Chapter 4

Portrayal of Iraq War in the Global Media

This chapter deals with the role of global media in the coverage of Iraq war. Firstly, it discusses the historical and socio-political features of Iraq. Secondly, the dynamics of Iraq war and its strategic and ideological aspects are examined. Thirdly, the chapter analyses the way global media covered the Iraq war. The implications of Bush administration’s ‘War on Terror’ for the media coverage is analysed along with the whole gamut of ‘embedded journalism’.

Iraq: Past and Present

‘Iraq’ is derived from the Arabic word *araqa* which means deep-rooted. The biblical name for the region was *Erech* (Genesis 10.10). The Greeks had named the land between the two rivers, Mesopotamia. They adopted it from the ancient word Miyanrudan which has the same meaning. Lower Mesopotamia has always been called ‘the land of Iraq’ in Arabic, meaning ‘the fertile’ or ‘deep-rooted’land. Ancient Iraq was known as Miyanrudan till 1921. This land was a part of the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century until the World War I. It was captured by the British from the Ottomans in 1917. Iraq is the cradle of civilisations and a triangle of mountains, deserts, and fertile river valley, bounded on the east by Iran, on the north by Turkey, on the west by Syria and Jordan, and on the south by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This unique land is one of the world’s earliest civilisations, including those of Sumer, Akkad, Babylon, and Assyria. These places were preserved by rulers such as Hammurabi (1792-1750 B.C.), Cyrus (550-530 B.C.), Darius (520-485 B.C.), Alexander (336-323 B.C.), and the Abbasids (750-1258). Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, indicates the main physical aspects of the country (Fisher 2008: 469).
Thus, Iraq is commonly referred to as part of the Fertile Crescent. Iraq has 19 km of coastline along the northern end of the Persian Gulf.

Iraq has traditionally been united by language, religion, legends, history and past achievements (Longricg 2002:389). This wealthy region later became a valuable part of larger imperial polities, including Persian, Greek and Roman dynasties, and after the seventh century, it became an integral part of the Islamic world. Its capital “Baghdad is a city both ancient and modern and the culture of the people a similar mix” (Premachandran 2008).

Iraq’s modern borders were mostly demarcated in 1920 by the League of Nations when the Ottoman Empire was divided by the Treaty of Sevres. Iraq was placed under the authority of the United Kingdom as the British Mandate of Mesopotamia. A monarchy was established in 1921 and the Kingdom of Iraq gained independence from Britain in 1932. In 1958, the monarchy was overthrown and the Republic of Iraq was created. Iraq was controlled by the Ba'ath Party from 1968. Later, Saddam Hussein became the President of Iraq in July 1979 and he controlled the Republic from 1979 to 2003. “His period was marked by bloodshed, construction and destruction, war and invasion, attempted coups and numerous assassination attempts” (Kalha 2008:29). The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) resulted in horrendous loss of life and enormous hardship. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was a consequence of the Iran-Iraq war as Iraq found it difficult to reconstruct its war-torn economy with the falling oil prices due to over production by Kuwait.

The society in Iraq “is made up of three discrete blocks: the Kurdish north, Sunni Arab centre, and Shi’a Arab south” (Anderson 2004:139). The Sunni Muslims have traditionally filled most leadership positions in Iraq. They were small in number but significant in the ruling class until the ouster of Saddam Hussein from power. Thus Iraq was ruled by the Sunni Muslims who came from the so-called golden triangle consisting of Baghdad, Mosul and Ramadi. Arabic

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1 Interview with M.K. Premachandran, Member of Parliament at Trivandrum, 25 May, 2008.
was the sole official language of Iraq but since the new Constitution of Iraq approved in June 2004, both Arabic and Kurdish are official languages.

Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003 following the US-led invasion of the country. After the invasion, the situation deteriorated and was on the brink of a civil war. “The misfortune of Iraq was that most of its political leadership has been selfish, personally corrupt and politically inept. They often misread signals coming from the outside. On numerous occasions they have showed that they had been quite unaware or even ignorant of developments taking place in the outside world” (Kalha 2008:30). After the 2003 Invasion of Iraq, an estimated 2.4 million people were internally displaced, four million Iraqis were considered food-insecure and only a third of Iraqi children had access to safe drinking water. The effects of Western colonialism, US intervention, dangerous leadership, the Cold War, and oil dominated the history of Iraq during the twentieth century.

Premachandran, a delegate of the left parties in solidarity with Iraq, visited Iraq and expressed his views:

We first met Dr Mohamad Taka, Dean, College of Economics, Baghdad University, who told us that after 1991 when the USA attacked Iraq, 90 per cent of the infrastructure was destroyed --- bridges, colleges, university, hospitals, electricity plants, and industry. In 1992 the government of Iraq decided to reconstruct everything and it was done in just 3 years. However, after the UN embargo there is high inflation in Iraq with Iraqi currency devalued vis-a-vis the US dollar. Earlier the exchange rate was 3 US dollars to 1 Iraqi dinar, now it is 2000 dinars to 1 US dollar. So salaries have gone down. Since the average middle class professionals get a very low salary, many work as taxi drivers, etc, to supplement their income. Unemployment is there, due to the economic situation: the
lack of investment due to the economic embargo and the country has virtually been at war since 1991 (Premachandran 2008).²

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) state that Iraq has a mixed population of Shias and Sunnis and around 65 per cent of the population is Shia, and around 35 per cent are Sunni. In November 2006, the UNHCR estimated that 1.8 million Iraqis had been displaced to neighbouring countries, who are mostly Sunni Muslims and Christians. Another 1.6 million are displaced internally.

