           |
| 5. NZPA               | 17. Telegraph         |
| 6. New Zealand Herald | 18. PA                |
| 7. Dominion Post      | 19. Bloomberg         |
| 8. Press              | 20. Los Angeles Times |
| 9. Times of London    | 21. Agencies          |
| 10. Independent       | 22. Other             |
| 11. Guardian          | 23. No source cited   |
| 12. New York Times    |                       |



**9. Primary source in the item** (Applicable to News, News analysis and Features)**US, Coalition**

1. US Government
2. US Military
3. US Soldiers
4. US Opposition
5. US Academics, experts
6. US Ordinary citizens
7. US Other
8. UK Government
9. UK Military
10. UK Soldiers
11. UK Opposition
12. UK Academics, experts
13. UK Ordinary citizens
14. UK Other
15. Coalition Government (Other)
16. Coalition Military
17. Coalition Soldiers
18. Coalition Opposition
19. Coalition Academics, experts
20. Coalition Ordinary citizens
21. Coalition Other

**Organisations, NGOs**

1. UN
2. EU
3. Asean
4. OIC
5. Red Cross
6. Green Peace
7. Other

**Iraq**

1. Government
2. Military
3. Soldiers
4. Opposition
5. Academics, experts
6. Ordinary citizens
7. Other

**New Zealand**

1. Government
2. Military
3. Soldiers
4. Opposition
5. Academics, experts
6. Ordinary citizens
7. Other

**Arab/ Muslim countries**

1. Government
2. Academics, experts
3. Ordinary citizens
4. Other

**News media**

1. Western
2. Arab
3. Other

**Other****10. Direction of primary source** (Applicable to News, News analysis, features and not applicable to editorials, opinion and letters)

1. Favourable to U.S.
2. Favourable to British
3. Favourable to Iraq
4. Neutral
5. Unfavourable to U.S.
6. Unfavourable to British
7. Unfavourable to Iraq
8. Favourable to coalition
9. Unfavourable to coalition
10. No source cited

11. Favourable to NZ govt Iraq policy
12. Unfavourable to NZ Iraq policy
13. Other
14. Unclear

## **11. Main theme of the item**

### **Process of combat**

1. Process of combat

### **Military build-up/ technology**

1. US Military build-up
2. US Military hardware-technology
3. Iraq military build-up
4. Iraq military hardware-technology
5. Coalition military build-up
6. Coalition military hardware-technology

### **Impact of war**

1. Economic impact
2. Environmental impact
3. Humanitarian impact

### **Debate about the war, antiwar responses**

1. Anti-war demonstrations, responses
2. Criticism of US government/military
3. Criticism of Iraq government/ military
4. Criticism of other coalition members

### **New Zealand and Iraq War**

1. Criticism of NZ government Iraq policy
2. Support for NZ government Iraq policy

### **Casualties of war**

1. US military casualties
2. Iraq military casualties
3. US civilian casualties
4. Iraq civilian casualties
5. Coalition military casualties
6. Coalition civilian casualties

### **Diplomacy, peace journalism**

1. Diplomatic efforts by UN (for peace, ceasefire)
2. Diplomatic efforts by US-Coalition
3. Diplomatic efforts by Iraq
4. Diplomatic efforts by Middle East
5. Diplomatic efforts by EU
6. Diplomatic efforts by NZ

7. Diplomatic efforts by others

**Context of war**

1. Background to conflict
2. Iraq history, culture
3. Iraq al Qaeda link
4. Weapons of Mass Destruction

**Other categories**

2. About Iraqi officials
3. Iraq reconstruction
4. Media, war coverage
5. Iraqi atrocities, abuse
6. US, Coalition atrocities, abuse
7. Civil unrest
8. Iraq Opposition

**12. Contextualising the conflict**

1. Episodic coverage
2. Thematic coverage

## Appendix 2: Iraq timeline of key events (19<sup>th</sup> March to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2003)

