depiction 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.
CHAPTER FOUR

United State’s Media Portrayal of Persian Gulf War-II

“Medium is the Message,” is a popular saying advanced by Marshall Macluhan (Macluhan 2003: 20) one of the eminent media studies theorists. Shanto Ayengar, in his seminal study, “Is anyone responsible?” has further advanced the notion that media personalities involved are part of the reporting of news and events. This raises the question that whether media has extended it’s coverage since the Persian Gulf War-I. The second part will describe and analyze the changes in war reporting during the intervening years. This chapter would further seek to analyze the following argument: Objectivity and journalistic standards are compromised during wartime or are they the first casualty during wartime. Through a detailed analysis of the US media coverage of Persian Gulf War-II, the hypothesis that the media plays a vital and significant role in the national discourse during wartime will be examined. Finally, the chapter will continue to examine the government-media relations by contrasting the practices prevalent in Gulf war I and the changes that occurred during Gulf War-II.

The media has vastly extended and it’s coverage of conflicts from the Persian Gulf War-I onwards. Earlier on during Persian Gulf War-I, 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, 2003.1 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.2 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. War becomes 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.

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During the Persian Gulf War-I, the war was widely covered but the media personnel had to rely upon the military releases and the press attaché’s statements. (Bellamy 1992: 252) The war correspondents, were, not allowed to venture out with the troops and the warplanes to cover military missions. (Arnett 1994: 463) This policy resulted in a scarcity of “live feeds” for the spectators. During the Persian Gulf War-II, the embedded reporters were selectively allowed to venture with the military personnel during the military operations which resulted in a more in-depth and lively coverage of the war.

Changes in Media coverage from normal times to Reporting during War

The 1991 war against Iraq was one of the first televised events of the global village in which the entire world watched a military spectacle unfold through the global TV satellite networks. According to one analyst, the Bush administration and the Pentagon carried out one of the most successful public relations campaigns in the history of modern politics in it’s use of the media to mobilize support for the war. (Sweeney 2001: 40) According to this view, the mainstream media tended to be a willing vehicle for the government strategy to manipulate the public despite the fact that democracies such as the US required informed citizens, checks and balances against excessive government power. Further, the media needed to adequately inform citizens in order to provide a check against government power and corruption thus undermine democracy.  

In the year 1991, the war coverage became live, intense and graphical for the first time. Still as changes occurred in the international circumstances, the modus operandi of the war coverage also changed. Television became an instrument of war as decision making became dependent on public opinion. A positive public reading of the war was essential in order to find a rationale for the war. (Gilboa 2002: 748) Television became a debating ground for explaining alternatives with the invention of immediate reporting of Persian Gulf War-II. Robert E. Danton, an eminent media observer commented, “Vietnam was the first television war. Television became an instrument of war which was as powerful and targeted as any cruise missile.

Television is an effective weapon not simply because of any specific rules of journalism or agreements between networks and government but because of the unique characteristics of the medium and contemporary technologies. He further stated, "The dilemma becomes how to preserve national security and the freedom of the press in times of war. The press is caught in a balancing act between providing adequate information for informed citizen action and the security and integrity of national interests. As is the case with any democracy, there will be a natural tension, between the twin objectives."  

War coverage involves a set of rules which are very different from coverage during peaceful conditions. War coverage can border on to "sensationalism" and "hyperbole" which ought not to be discarded as sheer propaganda as media basically survive due to popularity, readership numbers and profits. Expectations of commercial media to report in a manner similar to alternative media would be to anticipate an improbable development. The media recorded the public support for the American decision to go to war against the Taliban in 2002, and the Al-Qaeda in March, 2003. Vietnam is a case in point where public support dwindled when correspondents such as Walter Cronkite when he began sending incriminating reports of the American action in Vietnam.

Media reportage during peaceful times is an ordinary affair involving less of operational dangers of the battlefield. (Cunnigham 2004: 567) There is a complex social-systemic interlocking of militarism with other historical, political, institutional, economic, cultural and psychological forces. These factors tend to reinforce the hegemony of militarism and aggressive, pre-emptive foreign policy in the current period. The Washington-based, Project for the New American Century (PNAC) is also an effort on the part of the American authorities for driving home the point of a pre-emptive war against the rogue states. It helped the conservative ideologues, into structuring a rationale for war in March, 2003. PNAC a non-profit educational organization was dedicated to a few fundamental propositions: that American

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5 Ibid
6 Ibid
7 (Online: Web), Accessed on 1 September, 2007, URL: http://www.newamericancentury.org/
leadership is good both for America and for the world and that such leadership required military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principles. It also included the argument that few American political leaders are making the case for global leadership which must change. Further it was committed to promoting American world leadership and notably to the control of international cyberspace. The philosophical underpinnings of these neo-conservatives are acknowledged to be in the writings of political theorists such as Machiavelli, Hobbes and Edmund Burke. The question was how much of these arguments were reflected in the media portrayal of Gulf War-II.

The Role of Media organizations and Polls in the changed scenario

A few media observer organizations such as Pew Research Center, Media Research Center and the Columbia School of Journalism, have undertaken studies based upon public opinion in the aftermath of the Iraq War. These studies and surveys have initiated public interest in the Gulf War-II. These polls and surveys have added newer variants to the war reporting in Iraq. There have been apparent trends in the changing public opinion in the United States during “Operation Iraqi Freedom” which ushered a change in the vast reach and variety of the war coverage since the Persian Gulf War-I.

Four years after the launch of the US led invasion in March 19, 2003, public opinion about the war had turned decidedly negative. Most Americans regretted the decision to use military force. A sizeable majority believed that the war was not going well and most stated that the United States should bring its troops home, as soon as possible. When the war began in March 2003 the US-led operations had strong support from most Americans and the war was perceived as being successful. The Pew Research Center has tracked the downward trend in public opinion over the past four years. Most of the “media pools” have discovered that the public opinion remained favorable till the end of 2005. Then, the opinion received a downturn after

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8 “Project For the New American Century” (Online: Web) Accessed on September 4, 2007, URL: http://www.newamericancentury.org/. The Project for the New American Century is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to a few fundamental propositions: that American leadership is good both for America and for the world; and that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle.

the question of how long to maintain the US military presence in Iraq which gained relevance in the public debate and discussion in the country. Since the month of January in 2006, the public opinion has slid from the rallying-around-the-flag-phenomenon.\textsuperscript{10}

\textit{Cable News Network}, part of the mainstream media mouthpiece indicated as early as in July, 2003 that the popular view was not overwhelmingly in the favor of "Operation Enduring Freedom." The CNN Poll revealed that "Only 56 percent of Americans think that the current US-coalition efforts as proceeding well according to a recent \textit{CNN / USA Today Gallup poll}. This observation is much lower than the 70 percent in late may and the 86 percent in early may who thought that things were proceeding well."\textsuperscript{11} In the CNN's analysis, the main reason for such a downward slide was as follows: The US military carried on "Operation Sidewinder" to get rid of entrenched Baathists in the urban areas in Baghdad and other smaller towns in Iraq. These raids as part of the operations led to casualties of the order of twenty three Americans which began changing public support for the "war in Iraq" as the \textit{Cable News Network} termed it as. By the end of 2005 the public support for the war in Iraq began receding at a fast and alarming rate much to the discomfort of the US government.