Iraq’s Oil Economy

Iraq’s economy was stagnant until 1914, it was based on agriculture (Longrigg 2002:394). Since the establishment of the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) in 1925, petroleum has been the major source of the Iraq treasury. Petroleum was first discovered at the Kirkuk field in October 1927 by the Turkish Petroleum Co (TPC) and later it was renamed Iraqi Petroleum Co (IPC). By 1938, Iraq was exporting oil and in 1972 the government nationalised the IPC and changed it to the Iraq National Oil Co (INOC), which was responsible for the exporting of crude oil. Therefore, Iraqi economy is basically oil based or oil dependent since 1970.

Oil experts believe that Iraq has immense oil resources. Iraq has about 10 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves. Iraq's economy is dominated by the oil sector, which has traditionally provided about 95 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. Iraq ranks second in the world oil reserves, behind Saudi Arabia. Two thousand oil wells have been drilled in Iraq and it was one of the founding members of OPEC. Iraqi oil wealth provided it an important role in Arab and foreign affairs. Thus oil is the foundation of Iraqi’s power, economy and livelihood. Oil revenue is the corner-stone of Iraq’s development and services.

² Interview with M.K. Premachandran, Member of Parliament at Trivandrum, 25 May, 2008.
Thus the livelihood and economic security of the people of Iraq became highly dependent on the world oil market. Iraq’s industry, agriculture, health, education and infrastructure depend on the oil revenue. “It enables the state to break its financial dependence on its citizens” (Ismael 2004:121).

Ranjit Singh Kalha, says that Iraqi oil commands a high premium in the oil market for three reasons.

1. Iraq’s oil is of very high quality and has attractive chemical properties such as high Carbon content, lightness, and low Sulphur content that makes it easier for refining for high value products.

2. Iraq’s oil is plentiful. Its proven reserves are estimated at 115 billion barrels. There are many promising areas in Iraq that remain unexplored.

3. The cost of producing oil in Iraq is probably the lowest in the world. More than a third of Iraq’s oil lies in wells that are just six hundred metres from the surface. They can be tapped relatively easily. It costs about US $ 1.5 per barrel to produce oil in Iraq, as against US $ 5 in Malaysia and Oman. In Mexico and Russia, the costs are significantly higher (Kalha 2008:258).

The 1970s witnessed the prosperous decade of the growth of oil revenue in Iraq. But this was never duplicated in the next decades because of the Iraq- Iran war, Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the US-led invasion and war. The invasion and war “caused destruction and the closure of oil facilities led oil output, export and revenue to decline very sharply” (Ismael 2004:122). Thus the Iraqi oil sector faced a number of serious structural problems such as destruction of oil fields and decline of oil exports. The massive shift of labour from the civilian economy to the military resulted in the decline of the Iraqi economy in the decades of 1970s and 1980s (Ismael 2004:123).

“In early times gold, silver, grain, cotton were the commodities of exchange, but today its oil. The war over Iraq may be a war for oil, but at a deeper level, it is a war for defence of the continued control of the world’s oil economy
through the US dollar” (Pasha 2003: 132). Iraq was a radical factor in the oil market even before Saddam Hussein rose to power (Feldman 2003:76).

In the post-war scenario after 2003, the import of foreign military equipment led to bankruptcy. It affected development plans and social services (Ismael 2004:122). Unfortunately now the oil dependent country has no full control over its oil income, which has been determined by the international political forces. It is noted that “the main issues between and Iraq and the US are not weapons of mass destruction but oil and Palestine. Iraq has the second largest reserve of oil in the world, expected to last 50 years” (Brittas 2010)³.

The US wants control over the oil resources and the strategic region of the Gulf, which is the key to its global hegemony. In a speech on 17 March 2003, George Bush commanded that “Do not destroy oil wells, a source of wealth that belongs to the Iraqi people”. About Iraq he said: “The regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East. It has a deep hatred of America and our friends. And it has aided, trained and harboured terrorist, including operatives of al Qaeda” (Bush 2003). The projected danger is clear: “using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapon, obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorist could fulfil their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of innocent people in our country [US], or any other”( Fabian 2003:462). Thus the US plan was clear, to disarm Iraq. The Bush administration believed that “the US and its allies can achieve their goals with relatively few troops and the cost can be measured as low as $20 billion” (Chauhan). The calculations proved much more costly. The Iraqi invasion by the US-led forces was undertaken on the lie that Iraq has stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction.

**Brief History of Iraq War**

The Iraq war in 2003 consisted of two phases: the first was a brief, conventionally fought war in March–April 2003, in which a combined force of

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³ Interview with John Brittas, Director Kairali TV at Trivandrum, 15 December, 2010.
troops from the United States and Britain invaded Iraq and rapidly defeated Iraqi military and paramilitary forces. It was followed by a longer second phase in which the US-led occupation of Iraq was opposed by an insurgency. The war against Iraq was based on three objectives: one was finding weapons of mass destruction, the second was dismantling the terrorist network and the third was establishment of democracy. All these objectives were based on shaky grounds.