- Mar. 19 President Bush declares war on Iraq
- Mar. 20 The war against Iraq begins 5:30 am Baghdad time when the US launches Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- Mar. 21 The major phase of the war begins with heavy aerial attacks on Baghdad and other cities.
- Mar. 24 Troops march within 60 miles of Baghdad.
- Mar. 26 About 1,000 paratroopers land in Kurdish-controlled Iraq
- Mar. 27 Iraq says 350 civilians have died in air raids since the conflict began.
- Mar. 29 The Iraqi Information Minister accused the US forces of killing 140 civilians during the last 24 hours. Four US servicemen are killed by a suicide bomber at a checkpoint near Najaf.
- Mar. 30 US Marines and Army troops launch first attack on Iraq's Republican Guard, about 65 miles outside Baghdad.
- Mar. 31 US troops kill 7 civilians including women and children in a car whose driver refuses to stop at a checkpoint
- Apr. 1 Saudi Arabia urges Saddam to make a war-ending 'sacrifice' and quit, while Saddam Hussein's aides deny US reports that some of the president's family have fled abroad.
- Apr. 2 Special operations forces rescue Pfc. Jessica Lynch from a hospital in Nasiriya. She was one of 12 members of the 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company captured by Iraqi troops on March 23
- Apr. 3 About 320 Iraqi soldiers were killed in the advance by some 1,000 US troops, US military sources say. As many as 80 Iraqis, some of them civilians, are reported to have been killed at the village of Furat near the airport in what witnesses described as a rocket attack.
- Apr. 5 US tanks roll into the Iraqi capital and engage in firefights with Iraqi troops
- Apr. 7 British forces take control of Basra, Iraq's second-largest city.
- Apr. 8 Three journalists are killed by coalition fire. Two die after a shell hits the main hotel in which the media are staying in the city.  
Pentagon officials say they cannot confirm whether the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, was killed in the bombing of a Baghdad suburb. However, Iraqi command orders are still being issued to key elements of the regime's military
- Apr. 9 US forces take control Baghdad, but sporadic fighting continues  
US marines help crowds to topple a giant statue of Saddam Hussein in the heart of Baghdad. Widespread looting breaks out unhindered in the Iraqi capital.  
The US vice-president, Dick Cheney, says the Iraqi regime is collapsing, and that military progress shows criticism of the war was misguided.
- Apr. 11 Kirkuk falls to Kurdish fighters
- Apr. 12 Looting and unrest in major cities such as Baghdad and Basra. In Baghdad, with the notable exception of the Oil Ministry, which was guarded by American troops, the majority of government and public buildings were totally plundered,
- Apr. 13 Marines rescue five US soldiers captured by Iraqi troops on March 23 in Nasiriya, and two pilots who had been shot down on March 24 near Karbala.
- Apr. 14 Major fighting in Iraq is declared over by the Pentagon
- Apr. 15 At least seven Iraqis are killed when US troops try to restore order at a demonstration in Mosul.
- Apr. 18 Tens of thousands of Iraqis demonstrate against the US occupation of Iraq in central Baghdad.
- Apr. 24 The UN secretary general calls on the US-led coalition to respect international law as the "occupying power" in Iraq, drawing immediate ire from US officials who resist the label "occupier".
- Apr. 25 Tariq Aziz, the former Iraqi deputy prime minister, surrenders to US forces in Baghdad.
- Apr. 28 US troops fire on a group of Iraqi demonstrators near Baghdad, killing at least 13 people and wounding 75 others.
- Apr. 30 US troops open fire on Iraqi civilians, killing two, for the second time as an angry crowd in

- 
- Falluja protested over an earlier shooting
- May 1 The US declares an end to major combat operations
- May 7 The US military says it has found a vehicle which appears to be a mobile bio-arms lab.
- May 12 A new civil administrator takes over in Iraq
- May 15 May 15 2003  
British Foreign secretary, Jack Straw, concedes that hard evidence of weapons of mass destruction might never be found in Iraq.
- May 22 UN Security Council approves a resolution lifting the economic sanctions against Iraq
- May 27 Two US soldiers are killed and nine injured in an attack on an army checkpoint in the Iraqi town of Falluja.
- May 30 US secretary of state Colin Powell and British prime minister Tony Blair deny that intelligence about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction was distorted or exaggerated to justify an attack on Iraq.

**Source:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

Appendix 3: Jessica Lynch story in New Zealand newspapers

1. The New Zealand Herald (3 April 2003)

**The New Zealand Herald**  
 Auckland edition Thursday, April 3, 2003 \$1.20 (NZ law may apply)

# Daring raid brings joy to a mother

**RESCUE: US special forces swoop on an Iraqi hospital to save a wounded prisoner of war**

by Monica Davy and Jayson Blair

Deandra Lynch waited by the telephone for nine days, wondering whether it was going to bring good news or the worst news a mother could hear.

There came "the telephone call I have been praying for."

Her daughter, 19-year-old Jessica Lynch, a civilian nurse army supply clerk missing in action, was alive and had been rescued from an Iraqi hospital.