In one of the observations made by a prominent journalist, the public opinion was expected to fall short of the administration's expectations in the long run anyway. He argued that the three most important US military engagements since 1945, Korea, Vietnam, and now Iraq, share an important trait: As casualties mounted the American public's support declined. In the two Asian wars that decline proved irreversible. (Arnett: 1993: 463) In the battlefield the additional bad news for President Bush was that a positive spin for the war in Iraq dwindled more quickly than it did in those two conflicts. For President Bush a want of acceptance for his management of the war depleted to a paltry 35 percent according to the one Gallup poll. President Bush depleted any reserves of 'political capital' which he had earned from his reelection. In the year 2005 both the bipartisan Senate resolution calling for more progress reports

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid
on Iraq and the call for withdrawal by a Democratic hawk, Republican John Murtha of Pennsylvania did not help the cause of the war much either. (Feldman 2005: 49)

It must be noted that the media coverage of the Gulf War-II had gained momentum much before March 2003 when action erupted. Since Colin Powell’s presentation, at the UN the indicators had started pointing towards an impending American intervention inside Iraq. (Ottosen 2004) Apart from this, the nature of reporting was better regulated by US Government. In Operation Desert Storm, the correspondents of all hues had to be transported within a short notice to the Iraqi battlefield. In the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the media received ample of time to plan it’s coverage as the war clouds between Iraq and United States had been gathering since long after the September 11 attacks. (Fox 2006: 51)

United States initiated action against Iraqi forces and the US and international media went along with the advancing troops as “war correspondents” and “embeds”. This was a new system of embedded reporters which generated a continuation of the “pool system” of war correspondents which was introduced in the Gulf War-I. There is an all apparent continuity between Gulf War-I and II keeping in view the comments of the various media observers.

**The Concept of Embedded Reporting**

Some of the reporters in Iraq during wartime were embedded and others were independent. (Hull 2004) The term given to individual correspondents was “Unilaterals”. The central theme of most of the stories with these “embeds” was that how bad the conditions were and why the reporters were exhausted and had to go home after their grueling five weeks of covering the war. (Butler 2004) Observers have marveled at the courage and fortitude of the military personnel who endured these conditions for months on end. Some of the stories reflect admiration for the troops and an increased appreciation of the US military and the difficult conditions under which they work and fight. Some stories reflect a lack of preparedness and understanding by the reporters of what they were going to undertake in Iraq.

In comparison with the Gulf War of 1991, the war in 2003 was more wide-open for reporters. This was partly done to counteract propaganda emanating from the Iraqi government. It was also an attempt to control and influence the news by keeping journalists under close watch. The Pentagon developed a “slick new public relations
concept known as embedding.” Embedded reporting was a new phenomenon which was developed to facilitate the media coverage of the war as the correspondents accompanied the fighting units in the battlefield.

A few observers like Katovsky and Carlson, interviewed 60 leading journalists who lived ate and traveled with the American troops. The authors began with a brief history of the relationship between the military and the media and a discussion of the practice of embedding reporters detailing the pros and cons. The interviews included CBS News’, Jim Axelrod who mourned the loss of his colleague David Bloom and Peter Baker belonging to the Washington Post. Jim Axelrod recalled the strain of covering a battle while worrying about his wife Susan Glasser who was also reporting from Iraq. Recollections ranged from the raw fear provoked by close calls in the battlefield to the boredom of daily briefings at the CENTCOM media center in Doha, Qatar.13

During the build up to the war in Iraq, Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld faced an important decision regarding the military’s public affairs policy. He needed to decide the way in which the war would be covered by radio, television, and print media. The Defense Secretary advanced three courses of action:

- He could continue the practice of limiting the media’s access to the battlefield and conduct press briefings at the Pentagon and during Operation Enduring Freedom.
- Secretary Rumsfeld could employ a second option that envisioned a return to the management of the media through the creation and use of media pools as had been done during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm.
- A third course of action suggested, was, that the Department of Defense (DoD) and the military leverage the media used were an extremely radical public affairs plan now referred to as “the embedded media program.” In the

13 Ibid

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year 2004 another set of interrogation documents were released by the Department of Defense in the form of a memo.\textsuperscript{14}

In consultation with his Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Victoria Clarke\textsuperscript{15} Secretary Rumsfeld chose to implement the embedded media program because he understood that the media coverage of the impending war would “shape public perception of the national security environment.” The technology used by the media to report instantaneously from distant locations with the rise of non-American news agencies (specifically the Arab news agency, Al Jazeera) overpowered military public relations efforts. The American and international media needed to have freedom of access and reporting free of the restrictive nature of press pools and without necessary censorship. Secretary Rumsfeld, announced his decision in his Public Affairs Guidance message dated 10 February 2003, “We need to tell the factual story, good or bad, before others seed the media with disinformation…”

\textbf{The American Rationale in the War with Iraq}

The role of the media in explaining the causes for American intervention in Iraq is worth explaining. Many media attempted to be in the good books of the administration in it’s jingoistic objectives and the government prompted some of the newspaper and television channels to pepper their pro-government coverage with articles of anti-war analysis. The critiques also pointed out that such media often questioned the governmental decisions regarding minor issues and did not raise questions about major issues such as “the rationale advanced by the government to undertake the war” and “the liberal and democratic ideal involved in intervening in a far-off land.

This argument continued to point out that the Bush Administration’s justification for an invasion based on the claim that Iraq posed an imminent military threat was open to many questions. It prompted discussions in the media that the failure of United Nations inspectors to find evidence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction was a major setback for the administration and has fueled public

skepticism towards the administration’s war. (Soros 2003) Many ideological critics of Bush administration also wrote that events in Korea further undermined the White House propaganda campaign. The Bush administration spokesmen have been unable to explain the disparity between the American policy towards North Korea and the war drive against Iraq.¹⁶

The US administration insisted that North Korea which had openly declared that it was developing a nuclear weapons capacity was to be dealt through diplomatic channels. With Iraq where there was no evidence of nuclear weapons was which had to be attacked and militarily occupied. Such differences in approach in Iraq however did not questioned and critically examined by the media. This war involving precious American lives in a far off land littered with dangers was not informed by the media. According to Pew Research Center Polls citizens of the country were ill-informed and unaware of the stakes involved in the Middle East due to such bad reporting. The Israel-Palestine conflict had always been their focus of attention and debate in the Middle East,¹⁷ and the media reporting was termed inadequate on the Iraq war. In particular as the reasons advanced by Bush Administration were found to be full of falsehoods, media role once again became the focus of sustained scrutiny. As the Foreign Policy of Bush administration and the strategies it undertook to achieve its goals became hotly contested in the US media’s coverage of foreign policy itself began to be probed.

**Importance of Foreign Policy Reporting**

In the same way as the foreign policy of a nation is allowed to be determined by certain external and internal factors, the reporting of the foreign policy decisions too has certain factors determining it. Coverage of foreign policy required funds for it’s correspondents to be stationed at points of conflicts. Earlier on, only a few newspapers used to appoint correspondents in foreign locations. Later as popular interest was augmented in foreign happenings, separate columns for foreign

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¹⁷ An Excerpt, "Despite delays in shutting down a North Korean nuclear facility at the center of an agreement reached in the Six-Party Talks, lead U.S. envoy Christopher Hill believes the February 13 plan still can be implemented as planned. “We continue to believe that the best way to achieve denuclearization is to move step-by-step,” Hill, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs."
commercial news and early year memorandums of understanding were being reported in the news. As the United States ended its “isolationist policy” and it became evident that the American interests in Philippines, Korea and Vietnam, were enduring, it became essential that these developments should be reported to the citizens. Thus the media were uniquely placed to link the citizens with the government purposes, goals and strategy. More than that they raised expectations that they would play a “watchdog” role on how the government performed.

In the case of the Operation Enduring Freedom, the mainstream media examined the nature and logic behind the happenings in Iraq after March, 2003. Foreign policy coverage known to be a specialized art which involves a lot of risk taking induced War correspondents in Iraq to learn the survival skills by the war schools in the country. War schools also imparted training to the correspondents by providing them with “survival paraphernalia” such as flak jackets, kevlar helmets and the skills to evade enemy fire. They also appeared to have a more positive view of the military involved in conflicts. For instance, one excerpt from an Irish columnist Ernie Pyle Column encapsulates the state of American soldiers as they congregate in Ireland and prepare for war, while, smoking cigarettes.