The Bush administration’s allegation that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction intensified after the events of 11 September 2001. President George W. Bush named Iraq, Iran, and North Korea the “axis of evil” in his January 2002 State of the Union address. So the US had decided on a direct intervention and the military occupation of Iraq. However, in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 12 September 2002, President Bush pledged to work with the UN Security Council to meet the “common challenge” posed by Iraq (Bush 2002). Vice President Dick Cheney, in a speech on 2 August 2002, accused Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein of seeking weapons of mass destruction to dominate the West Asian region and threaten oil supplies to the US. In his speeches Cheny alleged that “Iraq is a serious threat to our country to our friends and to our allies” and “Iraq poses terrible threats to the civilized world” (Bush 2003). This fuelled speculation that the United States might soon act unilaterally against Iraq. The US administration said it wanted to introduce democracy and overthrow the dictator and eliminate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But it really wanted to control the world’s second largest reservoir of oil assets and gain strategic advantage. A. K. Pasha states that:

many countries expressed their clear oppositions to US - UK plans to invade Iraq. Many questioned the allegations against Iraq, especially disarming or liberating the Iraqi people from the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. Many felt that Iraq posed no threat to anyone especially since 1991 when UN sanctions had crippled Iraqi’s military capability severely (Pasha 2003:128).
The war in Iraq began on 20 March 2003 with an aerial attack on a location where Saddam Hussein was suspected to be meeting with top Iraqi officials. President Bush addressed the nation soon after the bombing of Baghdad. He declared that:

The people of the United States and our friends and allies will not live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder. We will meet that threat now, with our Army, Air Force, Navy, Coast Guard and Marines so that we do not have to meet it later with armies of fire fighters and police and doctors on the streets of our cities (Bush 2003).

On 21 March 2003, the US and its allies launched a direct ground attack on Iraq. They claimed to be acting under a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution. The US and British troops entered Iraq on 20 March, and the action encountered resistance. US forces had largely gained control of Baghdad, the capital, by 9 April 2003. The northern cities of Kirkuk and Mosul fell shortly afterwards, and on 14 April, US troops entered Tikrit.

Saddam was toppled and Iraq was occupied by the US and its allies. On 15 April 2003, President Bush declared that “the regime of Saddam Hussein is no more.” The US became the direct ruler of Iraq of 25 million people, with the World’s second largest reservoir of oil. A. K. Pasha presents a clear picture of the US invasion of Iraq. He writes:

The fall of Baghdad to US forces on 9 April, 2003 with little resistance from Iraqi forces, and the subsequent breakdown of law and orders, large scale looting, plundering and burning of ministries, national museum, national archives/library, public and private houses, and hospitals, indicates the scale of disorders which has descended on Iraq. US soldiers were mute spectators to loot and arson. The only thing they safeguarded was the oil ministry in
Baghdad and the oil fields/installations in Rumailah area and in Mosul and Kirkuk, clearly relieving their objectives behind the invasion (2003:135).

The invasion consisted of 26 days of major combat operations, in which a combined force of troops from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Poland and 36 other countries were involved. The invasion phase consisted primarily of a conventionally-fought war which concluded with the capture of the Iraqi capital Baghdad by American forces. The coalition nations’ mission was, as they claimed, to disarm Iraq from nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism. But the invasion of Iraq was strongly opposed by the governments of France, Germany, New Zealand, and Canada.

Saddam Hussein was captured on 13 December 2003, and was turned over to Iraqi authorities in June 2004 to stand trial for various crimes; he was convicted of crimes against humanity, including willful killing, illegal imprisonment, deportation, and torture, and was sentenced to death by hanging. Saddam was executed on 30 December 2006.

The Iraq war is the longest military conflict involving the United States other than the Vietnam war. Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes conclude that the US invasion of Iraq was a terrible mistake. They argue that nearly 4000 US soldiers have been killed and more than 58000 have been wounded, injured, or fallen seriously ill (2008: ix).

Privatisation and globalisation are nothing in the case of Iraq war but means of US hegemony and domination in the world. Iraqi oil reserves can give the US the supply it wants. If Iraq puts its oil on the market, European countries can buy it and be free of US domination. The USA will control Iraqi oil and the World Bank will do the rest. Colin Powell has stated quite clearly, “After the war we
will reshape the world in accordance with US interests” (Brittas 2010).\(^4\)

The Iraq invasion agenda was oil and hegemony of the US. Pasha writes: US eye on Iraqi oil (over 112 billion barrels plus high quality, low cost production), strategic location in between Syria and Iran (to curb Tehran’s options of taking independent actions) and to protect Israel’s regional supremacy and its monopoly of weapons of mass destruction, were some of the real war aims, besides asserting US global supremacy” (2003: 131).

