Chapter 7
Conclusion

The US invasion and occupation of Iraq has been a global conflict of multiple dimensions. Global media played a crucial role in the coverage of the war. The US invasion of Iraq was undertaken with false claims of Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction and the ‘war on terrorism’. The Iraq war led to the deaths of more than one lakh Iraqi civilians and potentially contributed to the deaths of many hundreds more. This study attempted to reveal the nature of dissemination of cultural hegemony through the global media and its implications for the coverage of the Iraq war in the Indian media.

Since 1990s, the driving force of globalization has been ideologies of neoliberalism which profess free-market capitalism. The convergences of the information and communication technologies widen the globalisation processes and strategies. In the globalisation debate, ‘the neo-liberal ideology’ is supported by multilateral institutions like WB, IMF and WTO. The media, capitalism and market become the dynamic features of globalisation which results in “media globalisation”. It is the phenomenon of expanding multinational corporate media investment, which own and operate a variety of mass media content and distribution of technologies at the global level.

Since 2000, global media technology has been shifted to digital transmission with the information super highways that is open to flow of information. The internet revolution has drastically transformed the media landscape. The globalisation of media is embodied with free market and propaganda of products and ideologies that perpetuate the existing domination of the United States. Besides, globalisation and the global media help in “manufacturing consent” for neoliberal ideology. The global media propagates the cultural hegemony of the West. This hegemonic power is exercised mainly through
the consent and ideology of the media. The media contents flow unequally across the globe. Global media with its hegemony causes the cultural erosion of the marginal societies, ideologies and images. It is focused on the global economy for advertising and consumption. The global media imparts cultural imperialism and media hegemony that in tandem legitimate capitalism and free market culture.

Globalisation and technological revolution have radically transformed the traditional concepts of the “global village” into a “global market”. It is the phenomenon of both production and distribution of information and entertainment by expanding the multinational corporate media investment into a global level. The nature of the globalisation of media through the global media syndicate promotes global markets and encourages the consumer values. Thus multinational corporations become major players of the globalisation of media. Global news agencies like AP, AFP, UPI, and Reuters have big influence on communication flows and in orienting the taste and vision of the media consumers across the world. The flow of global news is almost one-way, unbalanced and prejudicial towards the interest of third world countries. The major global media control and dominate the news in the media market. Its contents are the constructions of the commercial interest with ‘their own language’, style, techniques, codes, convictions and aesthetics. It is closely related to the commercial implications of cultural imperialism. The neo-liberal economic policies, dominant ideologies of culture, and the convergence of information and digital technology of telecommunication are the new modes of hegemony of developed nations. Thus, cultural hegemony is the domination of a nation, group, institution or class by ideas, technologies and power of a few powerful nations and it operates through complex systems of domination strategies. Mass media have the capacity to deliver cultural hegemonic messages at the global level. The media coverage of Iraq war was one of the best examples of the cultural hegemony of global media dominated by advanced capitalist economies.

Iraq war was on the agenda of the US after the 9/11 event. “War on Terrorism” has been utilized as an ideological and militaristic tool to advance
power political interests. Global media helped in the massive propaganda for waging a war in Iraq. Its intension was global market and trade as well as perpetuation of the hegemonic power of the US. In the post-9/11 period, the global media constructed, recorded, interpreted and presented a “War on Terrorism” euphoria in hegemonic ways.

The Iraq war was covered by the global media with embedded journalists. It was the most media-covered war in twenty-first century. More than 3000 journalists were assigned to Iraq, with more than 500 of them embedded with various military units. The embedding of journalists with the military was one of the most significant aspects of the communication scenario of the Iraq war. The media facilitated the intervention through the large scale presence of journalists on the battlefield, embedded in military units. The Iraq war coverage was done by the mainstream media and alternative media. But the major part of the Iraq war coverage was brought to the public by Western mainstream media conglomerates. They were dependent on embedded journalists and the US agencies for news from the ground. Globalization of media played a critical role for the agenda setting of the Iraq war. This was operated through ‘embedded journalism’ and global news agencies. Such an agenda was disseminated through the mass media across the globe. The news coverage of Iraq war was grounded on the militaristic notion of conflicts. War reporting remained sensational and one-sided and it was couched in a militaristic triumphantist language. It reflected the hegemony of the global media.

Indian press has a long history of assisting in the anti-colonial struggles of the people. In the era of globalization, a large chunk of Indian media fell for commercialisation. The corporate media giants are controlling the media market and constantly speculating the news events. There occurs a competitive sensationalism of media in large corners of the media. The global media has transformed the Indian media from giving attention to national concerns and values to market-driven interests. The press had a significant role in the propagation of cultural hegemony, which was imparted to the urban educated middle class through readership of the English newspapers.
Indian press had a credible-informational, critical-investigative functions and agenda-building processes for the public, an outcome of a democratic and people’s struggle. Thus it was an agency in public education and a critical forum for analysis, discussion and debates. Since 1990s, Indian media had a massive change in production, dissemination, and consumption of news. In fact, now Indian media holds the style of hyper-commercialisation and politicisation with rogue practices like paid news. But the basic realities of the mass poverty and the multiple deprivations are never getting the proper coverage in Indian media. Media are controlled by those who have power and resources.

This study analysed patterns of the coverage of the Iraq war in Indian media with four selected leading Indian newspapers. The Times of India, The Hindu, The Indian Express and Malayala Manorama were selected for the content analysis. Among them, the first three are English daily newspapers and the last one is a regional Malayalam daily newspaper. The content analysis of these newspapers reveals that they have provided a very wide coverage of the Iraq war. This extensive coverage of Iraq war was vehemently imparted by both English language newspapers and the regional language newspaper. All the selected newspapers project the significance of the Iraq war propaganda in the Indian media. Indian newspapers have given a huge amount of attention to the Iraq war with an average of three to four pages daily during the 26 days of the initial phase of the Iraq war. The space coverage includes news reports, analyses and photography regarding Iraq war. The analysis of the newspaper headings reveal the domination of US-related themes in moulding the titles for public consumption.

The study reveals that the coverage of Iraq war in Indian media, based on the selected four newspapers, was considerably in favour of the US position regarding the Iraq war. The facts and figures help one to reasonably arrive at the conclusion that the national English newspapers were highly favourable to providing US-related information and content. It is clear in closer observation that the media have formed a league with Washington–pentagon and embedded news sources. This could certainly be the result of globalisation and the cultural
hegemony of global media. The majority of the first page main titles reflect the
hegemonic approach of the global media coverage on Iraq war. The coverage
analysis of the Iraq war in Indian media reveals the propagation of the hegemony
of the US and its allies. Thus the Indian media, whether it is national or regional,
demonstrate the ideologies of market, capital and power.

Both the English and regional language newspapers disseminated
hegemonic interests in the war rather than voicing the sufferings of the Iraqis.
Cultural hegemony of the Iraq war coverage appears to have considerably affected
the public discourses on ‘war and terrorism’. Thus Indian media still functions as a
powerful tool of hegemony, particularly in the age of globalisation.