“The Irish People were a little standoffish at first, it seems, but they have warmed up. They say the Americans earned a bad name here before the troops arrived. That was caused by the large contingent of civilian construction men who came long ago to build camps and storehouses ahead of the troops. They made big money, and they brawled and fought and caused trouble. The troops hid to live that down. We sometimes get the idea at home that all the troops do over here is drink and pick up girls and go to dances. Actually, they are up early and work hard. In the recent maneuvers many of them marched 32 miles in one day, and that was followed with 25-mile marches the next two days.” (Pyle 2003: 70)

The reporting continued in the same interesting and realistic strain,

“They were on the go for eight days. They slept on the ground wherever they stopped, regardless of the weather. Often they would be awake until midnight and by 2 a.m they would be marching again. Some of the boys were toughened and ready for the grueling march. Cooks and clerks were soft but had to live through the tough conditions with the rest of them. When great blisters
developed on their feet, they were merely taped up, and the men marched on. They were proud of their bandages.”

During the half century between the war-reporting careers of Lansner and Mr. Pyle there were few places for correspondents to turn for support. Over the past decade however journalists across the world have begun to acknowledge their own susceptibility to emotional trauma - on the battlefield amid the destruction of 9/11 or in the living room of a mother grieving for a dead son. (Tobin 2003: 55) Special training for war correspondents has become more common and some journalism schools are teaching students how to cover tragedy sensitively and cope with their own emotions. “It’s something that has been discussed throughout the industry,” commented former war correspondent, Andy Alexander who was the Washington DC bureau chief for the Cox newspapers chain. “There’s a growing realization that it’s something we have to deal with and not simply the reporters who cover wars but reporters in all sorts of traumatic experiences.”

Some media organizations offered counseling to journalists while covering violence and conflicts. The Christian Science Monitor provided the correspondents with health insurance coverage. Across the news industry however it’s almost always up to individual journalists to decide whether to seek help or not. Many reporters don’t bother about the stigma that it is attached to covering foreign news. Sessions are suggested with therapists to help “remove the stigma” in the view of one Daily News photographer David Handschuh who covered the Columbine High School massacre and nearly capsized when one of the World Trade Center towers fell in a heap. Another difficulty which the foreign correspondents suffer with is the malady of “combat fatigue”, which envelops the soldiers and the correspondents alike. Thus, the Iraq war changed not only the way reporters covered the conflict, it also changed individual skills. Yet, to be able to present a total picture of the media portrayal of the Gulf War-II, it is important to critically examine the content of the media reports of the war.

21 Ibid
Content Analysis of a Few Newspapers

The content analysis of media reports of the Iraq war broadly included these angles, a. The rationale for the war. b. The general coverage of the war and the level of support and criticism in the goals of the US foreign policy in Iraq. In the face of the failure of the government or favorable media campaign to build mass support for a US intervention of Iraq, *New York Times*, columnist, Thomas Friedman came to the aid of the Bush war cabal by proposing a shift in its propaganda. Friedman’s, January, 5th column, headlined “A War for Oil?” raised quite a few questions. (Friedman 2003) Friedman conceded that what was obvious to anyone who had followed the US military buildup with any objectivity. He contended that Bush’s plan to invade the country was driven by a determination to seize control of Iraqi oil. The column was by no means the first effort by Friedman to provide a cover of legitimacy to Washington’s war effort. On December 1st, 2003 he authored a column in which he urged his readers to “pay no attention” to the weapon’s inspections in Iraq.

In order to create a pretext for war he advocated that the United Nations could kidnap the Iraqi scientists and remove them from Iraq and allow American interrogators to extract the “proof” of the weapons of mass destruction from their captives. (Foer 2007) Thus opponents pointed out that Friedman had no quarrel with the official line that Iraq represented an imminent threat to the safety of Americans. Despite the columnist’s urging millions of Americans had been paying attention to the weapons inspections—as well as the rising toll of layoffs and pay cuts at home. The citizens had grown increasingly hostile to the administration’s obsession with war as well as to President Bush himself.22

Friedman ultimately was compelled to shore up the flagging credibility of the Bush administration’s case for war. (Friedman 2003:10) “Is the war that the Bush team is preparing to launch in Iraq, really a war for oil?” he asked in one of his columns. “My short answer is ‘Yes.’ Any war we launch in Iraq will be in part about oil. To deny that is laughable.” Friedman admitted that the official reasons given by the Government for a war against Iraq were lies and crude ones at that. He wrote that,

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“Bush’s recent attempt to hype the Iraqi threat by saying that an Iraqi attack on America, which is most unlikely, would cripple our economy’ was embarrassing. Let’s cut the nonsense. The primary reason the Bush team is more focused on Saddam (than on North Korea), is because, if he were to acquire “weapons of mass destruction,” it might give him the leverage he has long sought, not to attack us, but to extend his influence over the world’s largest source of oil, the Persian Gulf.”

**New York Times Coverage**

*The New York Times* while very critical of the American war effort never questioned the rationale behind President Bush’s decision to go to war in the early stages.23 Newspaper authors like Judith Miller substantiated the American case for war through the available evidence of a Uranium centrifuge in a laboratory in Iraq. (Miller 2003) Similar to *The Washington Post*, *New York Times* was very much in the favor of the American intervention. *The Washington Post* also a released a report to negate criticism about it’s pro war tilt. In August 2007 the *New York Times* promoted the reformative effort of the US doctrine in Iraq. The article discussed the new experiences of a rehabilitation programme undertaken in the wilderness of the country. The article was titled as, “Outward Bound, Looking in”. One of the excerpts reads:

“They were a wary group of strangers, guarded and slow to trust, who, had arrived at the Outward Bound Wilderness school in Leadville, Colorado, a few days before, wondering, how a one-week course in the wilderness could help them heal. The five-day veterans’ course, however, sought to do much more. These men may have left the war, but the war never left them. The program, was designed to be a part of their continuing therapy, which, for some people, had lasted as long as five years. Physical injuries were common in this group, and they eagerly compared the bands of scar tissue, shiny and too smooth, that crisscrossed their bodies. The specter of emotional trauma loomed beyond most conversations.” (Mulchay 2007)

The rationale behind the war was questioned by *New York Times* very selectively. One article which appeared in October 2005 stated, that,

“The dispute over the rationale for the war has led to upheavals in the intelligence agencies and left the Democrats deeply divided about how aggressively to break with the White House and exposed deep rifts in the administration and among Republicans. The combatants’ intensity was underscored in a speech by Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to Colin L. Powell. He complained of a “cabal” between Mr. Cheney and Defense

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Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld when it came to Iraq and other national security issues and of a “real dysfunctionality” in the administration’s foreign policy team. The intensity could be further inflamed by comments from Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser during the administration of Mr. Bush’s father, in another edition of the “New Yorker” which are reminders of how the breach over Iraq had its roots in competing views of foreign policy in the country.” (Stevenson 2005)

The rationale for the war could not be argued favorably in the mainstream media. In a New York Times article David Sanger and John O’Neil included a striking revision of President Bush’s reasoning for going to war. The authors contended, “The possibility that Saddam Hussein might develop weapons of mass destruction and transfer them to terrorists, was the prime reason why President Bush advanced in the year 2003, to order the invasion of Iraq.”