The White House economic adviser Lawrence Lindsay estimated the cost of the war at $100 to $200 billion. So the White House got rid of him and "re-estimated" the cost at $50 to $60 billion. In …it is estimated to be over $800 billion. In fact many of these US budgets on Iraq war was totally unrealistic. A March 2011 Congressional Research Service Report estimated the war funding at $1.4 trillion through 2012 and the Congressional Budget Office pegged the cost from 2001 through 2021 at an estimated $1.8 trillion. However, the White House says that the "total amount appropriated for war-related activities" is $1.3 trillion, which could rise to $1.5 trillion in 2013. But Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Bilmes claims of the Iraq conflict was a three trillion dollar war (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008: x). Bush administration estimated the war cost only $50 billion, before the war. The total cost of the war is far higher than the official number.

‘War on Terrorism’

The world terrorism has a long lineage (Raport 1999: 498). It is a politically and emotionally charged idea that has a significant history in various religious and geopolitical traditions. It has multiple manifestations as a reality of political life in many parts of the world (Upadhyay 2009: xvii).

\(^4\) Interview with John Brittas, Director Kairali TV at Trivandrum, 15 December, 2010.
The term terrorism comes from Latin *terrere* means to ‘frighten’. Etymologically, terrorism derives from the word ‘terror’. Originally it meant ‘a system or regime of terror’. The word itself entered the vocabulary of western civilisation during the French Revolution. The term terrorism initially referred to government acts. Recently, it is referred to mean more of non-state actions of violence.

Since 2001, terrorism has become a global phenomenon. Terrorism is the scourge of our times and it appears as a new *avatar* with advanced information technology, media and communications at the international travel. “Terrorism, like virus, is everywhere” (Baudrillard 2002:10). Now terrorism is highly pejorative and a most politically motivated violent term with negative connotations in the language of media. Therefore, Jean Baudrillard says that “terrorism is immoral” (Baudrillard 2002:10). To many, the so-called “terrorism is the logical and just resistance of the people against state terrorism, capitalism, racism, sexism and imperialism” (Weinberg 2006: 1).

Almost everyone concedes that terrorism is a tactic, one involving the threat or use of violence. Bruce Hoffman states that “terrorism is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political changes” (Hoffman 199:43). *WEST'S Encyclopedia of American Law* states that “terrorism is the systematic use of terror or violence to achieve political goals”. It is also noted that “the target of terrorism includes government officials, identified individuals or groups and innocent bystanders based on political or social objectives. Terrorism is the weapon of the weak and frequently used tool of the powerful”.

The historical background of terrorism shows that “it has been closely interrelated to the problems of communalism and fundamentalism”(Verma 2007:216-222). The ‘terrorist networks’ have also embraced cross border dimensions. These networks have designated channels of communication connecting people at a distance. It is used of different kinds of system including
broadcasting, computer driven information and entertainment networks. This clearly shows that terrorism operates as a global as well as a local problem.

The phrase ‘war on terrorism’ was first used by the western media to refer to the attempts by Russian and European governments and eventually by the US government to stop attacks by anarchists against international political leaders. ‘The war on terrorism’ or ‘the war on terror’ is a campaign slogan initiated by the US government under President George W. Bush following the 11 September 2001 attacks on New York's World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. This ‘war’ had two-fold objectives: “to destroy al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other groups in Afghanistan and around the world, and to remove Saddam Hussein from power to forestall threats from his presumed possession of weapons of mass destruction”. President George W. Bush declared after the two plane crashes into World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 at 9.30 am thus: “Today we’ve had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Centre in an apparent terrorist attack on our country… Terrorism against our nation will not stand”. The same day, the official press briefing of the White House elaborated the tragedy:

Today America has experienced one of the greatest tragedies ever witnessed on our soil. These heinous acts of violence are an assault on the security and the freedom of every American citizen. We will not tolerate such acts. We will expend every effort and devote all the necessary resources to bring the people responsible for these acts, these crimes to justice (Bush 2001).

These two White House statements show the concept of ‘war on terrorism’. The Bush Administration’s objectives and strategies of ‘war on terrorism’ was focused on the following: identify, locate and destroy terrorists along with their organisations; diminishing the underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit; deny sponsorship, support and sanctuary to terrorists; and defend US citizens and interest at home and abroad.
Noam Chomsky, the foremost critic of US foreign policy offers a detailed analysis of these tragic events and terrorist attacks (Chomsky 2003), Zinn (2001), Vidal (2002), Parenti (2002), Honderich (2002), etc. are the other critics of American response to the 9/11 event. Many of the social critics are against the concept of ‘war on terror’. Ninan Koshy in his book The War on Terror, Reordering the World states that “‘the war on terror’ is an imperialist war to make the world secure for the global economic and strategic interest of the United States” (2003: viii).