She was one of 15 members of the British airborne parachute troops rescued by US special forces on the first landing of the war.

Last night, after her rescue, she was being treated for two broken legs, a broken arm and multiple gunshot wounds. Her condition was said to be stable.

The US military spent several days pinpointing the exact location after hearing that Private Lynch was being held at Nasiriyah's Saddam Hospital, which was being used as a military facility.

The operation was a top secret Command effort and members of the Special Operations forces who completed the raid.

As the forces stormed the building...

...delivered unbelievable," said Randy Coleman, a spokesman for the West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety.

"I think that no one can talk to the family before they had been wanting to preserve hope, not to give up, but for what was really expected — one word."

Deandra Lynch said "everyone in town" was at the family home. They planned to celebrate all evening and into the early morning.

"This is phenomenal, no, it's borderline unbelievable?," Randy Coleman was vague.

Her husband could barely contain his joy.

"He just went crazy, screaming 'Thank God, thank God, thank God,'" said Jane Cooper, a family friend, who was sitting in the Lynchs' living room when the Army called with the news.

"Everyone in that room just went nuts, but she was the only one who didn't cry."

...said "I reckon when it's your own baby, you never lose hope."

The rescue was recorded on television by a member of the special forces team.

A US official said the tape might be shown today.

The strike, which is from Texas and is believed to be the first military strike in Iraq, was a surprise to some who maintain the Army's policy of no-fly zones.

Military officials said after the attack that Private Lynch was being held in a hospital in the town of Nasiriyah, a company unit of four soldiers believed to be in the area.

Private Lynch was taken to the US military hospital in Baghdad.

Seven other members of the command unit were rescued in action. Although two have been reported dead, the report says two others were rescued and returned to their families, even as a military team tries to identify four bodies of what appeared to be four Americans who were killed.

...WAR BRIEFING

**Quick overview**

- The beginning of the ground battle in Iraq may come to a head in Baghdad.
- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.
- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.
- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.

**The fight**

- US forces continue to push north from Baghdad.
- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.
- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.

**Coming home**

- TV reporter Mike McRobert is expected to return to New Zealand early next week.
- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.

**Leaders**

- US forces are expected to cross the Tigris river.



2. The Dominion Post (3 April 2003)

**THE HEART OF NEW ZEALAND**

**THE DOMINION POST**

Wellington, New Zealand Thursday April 3 2003 \$1.20 (NZ law may apply)

**Watching my mother die** Rosemary McLeod B4

**Gambling and sport** Why clubs want pokies B5

**Reading your face** Kiwi computer breakthrough A5

◆ Race to Baghdad resumes ◆ Marines cross Tigris ◆ Militia strafed

# Daring POW rescue

**Decoy raids as soldier snatched from hospital**

...SPECIAL Forces rescued a young woman held in an Iraqi hospital in a daring overnight raid on Saddam Hussein's Saddam Hospital, which was being used as a military facility.

The operation was a top secret Command effort and members of the Special Operations forces who completed the raid.

As the forces stormed the building...

...delivered unbelievable," said Randy Coleman, a spokesman for the West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety.

"I think that no one can talk to the family before they had been wanting to preserve hope, not to give up, but for what was really expected — one word."

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...WAR WATCH

**Kong star blesses remake**

...Faye Wong, 'King' is one of the great film...

**YOM GARDY**

...The US military spent several days pinpointing the exact location after hearing that Private Lynch was being held at Nasiriyah's Saddam Hospital, which was being used as a military facility.

3. The Press (3 April 2003)

Right to life... digital cameras... NEW WIVES... A buyer's guide - F990, £1

# THE PRESS

Thursday, April 3, 2003 www.press.co.nz Christchurch, New Zealand www.press.co.nz Subscription 85c, Retail 90c Air freight extra 30c

## 'US troops close on Baghdad' America doesn't leave its heroes behind'




**US troops close on Baghdad**

United States forces closed over the city of Baghdad yesterday, closing on Baghdad after what they called the most important battle in the war to oust President Saddam Hussein.

"This is not the biggest fight of the war," said a US spokesman at Camp Command in Kuwait. "The battle in Karbala and the way the most significant battle to date."

The commander of British forces in Iraq said there should be no rush to launch an all-out assault on Baghdad. He said "some additional troops and equipment."

US Marines said they seized a bridge over the Tigris, west of Baghdad, southwest of Baghdad.

"They're the last big battle we expect," a senior Marine Corps spokesman, adding that the operation "could" be completed by the end of the week.