New York Times pronounced in support of this rationale for the war. in an editorial unskeptically accepted these claims and incorporated them into the paper’s own arguments. In a September 18th 2002 editorial, the paper declared that:

What really counts in this conflict...is the destruction of Iraq’s unconventional weapons and the dismantling of its program to develop nuclear arms.... What makes Iraq the subject of intense concern, is, Mr. Hussein’s defiance of the Security Council’s instructions to dismantle Baghdad’s nuclear weapons program and to eliminate all it’s biological and chemical weapons and the materials used to make them.

In another article published in New York Times the author questioned the reason behind attacking Iraq on the basis of vague and unclear evidence. The author stated,

“America could alter the destiny of the Middle East in a way that probably could not be challenged for decades—not solely by controlling Iraq’s oil but by controlling it’s water. Even if America didn’t occupy the country once Mr. Hussein’s Baath Party is driven from power many lucrative opportunities would open up for American companies.”

(Pelleteire 2003) The Times further added,

“All that is needed to get us into war is one clear reason for acting, one that would be generally persuasive.Efforts to link the Iraqis directly to Osama bin Laden have proved inconclusive. Assertions that Iraq threatens its neighbors have also failed to create much resolve. In its present debilitated condition—

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25 Ibid
thanks to United Nations sanctions— Iraq’s conventional forces threaten no one.”

However, the rationale for US going to war was questioned as part of the run up to “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” The content of one such article cast suspicion at the American claims of drumming up war in Iraq.

“A letter to the Congress from the Director of central intelligence has brought into public view the divisions within the administration over what intelligence shows about Iraq’s intentions and it’s willingness to ally itself with Al-Qaeda. The letter and other reports from the C.I.A, paint a worrisome picture of Iraq’s pursuit of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. They do not support the White House’s view that Iraq presented an immediate threat to the American homeland and may use Al Qaeda, to carry out attacks at any moment.” (Gordon 2002)

In another Times publication, in January 2003 the US claim of Iraq, being a terrorist nation state received a setback.

The Times, also provided further evidence that, “several Iraqi defectors introduced to American intelligence agents by the exile organization and its leader, Ahmad Chalabi, invented or exaggerated their credentials as people with direct knowledge of the Iraqi government and it’s suspected unconventional weapons program,” the officials said. (Jehl 2003) The credibility of the American foreign policy further suffered when the Times stated that, “Intelligence provided by the defectors, that, could not be substantiated included information about Iraq’s suspected program for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as other information about the Iraqi government.”

As other writings of the time argued:

“Before we go to war over Halabja, the administration owes the American people the full facts. If it has other examples of Saddam Hussein gassing Kurds, it must show that they were not pro-Iranian Kurdish guerrillas, who, died fighting alongside Iranian Revolutionary Guards. Until Washington gives us proof of Saddam Hussein’s atrocities, why are we picking on Iraq on human rights grounds, when, there are so many other repressive Governments which Washington supports?” (Pellitiere 2003: 5)

It seemed that the media too began to move from criticism to opposition of the war on Iraq.

The media criticism of the war was also based on internal dissent of the Bush administration which revealed the clash between various departments of the
government for instance in the fact that the American Government was divided in its opinion about the relationship of the Iraqi Government with the terrorist outfit, Al-Qaeda\textsuperscript{26} appeared in an article which argued that the Bush administration's efforts to build a case for war against Iraq using intelligence to link it to Al-Qaeda, and the development of prohibited weapons has created friction within the country's intelligence agencies". Analysts at the Central Intelligence Agency, have complained that senior administration officials, exaggerated the significance of some intelligence reports about Iraq, in order to strengthen their political argument for war. (Risen and Johnston 2003)

Related to the cause of questioning the rationale behind the war was the issue of accountability of the American Government which was been raised by the \textit{New York Times}, later in 2007. Criticizing the United States reconstruction effort\textsuperscript{27} as too less and too late, articles led to the criticism of the new influx of US soldiers in Iraq, called as "the Surge". One excerpt from \textit{New York Times}, pointedly stated that, "In Iraq and in the United States, the killings were viewed as cold-blooded vengeance. After a perfunctory military investigation, Haditha, was brushed aside, but, once the details were disclosed, the killings became an ugly symbol of a difficult and demoralizing war. After a fuller investigation, the Marines promised to punish the guilty. (Zeilbaur 2007) The article, attempted to decrease the culpability of the young recruits, in the US Marine, who only knew how to decimate the enemy as part of their assigned duty.

\textbf{Other Themes of War Coverage}

In other coverage of war, military plans were glorified in some places and attempts were made to discuss them at length without the appropriate context. Al-Qaeda, was also discussed at length in the Iraq war coverage. (Ricks 2006) In one of the articles which appeared in March, 2003, one excerpt read, "The Pentagon’s war plan for Iraq calls for unleashing 3,000 precision-guided bombs and missiles in the first 48 hours of the air campaign. This was an effort intended to stagger and isolate the Iraqi military and quickly pave the way for a ground attack, to topple a


government in shock.” (Schmitt and Shankar 2003) The news article further added, “The initial bombardment would use 10 times the number of precision-guided weapons fired in the first two days of the Gulf war of 1991. The targets would be air defenses, political and military headquarters communications facilities and suspected chemical and biological delivery systems.”

Among other New York Times editorials, the American want of self guilt at incidents like Abu-Gharib, was reported after “the surge” had begun. One excerpt from an editorial reads:

“The man on trial, Lt. Col. Steven L. Jordan, was not a career officer. He was one of the reservists, pressed into Iraq duty, many of them for jobs beyond their experience or abilities. A military jury of nine colonels and a Brigadier general decided that, he was not to be blamed for the failure to train the Abu-Ghraib, jailers and acquitted him on all charges related to the abuse. He was convicted of disobeying an order to keep silent about Abu Ghrabi."

The trial was not authentic as the fundamental principles of “crimes against humanity”, are concerned. (Gerald 2007)

By the end of March, 2007, the New York Times, shifted it’s coverage in the internal pages like page no.B12, without giving prominence to the war. The real theme of the rationale for the war and the dangers to the civilians and US soldiers were intentionally ignored, as is evident from the Stephen Pelletiere’s observations in his scholarly work. President George Bush defended the army in Iraq, in having to manage a lot of unwanted criticism back home. In one of the news reports, that appeared in New York Times, the President observed that, “The stakes in Iraq are too high and the consequences too grave, for our security here at home to allow politics to harm the mission of our men and women in uniform.” (Meyers and Cloud 2007)

In a brief content analysis of the coverage of war stories, many significant observations can be recorded. Firstly the reporting of Collateral damage has been present in the news coverage of New York Times. (Reiff 2003) The evidence of this was the appearance of a news story of an Iraqi baby, found lying on the doorstep of a house, with the family inside was slaughtered on September 2007.. In one of the September articles, an accurate report of Iraqi atrocities was published in all it’s details.

“Fatima Jbouri was badly malnourished and underweight, when, she was found by Iraqi National Police officers as lying beneath a metal sheet in a
yard, near her dilapidated home in the southwestern Baghdad suburb of Saydia. A team of American soldiers, working as advisers to the Iraqi police found Fatima the next morning in an Iraqi police station and brought her to the 28th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad’s Green Zone.” (Ferrel 2007)

Such coverage incriminated the US Government, and was rather informative, though the actual dynamics of the war were never discussed in greater detail. (Hoyt 2005) Some of the news articles, propagated the “God Bless America”, pitch to elicit support for war. Iraq was a test, which, the Americans, could not afford to fail. The prominent strain in one of the newspaper articles was that, “The real patriots are the Americans protesting the inadequacies of the Bush administration’s politically skewed policies.” In another report, New York Times, promoted a nationalist urge to outdo the Iraqis in Operation Iraqi Freedom. One such article read,

“After being gripped for weeks in an antiwar mood, Europeans, are now devouring all they can learn of the mechanics of war: troops, tanks, ships, aircraft and cruise missiles. Newspapers are filled with maps and graphics, while, television and radio programs are filled with retired generals to explain strategy. The perception is that all debate about a postwar Iraq depends on the outcome of hostilities.” (Riding 2003)

Through such pieces, the case of the war effort in Iraq, was, strengthened a great extent.