After the first 100 days of September 11, 2001, George W Bush said: “we are supported by the collective will of the world”. Though the attack took place on American soil, it was propagated as a global issue. ‘It was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world’; ‘The world has come together to fight a new and different war’, ‘Axis of evil’, ‘civilizations fight’, ‘Islamic terrorism’, ‘worldwide campaign against terrorist activity’, ‘terrorism knows no borders, terrorism has a face… for the world to see’, ‘defeat terrorism of global reach’, ‘Americans are united in fight against terrorism’, and ‘Global war on terror’ etc. are the selected characterisation terms and phrases in the speech of President George. W. Bush. One of his statements (2001) declares that ‘Terrorists try to operate in the shadows. They try to hide. But we’re going to shine the light of justice on them. We list their names, we publicize their pictures. We rob them of their secrecy” George W. Bush addressed all nation of the world and outlined the choice before them: “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (Bush 2001). This declaration signifies that war on terrorism is not just American’s fight alone; this is the world’s fight and civilization’s fight. Though the atrocities were on American soil, it was described as the attack on freedom and civilization in the whole world. Any nation not joining the war on American’s side was viewed as supporting terrorists. Bush identified the new enemies and targeted different strategies against North Korea, Iran and Iraq. Bush said that these nations constitute ‘an axis of evil’ aiming to threaten the peace of the world. The Iraq war was a consequence of this policy. In fact “Anglo-
American imperialism’s war against Iraq is not merely an unprovoked war of aggression; it is at the same time an imperialist, predatory, unjust and reactionary war for the colonisation and subjugation of its proud people. It has nothing to do with their liberation but everything to do with their forcible occupation” (Brar 2008: 820).

Media and ‘War on Terrorism’

On 14 June 1930, Samuel Brody wrote in the *Daily Worker* a piece on ‘Television-A New Weapon for the New Imperialist War’. He prophesied that it would be used for entertainment and for bombing planes, for commercial advertising and for capitalist politicians’ (Brody 2003: 35-37). This has become true in the context of 9/11, 2001. From the 9/11, the media coverage of both the print and television has been constructing the concept of the ‘war on terrorism’. Its impact has been faced by the people of Afghanistan and Iraq. The US war always begins against the popular movements of imperialist rivals. The US, UK, Japan etc are partners of this strategy. They use mass media for this idea’s propagation so that their interests are served.

Media coverage of the ‘war on terrorism’ is an attempt of misinformation and propaganda by the US government. Researches in the area of Communication Studies have found that American understanding of the ‘war on terrorism’ is directly shaped by how the *mainstream news media* reports events associated with the ‘war on terrorism’. In *Bush’s War: Media Bias and Justifications for War in a Terrorist Age*, Jim A. Kuypers illustrated “how the press failed America in its coverage on the War on Terror”. In each comparison, Kuypers “detected massive bias on the part of the press.” He argues that the mainstream news media is an “anti-democratic institution” (Kuypers 2005).

Media researcher Stephen D. Cooper’s analysis of *Media Criticism the Watchdog: Bloggers As the Fifth Estate* contains many examples of controversies concerning mainstream reporting of the War on Terror (Brody 2003: 35-37). Cooper found in bloggers specialising in criticism of media coverage raising four
key points about reporting: mainstream reporting of the ‘war on ‘terrorism’ has frequently contained factual inaccuracies, and in some cases, the errors go uncorrected, The mainstream press has sometimes failed to check the source of information or visual images, story framing is often problematic and methodology unrealistic'. Mainstream reporting has tended to concentrate on the more violent areas.

America’s ‘war on terror’ means ‘a war without end’ and ‘a war without borders’ (Gordon 2007: 53-60). After the 9/11, 2001 attacks, George. W. Bush proclaimed the start of global war on terror. The White House declared that “the ‘war on terror’ will be a long war. Yet we have mobilised to win other long wars, and we can and will win this one” (Johnson 2009: 219). Can the war on terror be won? Since 9/11, 2001 US has propagated different policies and programs for the success of this declaration. But still it is an unsuccessful project. Most of the leading democrats argue that “success will come through reestablishing the United States’ moral authority and ideological appeal, conducting more and smarter diplomacy and intensifying cooperation with key allies” (Gordon 2007:53).

In fact Bush’s approach to the ‘war on terror’ has created more terrorists than it has eliminated. As Philip H. Gordon argues, “It is impossible to win a war without knowing what its goal is”. The war on terror is a new and different kind of war. He states that “the war on terror is not really a war at all The victory in the war on terror will not mean the end of terrorism, the end of tyranny, or the end of evil, utopian goals that have all been articulated at one time or another” (Gordon 2007:60). He notes, “The goal of ending terrorism entirely is not only unrealistic but also counterproductive” (Gordon 2007:61). There are those who argue that the Iraq war has contributed to a ‘Clash of Civilisation’, a perception that there is a new crusade against Islam (Huntington 2006).

In the book An End to Evil, David Fran and Richard Parle argue that Americans are not fighting this evil to minimise it or to manage it but lead to a series of wars, abuses and overreactions more likely to perpetuate the war on terror
than to bring it to a successful end (Gordon 2007: 61). “The US has not yet won the war on terror but the manner and method of its fighting has made future 9/11s” (Lynch 2008: 111-112). The aim of the war is “to defeat terrorism of global reach” and “it will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated”. The doctrine of war on terrorism is based on ‘Terrorism, Tyranny and Technology’ (Lynch 2008:126). All these three T’s are relevant everywhere, especially in the American political spectrum.

**Media Portrayal of Iraq War**

The Iraq war popularised the concept of ‘embedded journalism’ to the world. The story of the war was disseminated through the newspapers and depicted on television and excellent websites. The new digital technologies, 24-hour news and propaganda, media bias and framing etc. are highlighted during the Iraq war. The ubiquitous use of camcorders, digital cameras and computers have been enabling large number of people to capture events, causing concern for both for governments and news organisations. Therefore, the proliferation of new media technologies is blurring the distinctions between the media and the private citizen. In fact, in the coverage of Iraq war, the media played a significant role through ‘embedded journalism’ in which a large chunk of reports were depended upon the US troops. Independent journalism became a big casualty.

