Conclusion

The title of the Thesis is "United State’s Media’s Portrayal of Persian Gulf Conflict I and II". The Thesis highlights the rationale behind the nature and the content of the war portrayal undertaken by United State’s media since the times of the two World Wars, Korean War, Vietnam War with the core emphasis being upon the twin conflicts of of Persian Gulf War I and II. The differentiation between the various media, that is, the Print and the Electronic Media has to be clearly articulated through detailed evidence. The study describes the origins of the US mainstream media since the days of the war of Independence from the time of the founding fathers of the US.

The first chapter focuses on the growth of press from the colonial to the contemporary times. It highlights the various political and technological factors that helped the US media to grow. Further, it examines in detail the rising influence of the press over the years and the strengthening of private ownership of media. Significantly, the study found that while initially some papers were political and some commercial, they were overtaken by the forces of commercialization subsequently. For instance, in the section “commercialization of press”, the replacement of the stranglehold of political parties or candidates by the “penny press” which sold dailies in the streets. While it was clear that such a grassroots pervasiveness began to give its enormous influence, the chapter also found evidence that competition between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst provided “Yellow Journalism”. It also highlights the fact “the populist press” like the New York Times did not stay with that tradition. Instead, the tradition of bringing forth the inadequacies of the government began to develop in the prestige press of USA.

The study found that the origins and development of the privately owned media in the US eventually gave rise to severe corporatisation of the media. The coming into existence of media monopolies where one corporation owns a whole chain of newspapers, TV stations and record companies along with paper mills has framed the context by which the role of media can be examined. There was ample evidence to argue that ownership and integration of media gave it enormous economic clout in the US
political system. Further, figures reveal that the media with expansion into “infotainment” began programming based more on commercial concerns. However, the pervasiveness of media remained unchallenged despite this due to its large reach and quality of information. The chapter also probed the corporatization of war reporting and how media protested only mildly at censorship and accepted propaganda claims of the US government.

Chapter two focuses on the First Amendment, which pinpoints the right of the American citizens in the favor of freedom of expression, worship, publication and assemblage. The work investigates the origins of the American press, which, had a varied existence and has attained larger proportions as the development of the American press has been linked to the growth of the American republic from an assemblage of colonies to a vibrant nation. Chapter II focused on the linkage between National Security and freedom of Press by exploring the domestic developments. In particular it focused on the evidence that the press was linked to the growth of the American republic from an assemblage of colonies to a vibrant nation. It found that among the existing newspapers most of the newspapers played a prominent role in working up to boost the enthusiasm for the American revolution. One more finding highlights the fact that the pamphlet writing and the “war of words”, which went on in the newspapers, also played a significant role in enthusing the non-patriots in the years leading up to the American revolution. It also illustrated how the “Alien and Sedition Acts” began the debate on press freedoms between Republicans and Federalists which later morphed into a debate on balancing national security with freedom of press.

The findings of the chapter one include insights into the media ownership and discussions on the constitutional framework under which the media operate in the United States. In one of the chapters, the work finds a discrepancy in the role of the Federal Communication Commission which was established by the Federal Communication Act of 1934. How the FCC officials are also influenced by media mandarins has been one of the significant findings of the work. Some other findings pinpoint the important development of the ushering in of cross ownership of a large number of media by a few corporate houses and a dwindling newspaper circulation. This brought the broadcast media into prominence. The origins of the Broadcast media with the rise of the radio as
an indispensable part of the media in the United States too also provided the basis for the argument that the pervasiveness of media and its vital importance in reporting wars and conflicts was a major hypothesis of the study.

The work found that the trend accelerated after World War-II, and in the year 1990, a total of a 135 corporate groups owned 1,228 daily newspapers, which accounted for about 75 percent of all US dailies. The details of the Military-Media- and Industry complex were examined and it was found that the mammoth have been brought to the fore, which, highlight the overgrown and mammoth Mainstream Media had become a force to reckon with in government strategies during war. It was also found that despite the serious competition from television after World War-II, more than two-thirds of American adults still read a daily newspaper on an average weekday. The top five daily newspapers in United States, by circulation are: The Wall Street Journal, USA Today, the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Washington Post. This helped in selecting two of the papers for the content analysis on reporting of Gulf war I and II.