Coverage in The Washington Post

The Washington Post, did not favor the war effort led by President Bush. The Washington Post in 2003 had to publish an explanation that it did not support the US war effort in Iraq. (Ricks 2001) The Ombudsman of the Post clarified that there would be no taking of sides by the newspaper and assured the readers in the same clarification that anti-war rallies would not be neglected in the newspaper coverage.29 The rationale behind the war however was never clearly challenged by the newspaper. The Post, however, barring a few reports, toned down the pro-war coverage of the newspapers such as New York Times. As President Bush came to clarify the relationship of the Iraqi Regime with the Al Qaeda, Washington Post stated that,

“The argument that the United States faced a moment of maximum peril in early 2003, from Iraq, was, weakened by the release of a report of chief US

weapons inspector, Charles A. Duelfer. The article by the Washington Post Staff writer, Glenn Kessler noted further, “The report found that Gulf War-I, and subsequent UN inspections destroyed Iraq’s illicit weapons capability, leaving it without any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. Saddam Hussein hoped to resume his weapons efforts, the report said, but, for the most part there had been no serious effort to rebuild the programs.” (Kessler 2004)

The same author blamed the Washington Post for indirectly furthering the cause of the war in Iraq. “If a full and truthful history of the Iraq War is ever written, there should be a chapter devoted to the pivotal role played by the Washington Post’s hawkish editorial page and the many like-minded thinkers who published their articles in the newspaper’s op-ed section.” One article challenged the stand of President Bush, “In the wake of the report, President Bush has reframed the way he characterizes his rationale for launching the war. A review of his public statements before the war reflects how broadly his public argument has shifted, away from warnings that Hussein actually possessed weapons in favor of talking almost exclusively about the dictator’s intent.” All these assertions were by the Duelfer report. The Duelfer report contended that, Iraq had no weapons, but, also mentioned that Saddam-Hussein, was interested in acquiring weapons because Iran, had, it's own weapons programs. John Kerry, the Democrat leader, was influenced by the point of view as it aimed at United States as a potential target.

Many authors did not agree with the American rationale to go to war with Iraq. In one of his articles, William Clark, raised a vital point.

“Although completely unreported by the media and the government, the answer to the Iraq enigma, is, shocking, as it is in large part, an oil currency war. One of the core reasons for this upcoming war is the administration’s goal of preventing the momentum of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) towards the euro as an oil transaction currency standard. In order to pre-empt OPEC, the Government, needs to gain the geo-strategic control of Iraq, along with its second largest proven oil reserves. The second factor is the quiet acknowledgement by respected oil geologists is that the Government does not want to relinquish the, the Global “Peak Oil”.30

According to a Post article, one of the pre-determined decisions of the “Iraqi interim authority” in a postwar economy is to drop the Iraq Dinar, and to convert Iraq to the US dollar. “The exact role of the authority when it would begin to take over

government functions are still to be determined. They did suggest that in running a postwar Iraqi economy the country plans to substitute US dollars for the Iraqi currency, that, bears a likeness of President Saddam Hussein.” (Walsh 2003)

Other media too had their different ways of reporting the war. One news report, which appeared in the year, 2006, pinpointed the aftermath of Operation Enduring Freedom. It read that,

“The war in Iraq has become a primary recruitment vehicle for violent Islamic extremists, motivating a new generation of potential terrorists around the world whose numbers may be increasing faster than the United States and its allies can reduce the threat. A 30-page national intelligence Estimate, cited the "centrality" of the US invasion of Iraq, as the leading inspiration for new Islamic extremist networks and cells that are united by little more than an anti-western agenda. It concluded that, rather than contributing to eventual victory in the global counterterrorism struggle, the situation in Iraq has worsened the US position, according to officials familiar with the classified document.”

*The Washington Post* provided qualifying support for the American decision to go to war with Iraq. As a consequence of the war in Iraq *The Post*, reported the failures and doublespeak of Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfield in a report on September 1st, 2007. (Snell 2007) Thus, despite the doublespeak of the newspaper, the newspaper did expose the lies in the Iraq war. In the war in March-April, 2003, *The Post* did the correct thing by glorifying the bravado of Private Jessica Lynch. Lynch, a 19-year-old supply clerk, continued firing at the Iraqis even after she sustained multiple gunshot wounds and watched several other soldiers in her unit die around her in fighting on March 23, one official said. The ambush took place after the 507th convoy, supporting the advancing 3rd Infantry Division, took a wrong turn near the southern city of Nasiriyah. She was fighting to the death, the official said. “She did not want to be taken alive.”(Schmidt and Leb 2003) Thus, *Washington Post* remained true to the Pentagon reports on the incident of Private Jessica Lynch who nearly martyred for the cause of the United States security and well being.

Apart from other themes, the newspaper covered the mismanagement of the war. In one of the articles, the following was the strain of thought “Retired Lt. General Ricardo S. Sanchez, who led US forces in Iraq for a year after the March 2003 invasion, accused the Bush administration of going to war with a "catastrophically flawed" plan and said the United States is "living a nightmare with no end in sight.” Sanchez also bluntly criticized the current troop increase in Iraq,
describing it as “a desperate attempt by the administration that has not accepted the political and economic realities of this war.” (White 2007)

The staff of *Washington Post* commented on the want of coverage on the part of the counter-administration view holders. Confessions about the scarcity of anti-war viewpoints in the coverage of the *Post* prompted the following: “In retrospect, we were so focused on trying to figure out what the administration was doing, that we were not giving the same play to people who said it wouldn’t be a good idea to go to war and were questioning the administration’s rationale. “Not enough of those stories were placed on the front page. That was a mistake on my part.” 31 Ironically people such as former Presidents like Richard Nixon had blamed *The Post*, for harboring a liberal media bias in favor of the Democratic party. It was noted that articles supporting the decision to go to war with Iraq had been published. 32 Thus, one could say that *Washington Post* made a transformation from being a liberal newspaper to a pro-war newspaper, during Gulf War-II and that the paper had been branded as being completely supportive of the country’s war effort. (Arkin 2007)

Serious critics like Norman Solomon and Robert Fisk and other media observers have argued that the sensationalization of the Jessica Lynch story, was a manipulated story. They contended that,

“Private Jessica Lynch, has quite a tale. Even more interesting than the tale, itself, is the story of how it has been told. Jessica’s reports supplied American hearts and minds with an icon and a hope. Since then, however, we have learned that what the country’s audience was told of Jessica’s experience is, as the BBC states, “one of the most stunning pieces of news management ever conceived.” The Central Command in Doha, told reporters at the time of Jessica’s “rescue”, that the reportage, was, a Hollywood like story, replete with procedures adopted by Jerry Bruckheimer.” 33

The theme of collateral damage also received the newspaper’s attention. The *Washington Post*, reported about the casualties suffered by the country’s army. There is an excerpt on reporting the number of casualties in Iraq, “The number of US troops wounded in Iraq has surged to its highest monthly level in nearly two years as

American GI’s fight block-by-block, in Baghdad in an attempt to check a spiral of sectarian violence that could lead to a harmful civil war. Last month, 776 troops, were wounded in action in Iraq, the highest number since the military assault, to retake the insurgent-held city of Fallujah in November 2004. According to the Defense Department data, it was the fourth-highest monthly total, since, the US-led invasion of Iraq in March, 2003.” (Tyson 2004)

The Washington Post also reported the Congressional actions on war. The first report by the newspaper dealt with the following details, “On October 2002, both the House and Senate, passed a resolution giving President Bush the authority to use force in Iraq. The resolution noted Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s possession of weapons of mass destruction and the continued hostility towards the US and several other factors. As the resolution was debated, many amendments were introduced, and several received a floor vote.” The resolution was named as House Resolution number, 114, authorizing the use of force in Iraq.34

The noted neo-conservative, William Kristol, commented that, “We now seem to be on course to a successful outcome.” While others argued that the war was a mess from the start, and even leading Republican senators no longer buy the argument that Bush’s so-called “surge” was succeeding or can succeed as promised. However, Kristol contended that with the recent escalation “we are increasingly able to protect more of the Iraqi population.” (Corny 2007) Conservative write ups and reports, also, entered the fray in mainstream media coverage which followed a clearly defined support for “Operation Enduring Freedom.”