**Embedded Journalism**

The embedded journalism is a new phenomenon for an old concept. The tradition of the ‘embed’ was established since World War II and particularly in Vietnam War. In more recent times, Somalia (1992-05), Bosnia (1995), Kosovo (1999), and the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) etc. are cases where journalists had relatively little access to the province and relied on the military for information about the bombing campaign. But in the Iraq war, the most important innovation was the large-scale presence of journalists on the battlefield, embedded in military units. It refers to news reporters being attached to military units involved in armed conflicts. The US military defines an embedded as a media representative.
remaining with a unit on an extended basis. Embeds were to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of US forces in combat and related operations. In this process, media persons were observing the events from just the US perspective, not seeing them in a holistic perspective. The embedding process was an organised strategy planned well in advance of the conflict by the Pentagon in consultation with news organisations. Many of the journalists expressed apprehension about the embedding process and keeping their impartiality. But majority embraced the opportunity with military (Cornwel 2004: 302 - 304).

An embedded journalist lives, works and travels as part of the US troops to cover war reports. The embedded media people disseminated the coverage of the war only from what they gathered from the day to day interaction with the American military in Iraq. Embedded journalists were viewed as the best way to achieve the propaganda mission by the US. Thus the embedded reporter is attached to a military unit involved in an armed conflict. So, the embedded journalists provides a narrow decontextualised coverage of the war. In the Iraq war, around 900 journalists were embedded with military units (Miller 2003), 80 percent being British or American. Their round-the-clock reporting gave the Pentagon extraordinary control over the war reports. Thus, the partnership between the military unit and the media has changed the nature of war journalism.

**Process of Embedded Journalism**

The administration of the embedded process was based on a plan of allocating places to news organisations, not to individual reporters. The journalists embedded with the troops were given special procedures and guidelines as to how they could operate. The military offered journalists, referred as ‘embeds’, the opportunity to undergo a period of boot camp-style training before being allowed into the combat zone. Journalists experienced unprecedented access to the battlefield with the partnership between the military and the media within specific military units. Before joining their battalions, the embedded journalists had to sign a contract restricting when and what they can report. The details of military actions
can only be described in general terms and journalists agreed not to write at all about possible future missions or about classified weapons and information they might find. Embedded reporters travelled with the coalition forces and articulated the situation from a military presence.

David Ignatius (2010) narrates his experience in the field of embedded journalism in the Iraq war. "American reporters typically embedded with US units, spent a week or two with them. Some Arabic-speaking reporters working for the Iraqi or international media were able, in effect, to embed with the insurgents and report what the war looked like from their side". In Pentagon Briefing, Donald Rumsfeld, US Secretary of Defence states that, "What we are seeing is not the war in Iraq; what we're seeing are slices of the war in Iraq" (Rumsfeld 2003). This statement shows that the reporter or commentator should see only a particularised perspective. Thus, the embedded reporters in the British and US media-briefing operation transmitted inaccurate information and one-sided news coverage in the war reports. It did not permit a full coverage of the real war and never criticised the unethical trespasses by the military. But they have been imparting the American military angle of the war story. Embeds were not able to show the grim side of war, and avoided images they knew would be too graphic or violent for British television. David Ignatius narrates the coverage as an embedded journalist: “We are observing these wars from just one perspective, not seeing them whole. When you see my byline from Kandahar or Kabul or Basra, you should not think that I am out among ordinary people, asking questions of all sides. I am usually inside an American military bubble. That vantage point has value, but it is hardly a full picture” (David 2010).

The front-line footage provided by embeds was like watching a "war film" rather than capturing the reality of war. Therefore, in many reports on Iraq war coverage shows that the media propagated the flow of information with hegemonic, linguistic and visual manipulations. In fact, the war reports were embedded with verbal and visual imbalances of truth. Journalists gain access to information and talkative sources, but also inherit the distortions and biases that
come with being "on the bus" or "on the plane" (David 2010). In embedded journalism, there are pertinent issues of human rights and ethics of journalism. The following are some of the critical issues:

**The Safety of the Journalist**

The safety and freedom of expression of the journalists are less in the embedded kind of journalism. In the battlefield, many of the journalists were treated as prisoners and refused independent access to transport and communications. Moreover, there have been reports of neglect of the safety of journalists. In August 2004, the International News Safety Institute reported that 50 journalists had been killed in Iraq by that time. In the first six weeks of the Iraq war, 17 media people were killed. Journalists received threats, and experienced expulsions, detentions and confiscation of equipment. They were becoming increasingly vulnerable to physical and verbal attack. Since the safety of journalists was neglected in the Iraq war, the need for safety measures is becoming a major issue in war reporting.

**Information Imperialism**

The coverage of Iraq war with embedded media propagated the agenda of what to think about the war. The media have enormous influence upon the political decisions and their embedded reports are influencing the public perceptions of the war. It shows that how the media frames the issue and how the public understands the event. Media people frame and construct the war from a particular point of view. In Iraq war, it is the information imperialism of embedded journalism. It encourages and propagates the facts in a specific way in tune with the US ideology of ‘war on terrorism’. This unethical information flows show the cultural hegemony and informational imperialism in the Iraq war reports.