Later two large American tanks rolled into the Baghdad Green Zone from Baghdad.

The 1st Infantry moved Karbala and headed for the Baghdad Green Zone from Baghdad.

Two powerful US tanks are now in the capital from the west.

western city of Karbala, ending a series of quick strikes into the town to kill or capture those loyal to Saddam. They have held back from a final assault.

The British troops have been engaged in a series of battles, while repelling sporadic sniping attacks.

Three British tanks fired on a building on the edge of Karbala yesterday, the most serious battle since the British captured Karbala, a spokesman said.

Hours before the latest assault, America's top soldier, General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said one of the most important US troops in Iraq had lost its original combat capability.

The 1st Infantry began its assault on Karbala shortly after midnight, backed by warplanes. Another attack happened and a British attack happened and a British attack happened and a British attack happened.

It took only a few hours to oust the Saddam forces from the city.

Washington gave no details on how much US forces captured of Karbala's whereabouts, but said US troops had taken more than 100 prisoners in each situation.

"It's important to get good intelligence and then be able to act in a timely manner," the official said. "This was a great success."

Military sources said Washington said US Marines seized a theory

concerned headquarters in Qatar yesterday.

Lynch was one of 18 soldiers last night, captured, or killed when a British Commando company made a swing into and came under attack from Iraqi tanks and fighters.

Five of the captives, but not Lynch, were shown on Iraq television as well as the BBC and the Marwan device air and

Washington said it never will. A military source told a Reuters reporter traveling with the Marines that the bodies of the soldiers who Lynch was being held in was taken to the Baghdad Hospital and was then moved to the Baghdad, which was through the city.

The Marwan device air and

Appendix 4: War coverage in New Zealand newspapers

The New Zealand Herald (March 24, 2003)

**The New Zealand Herald**  
 Monday March 24, 2003

**DISPATCH FROM THE HEART OF A BURNING CITY**  
**The shock of war**

**IRAQ BRIEFING**

**IRAQ: The coalition's precision bombing of Baghdad leaves a little girl crippled and seven other members of her family wounded**

*Who dooiled, I wonder, that these children, these young women, should suffer for September 11?*

**Extensive war coverage, with live reporting from the Middle East**  
**TODAY'S NEWS IS ON 3**

The New Zealand Herald (March 29-30, 2003)

**INSIDE TODAY: Glossy magazine**  
**The New Zealand Herald**  
**Weekend Herald**  
 100 SPANER OF THE YEAR  
 SATURDAY - SUNDAY MARCH 29 - 30, 2003

**Enjoy the art of weekend reading**

**BEING TV**  
 Why Eric is an icon  
 MARCH 22

**HERE'S TWO YOU**  
 Ciscom/Banca leads Blues' by 100

**ALSO TODAY**

**Message from the Boss**

**Big Crown hold-up**

**Military marches**

**Highland council**

**Police ordered**

**Also today**

**Food warning as new cyanide letters sent to the Herald**

**DICK SMITH**  
 At all stores







#### Appendix 4: Questionnaire used in the semi-structured interview with editors

1. How are the foreign news selected for publication?
2. What are the criteria for selecting foreign news?
3. Are the news selection and editing process different during military conflicts and natural disasters? (eg Iraq War II, Tsunami and hurricane Katrina)
4. How and who decides the story placement, location and importance?
5. To what extent are the stories modified?
6. Are the headlines re-written or used as in the wire copies?
7. Who chooses photos and graphics to go along with the story?
8. Is foreign news coverage discussed at the daily budget or editorial meetings?
9. Does the newspaper completely depend on wire services for foreign news coverage?
10. To what extent were the wire copies modified by editors?
11. Did the newspaper send reporters to Iraq or Middle East between March and May 2003? If not has the newspaper sent reporters in any period of time to cover the Iraq War of 2003?
12. If the newspaper had journalists in the theatre of conflict will the newspaper's coverage/ outlook of the war be different than it is now?
13. What are the reasons for the newspaper not to post reporters in Iraq or the Middle East? Were they economic reasons or low news value?
14. Will the newspaper send reporters to Iraq or Middle East, if New Zealand was engaged militarily as a member of the 'Coalition of the Willing'? Will that change the news values?
15. Does war news/coverage boost circulation and readership?
16. Does extent of coverage depend on business/ market forces or public interest?
17. How far is it true that 'war is good for the media businesses'?
18. Is Iraq War coverage extensive because major actors are the major economic and political and military powers?
19. In Iraq War II coverage, what aspects of the war were emphasised?

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