Some News portals like Common Dreams, criticized the nature of media coverage in Washington Post. In its view the Washington Post had criticized the American war effort, but, it never raised a question mark against the support for the rationale behind “Operation Iraqi Freedom.” The Post editorialized nine times in favor of war, the last of those a full two columns of text, argued against the considerable critical reader response which the column had received, for pounding the drums of war. Over the six-month period from September through February, 2003 the Washington Post, had editorialized 26 times in the favor of war. It has sometimes

been critical of the Bush administration and sometimes commented on the developments in the war, without offering an opinion on the case for war itself, but it did not offer arguments against military action. The op-ed page, had been heavily slanted in the favor of war.” 35 Ultimately the two prestigious papers Washington Post and New York Times, had both initially supported and eventually argued that many other facets of the problem were unrepresented by the US government.

**Alternative Media Coverage of the Persian Gulf War**

Alternative media in United States owes it’s origin to press control and it was coordinated by the Black ideologues during the days of the civil rights movement. A systematic study of alternative and activist media provides an introduction to alternative media theories, audiences and practices. (Sylvie 2002: 50) It brings diverse voices and concepts from outside the commercial media world, to the fore, enriching and challenging mass media. Illustrated with historical and current examples, it, also includes carefully constructed exercises and discussion topics, based on case studies and available texts.

It includes a history of Alternative and Activist media and media participation and consumption by marginalized audiences along with the use of community radio, video and television, by, community and minority groups. (Waltz 2005: 10) The use of Alternative media and the blurring of boundaries between alternative and mass media are the significant themes of discussion. New technology and it’s possibilities for alternative media, are also significant factors in research. (Viquierre 2005: 55) Journals such as *Mother Jones* and *The Z Mag* along with portals like, wsws.org and Common dreams.org, are sources of different and critical coverage by the country’s media.

Media producers like Michael Moore, begin their vituperative attacks on the mainstream media through the Gun Ownership Debate and the anti-war sentiment pervading the US University Campuses. Michel Moore’s films like, “Bowling for Columbine” and “9/11” have been critically acclaimed in the country. Michael Moore stated in a work that,

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"One gets used to when one is in what's called "the public eye" is reading the humorous fiction that others like to write about you. For instance, I have read in a quite respectable and trustworthy publications that I am a college graduate I was a factory worker. I have two brothers (I have none). Newsweek wrote that I live in a penthouse on Central Park West (I live above a Baby Gap store, and not on any park), and the Internet Movie Database once listed me as the director of the Elvis movie, "Blue Hawaii" I was 6 at the time the film was made, but I was quite skilled in directing my sisters in building me a snowman. My favorite mistake, is, one of my reviews crediting the cartoon in "Bowling for Columbine" as being the work of the "South Park" creators. It isn't. I wrote it and my buddy Harold Moss's animation studio drew it." (Moore 2001: 60)

Michael Moore emerged as one of the foremost critiques of the American establishment which meant that he was a critical theorist along with being an alternative media producer of some repute. The other critic, Robert Fisk, an eminent media observer, noted that the condition of preparedness in Pearl Harbour, was intentionally kept low at the venue of the Japanese attack so that after the attack, the Roosevelt Administration could develop a rationale for intervening militarily in World War-II. (Fisk 2003) Robert Fisk, informed the public that, "How often I have wanted to repeat his advice to Bush and Blair. Obsessed with their own demonization of Saddam Hussein, both, are now reminding us of the price of appeasement. President Bush, thought that he is the Churchill of America, refusing the appeasement of Saddam. Now the country's ambassador to the European Union, Rockwell Schnabel, compared Saddam to Hitler. "You had Hitler in Europe and no one really did anything about him."

Black Press, which had published its first Journal called as "Freedom Journal" in the momentous year of 1827. "New Orleans Tribune," founded thirty seven years later became the first daily to be emerge out of the wilderness for the Blacks in United States.36 The Tribune was a champion of equal rights for Blacks, and called for an end to discrimination in employment, education and voting privileges. Another newspaper called as, "L' Union," The Union also propagated the rights of the Blacks in the discriminative era of an American Apartheid. The media also struck at the landmarks of the country's history. The incidents of the sinking of the USS Maine; the Japanese devastation of Pearl Harbor in the second World War and the Vietnam's War, Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, were scrutinized by the Fringe media as

36 "First Black Daily Newspaper Founded" (Online : Web) Accessed on 1 September, 2007, URL: BlackpressUSA.com
we have learnt to term them as. Many such observers like Norman Solomon and Robert Fisk have attempted to collect evidence which brings in the culpability of the Government in these historical episodes. They have provided some dubious proof which point towards an inclination of various US Governments to create newer rationales for going to war with the American enemies.

The Media and Military Interface

While the concept of embedded reporters during war was not new, the number of reporters envisioned under the embedded media program was much more robust than ever attempted in any previous conflict. (Allen and Zelizer 2004:200) Unfathomable to many strategic leaders, was the fact that many of the reporters would be able to broadcast ‘live’ from anywhere in the “battle space” with news of battles, complete with audio and television images of death and destruction. Remembering the impact of edited film reports during the Vietnam war, several military leaders had difficulty trusting the media to allow unlimited access.

The by-product of the coverage was the brutal images of war and death, which was, televised to every living room. Much of the senior military leadership remains, scarred by Vietnam and it’s aftermath. A whole generation of military leaders believed that the nation had lost the war in Vietnam, because the media turned public opinion against the soldier in the field. (Hallin 1989: 20) This belief shaped the military’s view of the media and the ethics of reporters, during the past two decades. Many Americans agreed with the worries expressed by General Colin Powell during the planning for the Gulf War-I. In the year 1990, he felt that instantaneous battlefield reporting via television would, bring home the horrors of war, along with graphic scenes of combat and death. Reporters and cameras recorded every step in a prolonged offensive ground war which created disillusionment and an anti-war sentiment at home. These fears led to the policy of “press pools.” (Woodward 1991: 315)

In order to make the “embedded media program” work, Secretary Rumsfeld had to first demonstrate that the press pools of Gulf War-I were not the optimum way to use the media in a war. The military liked the coverage of Gulf War-I and the public was ecstatic with General Norman Schwarzkopf’s briefings and the aerial
bomb footage. The media left the war saying “never again.” Walter Cronkite, writing in February 1991, decried the military’s control of the media coverage through the press pools and the monitoring of stories and interviews with the soldiers in the field. In his opinion, the military was attempting to hide something. Cronkite believed that if the ground war had lasted longer than a few weeks, this sense of hiding something would have led to a breakdown of popular support for the war. Cronkite was a battlefield reporter in World War-II, as, well as Vietnam. His ideas of press pools were most likely shaped by his own experiences. (Taylor 2003: 273)

The Power of Information

In Operation Iraqi Freedom, there were over 770 journalists embedded with coalition military forces, with over 550 positioned with the ground forces. These reporters generated over 6,000 stories each week. As a battalion commander in the conflict, one officer witnessed first hand, the impact these reporters had on both the military and the people in the homeland. His observations confirmed what, Philip Knightley, wrote on the effect of leveraging the media over a decade ago: “On the home front, news, used to arouse the fighting spirit of the nation and to mobilize public opinion about the war.” (Taylor 2002: 20) Lieutenant General, William Scott Wallace, Commander of the US Army V Corps, remarked that the embedded media ably narrated the story of the soldier to the nation. It would not have been narrated at all, anywhere. The stories filed by the embedded media gave the public something to know about at the “mom & pop” level.