**Distortion of Journalism**

The embedded journalists described the war in terms of the weakness of Iraqi army resistance and propagated the ideology of the supremacy of US troops.
The embedded reporting erodes the cardinal virtues of journalism ethics such as courage, temperance, justice and truth. Embedded journalists, travelling with combat forces, directly experienced the tedium, intensity, danger, and uncertainty of war situations; they observed first-hand the dominance of allied tactics and weaponry, but they didn’t reveal anything about the truthfulness, accuracy, impartiality and fair play concerning their reporting. The traditional role of the media has been to filter and sift through information, giving accurate and well-balanced depictions of real world events as far as possible (Johanson, 2008). But in the Iraq war, the media was active in disseminating the embedded information and the biased analysis of the American government agencies. In fact, before the war, these agencies created and maintained a pro-war public opinion and gave the impression that the war was necessary. This is the distortion of journalism ethics and it challenges the code of conduct of professional journalism. Thus the ethics of embedded journalism is considered as controversial and its practice is part of the propaganda campaign, siding with the invading forces.

**Political Hegemony**

As noted earlier, embedded journalism propagates the political hegemony of the US. Hegemony is dominance in power relations and it is a method for gaining and maintaining social and political power. It is the linking mechanism between dominant ideology and consciousness. This ideological hegemony was diffused through the embedded journalists and their reports. Embedded media was mostly under the control of conservative and corporate interests of the US. Instead of acting in the interests of the public, embedded media advanced the interests of political and economic views of the US elites as well as the multinational, global corporations.

**Culture of Violence**

The news value of embedded war reporting is based on the notion of conflict. The war journalism has been characterised by the action oriented militaristic language. Its narratives are superficial with little realistic background.
This type of new trends in journalism is based on the stories originating from Western news agencies which tend to emphasize war, conflict and violence. The war metaphors have become the new language in embedded journalism with all implied connotations. Thus in war reports, embedded journalism promotes the culture of violence and it, to a large extent, functioned as a tool of Pentagon’s war propaganda.

The war in Iraq attracted more media coverage than any war in history, the media did not and could not cover the real story behind the coalition’s quick and successful competition of the military campaign: the use of new generation weapons, instruments of revolution in military affairs that were invisible to the journalist eye, which critically weekend Iraqi defences and Saddam Hussein’s ability to communicate with his forces, and whose true capabilities were top secret (Feldman 2003:85).

In the Iraq war, embedded journalism was biased to such extents that the coverage depicted the invasion and war in Iraq as ‘war on terror’. It was also a "war of spectacle." David Ignatius narrates his experience in the field of embedded journalism in the Iraq war:

I covered the war as an unembedded or "unilateral" reporter, entering Iraq two days after the invasion with colleagues. That experience taught me two things: First, it is too dangerous, in most cases, to cover modern warfare without protection from an army. Second, although my visits were brief, I was able to see things that the embedded journalists could not. I remember visiting villages in southern Iraq after the US Army rolled through and finding local people who were intimidated by the beginnings of the insurgency (Ignatius 2010).

Rajiv Chandrasekharan, an Indian-American journalist, spent nearly two years reporting in Iraq and provides an eye-witness account of the Iraq war. In his
book *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Baghdad's Green Zone*, he writes: “the Iraqis believed that they should have been free to chart their own destiny, to select their own interim government, and to manage the reconstruction of their shattered nation” (Chandrasekharan 2006:290). The war reporting in general did not tell the story from the Iraqi people’s perspective.

**Portrayal of Iraq War in the Global Media**

The Iraq war was the most media-centred war in history. There were 1500 media people from all around the world who entered the war zone in the initial days of the war. Among them, 600 were embedded with the coalition forces during the combat. Unilateral independent journalists also joined the camp of journalists (Kurtz 2003). The advancement of information technology opened the Iraq war into the global gaze. Embeds had to depend on the military for everything - their movements, access, logistics and accommodation. Columnist Anita Pratap along with Uri Averney, an Israeli journalist and activist, compared the embeds to the prostitutes who accompanied the army in the middle ages (Pratap 2003, Raj 2004:23). The world witnessed and experienced the media fed facts and portrayal of the Iraq war. The Iraq war was unique in the nature of media coverage and it was also the first war to be covered on the internet. It was extensively reported by the media. The speed and volume of news coverage allowed media content to reach the global level. Communication satellites and the twenty-four-hour high tech news cycle were also behind this achievement.

“Bloodshed for oil”, “War of Occupation” and “An Illegal War” (2003: 3). These two sets of descriptions reflect different ideological take on the war.