The findings of chapter four include the reporting of the Foreign Policy with the appointment of special correspondents to cover international situations and conflict by the United States media. Among various international reporting situations, the significance of media coverage for the international summits, business conferences, and bilateral meetings of the political heads of various nation states and other international sports events were highlighted. It also described and analyzed the process by which the tilt of the domestic public opinion was altered by the mainstream media in order to justify the war effort initiated by President George Bush in the year, 1991. In one of the significant findings, the technological dominance of the US military best exemplified by the Patriot Missiles and the advanced jet fighter planes, formed the invincibility frame of reference for the United States’s mainstream media.

Another finding included was the vile portrayal of the persona of Saddam Hussein who emerged as the tyrant in Iraq, which then was portrayed as suffering under a draconian dictatorship. The dictatorship and the vagaries of the Iraqi Government’s atrocities against the Kurds and its own Kleaqi citizens served the common frame of reference through which to internationalize the facets of Operation Desert Storm. Thus,
these were a few findings of the work which highlighted the ideological and patriotic inclination of the United States media. After the content analysis of newspapers such as New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and satellite networks such as the Cable News News Network, CBS, NBC and the often vitriolic Fox News, it can be inferred that the United States establishment was firming up a case for imposing a war upon the nation which was labouring under the Vietnam syndrome.

Other significant findings include that the internalization of a business worldview occurs generally among intellectuals, not just among reporters. The work suggests that not only the media owners’ class position, but of columnists and reporters too is an important factor in determining the content of reportage and the medium of what is being reported. Thus, it may be stated that US media reporting of Gulf war-I was a significant factor in the US intervention. As this chapter shows, the world view of the media owners reporters and columnists coupled with the advances in technology have elevated the media stories of war from mere reporting to instant live coverage. As the detailed content analysis of various newspapers reports show that US policymakers were closely monitoring the “media effect”. As the Gulf war-I proceeded, it was also clear that a new medium, the Satellite TV called the CNN would become a powerful depictor of the war which could challenge the US Government portrayal of the conflict. Media reporting has become an indispensable part of understanding US foreign policy itself.

Another finding was that the emphasis on weapons and their technological finesse formed one of the staple fares of the mainstream media portrayal of the conflict in Gulf. There were these times when the appearance of an American superbowl game with the audiences worldwide deriving a vicarious pleasure out of the media coverage. The work found that contemporary war correspondents such as Peter Arnett and Bernard Shaw became celebrities after the Persian Gulf war-I. The camera images of the rockets, missiles and bombs disappearing into the Television screens became the staple fare of the American satellite Television which led to the creation of a “Gladitorial contest” between a technologically advanced US army and the Iraq’s army fighting with antiquated weapons. The war and the weapons became the telling reminders that they all were to be marketed by the US media as a reminder of the military and the economic might of United States.
The work then highlights the media coverage of Persian Gulf war-II in the year 2003. Earlier on, during the first Persian Gulf War, only a “Pool of Reporters” used to be employed near the battlefield. The new methodology of appointing an “embedded group” of reporters, has enhanced the expanse of the media coverage pertaining to the Persian Gulf war fought in the year, 2003. It argues that the movement and the sphere of operation of the media personnel, has increased manifold, which, is aided by new global positioning satellite technologies and other advanced technologies. The nature of stories being filed and the resultant debate, which, takes place, is a direct consequence of the increased coverage and the immediacy of the media coverage in the country. The work finds that war became a satellite festival for the various media personnel with all prominent news and events on the battlefield being covered with precision and in great detail.

In the final analysis, the study of media portrayal of Gulf war I and II have been characterized by both similarities and differences. The similarities were that the media interests and government policy remained intertwined and that was evidenced by the reports. However, the differences in policy, procedures and technological advances of US military and weapons impacted the media coverage of Gulf War-II. In particular the policy of “embedded journalists” has raised afresh the question of journalist accuracy, objectivity and neutrality that must characterize free press. Yet, the US media with its global reach and impact has significantly altered the way Americans and others view Wars in general and the Gulf Wars I and II.