Maintaining the support of the public back home while countering the lies emanating from Baghdad was one of the expected benefits from embedded reporters. Commanders in Iraq leveraged the media for intelligence value to achieve immediate success on the battlefield. A CNN television crew provided live footage of an infantry battalion’s movement into the city. The senior Marine commander, Lieutenant General James Conway, watched the live CNN coverage in his headquarters, east of the city. He saw friendly Iraqi civilians on the streets and noted the absence of enemy forces. Acting on these real time images, Lt. General Conway immediately approved a request to let the advancing forces continue until they hit enemy defenses. Live

feeds from other embeds, convinced the General to modify his entire plan and speed up the attack. The CNN coverage, enabled Lt. General Conway, to make his rapid assessment, and speed up the assault on Baghdad. (Bing and Ray 2003: 227) The mainstream media, in the form of Cable News Network, and Fox Television Network, played a key role in the framing of military strategy and operational planning of the country.38

However the reactions to the Embedded Media Program (Linder 2006) had mixed reception from the journalists and editors and the Military. (Scheter 2007) Robert Jensen, writing in the journal, Progressive, called the embedded media program a “failure of success” of journalism. The technology that allowed instantaneous reporting was a success. The reporting was a failure, because, the embedded reporters were unable to inform correct and unemotional news. They failed to provide the fullest possible understanding of the ‘what, why and so what.’ Mr. Jensen and others felt that the embedded reporters had identified too closely with their military subjects. Critics of the program believed that the, embeds allowed themselves to be censored by allowing the military to control their movements and reporting.

Since only good stories appeared, the critics reasoned that the military prevented the embeds, from narrating the whole story. These critics suggested that the military staged many of the historic events telecast live. The most referenced photo-opportunity was the pulling down of Saddam Hussein’s statue in Baghdad. The reporters who embedded with combat units denied any claims of censorship or staged photo-opportunities.

In a popular foreword to CBS News’ chronicle of the war in Iraq, Dan Rather defended the embedded media program. Dan Rather who was a war correspondent in Vietnam, admitted that the wartime journalism could not be expected to provide the full story of all that is happening on the battlefield. In the war, there, is no time for reflection on how the events unfolding before the camera lens fitted into world events.

38 The Battle for Tikrit affords another example of leveraging the media for intelligence value. Brigadier General John Kelly commanded Task Force Tripoli whose mission was to capture Saddam’s hometown following the fall of Baghdad. As his task force approached the town, BGen Kelly called up the reporters embedded with his unit along with some local Iraqi tribal leaders. He told them to spread the word that the Marines were here, and that anyone threatening the life or property of another individual (Iraqi or American) would be dealt with - with deadly force. The word was dispersed via the news and word of mouth that afternoon and evening. By the next morning the Kurds who had planned to attack the town had withdrawn and the town quickly surrendered to the Marines.
In most cases, the reporter will be unable to provide a general context for the images. Wartime journalists can only provide "a first draft of history," which could be incomplete and misleading. (Guisanni 2006)

One of the most challenging reporting during war was the coverage of civilian casualties in addition to the military casualties.

Walter Isaacson, the editorial head at CNN, issued a memo warning against credulous and simplistic reporting of civilian casualties. Isaacson wrote, "As we get good reports from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, we must redouble our efforts to make sure we do not seem to be simply reporting from their vantage and perspective. We must talk about how the Taliban are using civilian shields and how the Taliban have harbored the terrorists responsible for killing close to 5,000 people." Isaacson explained to The New York Times, "It seems perverse to focus too much on the casualties or hardship in Afghanistan." Reaction to Isaacson's directive drew comments along more or less predictable philosophical lines. Brit Hume, the Fox News anchor, supported the notion that such casualties should not be overplayed, because "Civilian casualties are historically, by definition, a part of war." On the same Fox program, the White House correspondent, Mara Liasson, agreed and commented that, "War is about killing people and civilian casualties are unavoidable."

War reporting is all about reporting war and but, the mention of collateral damage and civilian payoffs, can, have a deleterious impact upon the combined war effort of the country's military apparatus. War reporting has to have a state centric approach if a pro-nation and a patriotic sentiment, has to prevail in the war without bordering on to be jingoistic and reflecting too much of emotionalism. The Baghdad Bureau chief of the New York Times, could not have been any clearer. He commented, "The story really takes us back into the 8th century, a truly barbaric world."

John Burns was speaking June 20th on the PBS News Hour, and he described as to what happened to two soldiers whose bodies had been found recently. Evidently they were victims of atrocities and no one should doubt that the words of horror used by Burns to describe the "barbaric murders" were totally appropriate. What needs to

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be emphasized, is, that when war happens and a “rogue nation”, goes ahead with it’s acts of crime, then, it needs to be contained. The same media pinpointed that the allied forces committed acts of torture and murder in incidents like the Fallujah operation\textsuperscript{40} of the Coalition forces which was questioned by the, then United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan as the Secretary General feared that the war effort in December 2004.

The regime of torture, instilled, by Saddam Hussein, has not been represented, in all its notoriety, by the media. One can have a look at the obligation of states under the United Nations Charter, in Article 55, which reads that, “to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms, having regard to article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 7 (UDHR) \textsuperscript{41}of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ICCPR).” Both the conventions provided, that, no one may be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.\textsuperscript{42} The Iraqi Regime was also in the wrong, as, it has flouted the Declaration on the Protection of all persons from being subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, adopted by the General Assembly on 9 December 1975, Resolution no. 3452 (XXX). The International Organizations bring the rogue states to the book, but, the country’s media has forgotten an honest enunciation of the fraud and crime committed on humanity by tyrants like of Saddam Hussein. The United Nations Convention on Torture, brings an encompassing overview of the do’s and dont’s which have been


\textsuperscript{42} The Penn State sociologist defined three categories of journalistic vantage points within Operation Iraqi Freedom: embedded reporters, reporters stationed in Baghdad hotels only, and independent reporters. Article topics were combat, military movement, soldier deaths, soldier source and soldier human interest.” People do ask whether embedded reporters are less objective and can provide neutral reporting?, Lindner notes. “But the question may really be whether embedded reporters had the access or opportunity to talk with people other than the soldiers.” Combining all types of reporters, stories quoting soldiers made up 71.6 percent of the stories in the study, followed by combat and military movement stories at 46 percent each, nearly 24 percent on soldier human interest and 16 percent on soldier deaths, according to the study. Breaking down the categories, embedded reporters published stories with soldier sources in 93.2 percent of the stories analyzed. Military movement stories were at nearly 52 percent, combat stories at 46 percent and soldier deaths at nearly 16 percent.
prescribed for the nation states, which, need to be stringently implemented in the context of Iraq.43