The media coverage was done by the mainstream media and also by the alternative media. But the major part of the Iraq war coverage was brought to the public by Western media and the Arab media. Global media was not only covering the Iraq war but was involving the battlefield for audience manipulations and acceptance. The war coverage involved a variety of issues such as religious misunderstandings; diverse, disputed and dysfunctional political ideologies; socio-economic and ethnic inequalities; and differing cultural norms and values. The media coverage of the Iraq war reflected a pro-war attitude and portrayed the "Operation Iraqi Freedom" as a liberation of Iraq from tyranny. The media, military, and public plays a triangular relationship in the “war on terrorism” (Biernatzki 2003: xxvii). Government and military information therefore played a key role in shaping the media’s content concerning the war. Ralph D. Berenger (2004) says that Iraq war was an artifact of its times. The coalition nations used the mass media as a tool of propaganda during the Iraq war. The war in Iraq on American media is an ‘operation Iraqi freedom’. But the Arab media looked at it as ‘the invasion’ (Poniewozik 2003:68). Charges against Saddam Hussein was greatly exaggerated and overstated by the western media, leading to an increased sense of urgency in dealing with Iraq that translated into public support for the war. Most of the information concerning the possibility of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq was received by the media from government sources, which were later found to be false.

In Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, Deliuda C. Hanley wrote that there are two wars going on in Iraq. One is to bring freedom to oppressed Iraqis and the other is waged by Iraqis to protect land from the invaders. Hanley argues that, unlike US-based news stations, Al-Jazeera showed its thirty-five million viewers across the Arab World intensely terrifying scenes of the war. They provided an alternative view of the conflict. According to Fawaz Gerges, the US networks have focused on the technologically advanced nature of the American Military armada.
The Arab press tended to focus on the destruction and suffering visited on Iraq by this military armada. Arab media reported that America is fighting a war of conquest and occupation. Moreover, they depicted the subjugation and suffering of Iraqis. The global media coverage of Iraq war was in two spheres: pro-war media and anti-war media, each portraying a different reality one for the Arab and the other for Western audience.

Shahira Fahmy and Thomas J. Johnson’s study on embedded journalism suggest that their reports provided a narrow slice of the conflict (2005:301-17). In their survey on embedded journalists, of the 159 embeds who took part in the study, approximately 80 percent reported the conflict in more than one media format. Respondents were from 22 different countries, with 73 percent from the United States. Embeds had an extensive professional experience. About 30 percent were working as journalists for more than two decades; 71 percent covered previous wars; and 70 percent indicated professional experience ranging from 11 to 20 years of reporting. In the Iraq war, embedded journalists were sympathetic towards the Western forces because the embedded were protected by the US forces and their lives were in the hands of the forces (Brandenburg 2005). Embedding experiment actually destroyed the media content (Pfanetal 2004). Iraq war produced a bunch of jargons in the media content: ‘shock and awe’, ‘collateral damage’, etc. The new terminologies misled the public at large (Bowere 2003).

The global media was dependent on the news sources from the embedded journalists and the US government. Media gathered the news from the government sources and disseminated them globally for shaping the public opinion and agenda building for the war. Thus, the media content was not originally created in the newsroom but rather was shaped by the sources from which the information was gathered. It played a role in shaping public perception of the conflict. Many criticisms were sharply against the media in the Iraq battle field and this suggests that the US media has played a cheer-leader role for the war efforts and the media promoted the war without serving as a watchdog of the government policies. As an
analyst put it, the US media was a “weapon of mass deception and the propaganda of the Bush Administration” (Schechter 2003).

The differences between media coverage of American media and other global media are mainly centred on the countries’ audiences and the ideological needs of the each country. According to Friedman, “the rapid transmission of footage resulted in media coverage of stories having no ‘beginning, middle, and end’, unlike in Vietnam, where lower transmission allowed for more coherent editing” (Friedman 2003:29-31). The US based media people covered only a fraction of the events in Iraq. Meanwhile this was reproduced by other media outlets in countries like India. “The war in Iraq is a conflict between people’s power and imperialism. It is now for us to raise our voice of protest against the war in Iraq and join with the millions all over the world in opposing the imperialist globalisation and domination. Unfortunately still the war goes on” (Premchandran 2008). The war in Iraq was actually the US war for global leadership. In Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance, Noam Chomsky says that “the goal of the imperial grand strategy is to prevent any challenge to the ‘power, position, and prestige of the United States’” (2007: 14). In speech on 1 June 2002 President Bush said: “America must stand firmly for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law; limits on the absolute power of the state; free speech; freedom of worship; equal justice; respect for women; religious and ethnic tolerance; and respect for private property” ( Feldman 2003: 174). But in the Iraq war, the US has been exercising human right violations and unjust strategies and it crossed all considerations of moral and legal boundaries. In an interview, Sony Jalarajan Raj, Graduate Chair, St. Thomas University, USA, notes,

Even the most acclaimed journalists of the global media acted like guided missiles with a mission to carry out the theory of mass deception and propaganda. They were not manufacturing consensus but they were popularising a programmed agenda of business interests and economic restructuring. Journalists working in corporatised global
media was in a real limbo of whether to serve the masters or to tell the truth to the public (2013)\textsuperscript{5}.

In short, global media has given a huge coverage of Iraq war which was provided by the embedded journalists, the White House and Pentagon reports. The national and regional media even in India were depended on the global news agencies and their perspectives for the coverage of the war in Iraq. Inaccurate descriptions and distorted realities were frequent in the global media coverage. Many times, the reports were incomplete, uninformed and unbalanced.

\textsuperscript{5} Interview with M.K. Premachandran, Member of Parliament at Trivandrum, 25 May, 2008.