On March 19, CNN reporter, Walter Rodgers reported about “a charming vignette.” The incident involved members of the US Army 7th Cavalry, who, learned about the start of the war in Iraq not from their superiors but from Rodgers, who was embedded with the unit. When the correspondent told the troops that the US had launched air strikes at Baghdad, they were “surprised,” Rodgers commented, “CNN viewers in the United States, knew about the attack on Baghdad...before any of the soldiers here in the field,” Rodgers said. Another symbolic moment came the next day, when Rodgers and cameraman Charles Miller, provided some of the first real-time images from the battlefield. The report included the following words, “These are live pictures of the 7th Cavalry racing across the deserts in southern Iraq,” (Sharkey 50)

Media Analysis of the War Effort

According to some media observers, Iraq war was a “Rush Limbaugh / Fox News War” which was based on the premise that lying forcefully turned the lie into a truth. (Montgomery 2006) Rush Limbaugh, rose to be the top commentator in the country, while, conducting a reign of error, unnoticed by the mainstream media. Fox News, became the top cable news channel in the country. The mainstream TV writers, debated whether the channel was biased or not. The ideologues in the White House, learned from watching the rise of Limbaugh and Fox News: When you invert or concoct reality, do so passionately and repetitively, and accuse anyone who challenges your reality of liberal bias...or treason. In February, 2003, with the Iraq war approaching, MSNBC terminated, Phil Donahue’s primetime show after an internal NBC report complained that Donahue offered a “difficult public face for NBC in a time of war... He seems to delight in presenting guests who are antiwar, anti-Bush and skeptical of the administration’s motives.” The report, described a

nightmare scenario in which the show became “a home for the liberal antiwar agenda at the same time that the competitors are waving the flag at every opportunity.”  

MSNBC was part of a strategy that others in TV news were attempting to follow: “Let’s outfox Fox.” The spectrum of mainstream media, is alleged to be so narrowly center-right, that, and, the media finally began debating bias in their Iraq coverage. The issue was not the obvious question of whether the media have been war boosters instead of reporters, but, whether their coverage was emphasizing the negative too much in the occupation of Iraq. The media debate was not over an exit strategy. The debate centered on, whether the US should deploy more troops. Peacekeeping and reconstruction were also seen as the natural responsibility of a nation state. (Nye Jr 2003: 60)

On April 26th, 2003, ABC’s World News Tonight I, aired one of its news broadcasts, during the war. Anchor Claire Shipman, announced at the top of the broadcast, “US troops discover chemical agents, missiles, and what could be a mobile laboratory in Iraq. An ABC News exclusive.” ABC’s “exclusive,” appeared to be replete with falsehoods. The April 26, 2003, report began like this, “The US military has found a weapons site 130 miles northwest of Baghdad that has initially tested positive for chemical agents. Correspondent David Wright of ABC, explained, “Preliminary tests showed it to be a mixture of three chemicals, including a nerve agent and a blistering agent”. Wright added that an Army lieutenant “says the tests have an accuracy of 98 percent. “While expressing some reservations, Wright called it “by far the most promising find in the search for Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction,” since, it included what his military source told him. The American Broadcasting Corporation followed Wright’s report with a short segment about weapons claims that turned out to be false alarms. ABC continued to propagandize the

46 An Excerpt from the ABC Programme, World News Tonight, Dated April 26, 2003, With the Programme Being Anchored By Clare Shipman.
story the next day, with Wright appearing on *This Week* to explain that “what may turn out to be a very significant find are these mobile laboratories, which appear to have a pumping apparatus as well as machinery to mix chemicals.”

Anchorperson Carole Simpson in *World News Tonight* explained that “for the second day in a row, some of the preliminary tests have come back positive for chemical agents.” The report also noted one new development, the arrival of a mobile Exploitation Team *MET Bravo*, 49 which, conducted its own testing of suspected weapons sites. When these tests were conducted the story had changed significantly. According to an April 28th, 2003, report in the New York Times, the MET Bravo team “had tentatively concluded that there are no chemical weapons at a site where American troops said they had found chemical agents and mobile labs.” As media critiques noted such transgressions on the part of a mainstream media need to be taken into consideration. The media needs to be reprimanded through a regulatory body. The media need to perform the function of shaping and moulding the public opinion. These television networks like, *CBS, CNN, Fox News*, etc, need to be reined in as they have a larger role to play. They allegedly indulge in “manufacturing consent.” (Anderson 2003: 43) These views largely reignite the debate on the role of the media on the continuing war in Iraq.

*Fox News* presented the killing of soldiers by US soldiers. story in similar terms. “We warned these cars to stop. If they did not stop, we fired warning shots. If they didn’t stop then, we fired into the engine. Today some guys killed some civilians after going through all those steps. “Later on the night of March 31, the Post released its story on the shooting that would appear in the April 1st, 2003, edition of the paper. Branigin’s report described Army Captain Ronny Johnson’s attempts to avoid the incident as he directed his troops via radio from the checkpoint:

“Fire a warning shot,” he ordered as the vehicle kept advancing nearer. Then, with increasing urgency, he told the platoon to shoot a 7.62mm machine-gun round into it’s radiator. “Stop messing around!” Johnson, yelled into the company radio network when he still saw no action being taken. Finally, he shouted at the top of his voice,

"Stop him, Red 1, stop him!" Johnson yelled over the Radio, "That order was immediately followed by the loud retorts of the 25m.m. cannon fire from one or more of the platoon's Bradleys. About half a dozen shots were heard in all. "Cease fire!." (Ricchiardi 2003) As he peered into his binoculars, he roared at the platoon leader, "You just killed a family because you didn't fire a warning shot soon enough!" (Firaq 2006)

The Post's account is significant because it suggests that, in fact, military procedures may not have been properly followed at the checkpoint. The New York Daily News, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, L.A. Times and San Francisco Chronicle, managed to include the discrepancy between the official Pentagon account and the Post's eyewitness description in their reports on the Najaf killings in their April 1st, editions. (Ravi 2003)

The New York Times did not publish a story that only presented the official version. The headline stated that as a definite fact, an adequate warning had been given before soldiers opened fire: "Failing to Heed Warning, Iraqi Women and Children Die." The New York Times, had a deadline that did not allow it to include information from the Branigin article, the Times ran a follow-up article on April 2nd, 2003. Another headline read, "US Military Chiefs Express Regret Over Civilian Deaths", omitted any mention of the description of the incident in the Washington Post.

Christopher Marquis described the victims as being "killed when their van apparently failed to stop after orders by the American guards." His report rehearsed the official version of events, without mentioning the contradictory firsthand account from Washington Post.

The New York Times was not the only newspaper that overlooked, the reporting which undermined the official story on the killing. National Public Radio's reporter, Nick Spicer, reported that, "All things considered, what we are hearing here

50 "Official Story v/s Eyewitness Account" (Online : Web), Accessed on 10 December, 2007, URL: http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=3396
51 Ibid
at CENTCOM, is that troops fired a warning shot as a vehicle approached a checkpoint. The vehicle did not stop. It then fired at the engine block. The vehicle continued. Then, they fired in the passenger compartment and they killed seven women and children."

According to Associated Press, Arnett was not an NBC News reporter, but, an employee of the MSNBC show, "National Geographic Explorer." The network aired Arnett's reports, after, NBC reporters evacuated Baghdad. Peter Arnett, appeared on NBC's Today Show and apologized for his comments.\(^\text{55}\) Such is the stranglehold of the establishment over the freedom of media in the country.

Media coverage of Gulf War II has thus raised some significant questions on how press freedoms intersect with national security in times of war. While the content analysis reveals the pattern of media reporting in the course of the Iraq War it also induced a vigorous debate in the country on the rationale, conduct and scope of war. Most importantly it reinforced the divide between mainstream media and alternative media on the rationale and conduct of the war on Iraq. Further, there were mixed reactions to the concept of embedded journalists and the future of media military interface. Finally, the larger questions of accuracy, objectivity in media reporting remained as media coverage did not develop challenges to US policy in the Gulf.