

Global War – Local Views

Media Images of the Iraq War

Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen (eds.)

NORDICOM

Global War – Local Views
Media Images of the Iraq War

Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen (eds.)

© Editorial matters and selections, the editors; articles, individual contributors; Nordicom

ISBN 91-89471-33-4

An extended electronic version of this volume will be available on Nordicom's homepage (April 2006) with additional contributions from: Ahmed El-Goddy, Tine Ustad Figenschou, Johan Gunnarsson, Martin Hirst and Robert Schütze, Berit von der Lippe and Brigitte Miral.

Published by:

Nordicom

Göteborg University

Box 713

SE 405 30 GÖTEBORG

Sweden

Cover by: Roger Palmqvist

Photographs: Rabih Moghrabi, Roger Turesson & Laurent Rehbours/Pressens Bild

Printed by: Livréna AB, Kungälv, Sweden, 2005

Environmental certification according to ISO 14001

Contents

Acknowledgements	7
Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen Introduction	9
<i>Chapter 1</i>	
Lars Lundsten & Matteo Stocchetti The War Against Iraq in Transnational Broadcasting	25
<i>Chapter 2</i>	
Seref Ates, Jörg Becker, Richard Brunbart, Hüseyin Cicek, Thomas Oberhofer, Arzu Onay-Ok & Gülsen Taskara "Europe Can Say 'No' to America": Reporting on the Iraq War in Selected German and Turkish Newspapers	47
<i>Chapter 3</i>	
Julius Mucunguzi Images of the Iraq War in Ugandan Newspapers	73
<i>Chapter 4</i>	
Tauana Kupe & Nathalie Hyde-Clarke The South African Media and the War in Iraq	89
<i>Chapter 5</i>	
Mohamed El-Bendary Framing Coverage of Iraq War in Pan-Arab Press. A Case Study of Al-Hayat Newspaper	103
<i>Chapter 6</i>	
Angelika Carfora, Christian Flatz, Martin Hartlieb & Armin Lanzinger Even the Toilet Brush Is Gilded. News Coverage of the Iraq Conflict in Selected Austrian Newspapers	125
<i>Chapter 7</i>	
Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock & Christos Frangonikolopoulos Vox Populi, Vox Dei. Reporting the Iraq War in Greece	145

<i>Chapter 8</i>		
Sean Pbelan	Irish Media, Iraq and the Charge of Anti-Americanism	171
<i>Chapter 9</i>		
Rune Ottosen	Good-doers or Bad-doers? Images of the War in Iraq in the Mainstream Norwegian Press	187
<i>Chapter 10</i>		
Karmen Erjavec	The Iraq War in the Slovenian Media	209
<i>Chapter 11</i>		
Stig A. Nabrstedt	Media Reflexivity in the War on Terror. Three Swedish Dailies and the Iraq War	223
<i>Chapter 12</i>		
Margie Comrie & Susan Fountaine	Through a Distanced Lens. New Zealand's Coverage of the Iraq Conflict	245
<i>Chapter 13</i>		
Toby Miller	Financialization, Emotionalization, and Other Ugly Concepts	263
	The Authors	277

Acknowledgements

Editing this book has in many ways been a pleasure, in spite of its dark topic. Due to good co-operation with the contributors – our colleagues from almost all parts of the world. In the era of globalisation it is urgent that media scholars develop global perspectives on media, in particular in relation to media discourses on international conflicts. This cannot be achieved unless researchers from various countries, cultures and continents make joint efforts. This project was initiated at a conference in Oslo in February 2004, where some of the contributors met for initial discussions. We can only regret that we have not managed to gather all partners at the same time and place to get to know each other better than is possible via e-mail.

Without the competent language assistance of Monica Seeber and Charlotta Hambre-Knight, editing this book would have been a much more demanding task. Their efficient and thorough work in the time-pressed final stage of the project is worth all our gratitude.

We further thank our publisher at Nordicom and in particular the manager and editor Ulla Carlsson, not only for publishing this book, but also for the series of books from *Journalism in the New World Order* vol I & II and *US and the Others* up until the present and most recent one. It is a privilege to collaborate both with her and her colleagues Karin Poulsen and Roger Palmqvist.

Our thanks and gratitude also go to our sponsors in Norway and Sweden. The Norwegian Freedom of Speech Foundation has partly funded the Norwegian part of the study and hosted the conference in their beautiful building in February 2004. Thanks also to the Norwegian Research Council for Applied Media Research and Oslo University College for funding the conference. Many thanks also to research assistant Tine Ustad Figenschou who has done a lot of the empirical research in the Norwegian part of the study. Thanks also to Jarle Havenes for assisting in the statistical preparation of the data for the Norwegian part of the study. In Sweden, the Department of Humanities at Örebro University has supported the project financially and with great interest for which we are grateful.

Due to space restrictions this print version of the book has been complemented by an extended digital version available at www.nordicom.gu.se as PDF file. Contributions to this project from Tine Ustad Figenschou, Ahmed El-Gody, Johan Gunnarsson, Berit von der Lippe, Brigitte Mral, as well as Martin Hirst and Robert Schütze, can be downloaded there. We regret that we could not include these chapters here, as we for comparative reasons had to prioritise articles dealing explicitly with mediated discourses as well as optimising the geographical-cultural diversity of the book.

Örebro and Oslo, October 2005

Stig A. Nohrstedt

Rune Ottosen

Introduction

Stig A. Nohrstedt & Rune Ottosen

The recent military conflicts, in particular the Kosovo conflict of 1999, the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq War, seem to be remarkable because of the number of 'big lies' that have accompanied them *and* because these lies have been well exposed and criticised in public – at least in some places and by some media.

The most prominent example is the claim, as made by Colin Powell to the UN Security Council (Mral, 2004:44–48), that Iraq controlled weapons of mass destruction and represented an immediate global threat. Hence, one can imagine the parallel appearance of strategic manipulation of perceptions (perception management) and reflexivity as crucial traits, in the public sphere, of the new world order and its 'new wars' (Kaldor, 1999). Popular culture has long noticed these trends. Science fiction novels such as Aldous Huxley's *Braze New World*, George Orwell's *1984* (with its notion of 'new speak'), and Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* pointed at totalitarian tendencies in post-modern society – so, more recently, did movies such as *Wag the Dog*, *The Truman Show*, *Primary Colors* and *Matrix*. One might wonder whether science fiction is becoming breaking news in the new world order. And, if so, when fiction is fact, has it – and world public discourse – perhaps reached a new and higher level of reflexivity, as forecast in some theories of late-modern society (Beck, 1994; Giddens, 1994)?

In the Kosovo conflict, the propaganda field was levelled by the ways in which the so-called Rambouille negotiations were staged. The substance of the proposed peace treaty that was rejected by the representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and which was later revealed as Appendix B, was not made public until the NATO military intervention had started. In the meantime, American, French and other major players (in particular the American diplomat Richard Holbrooke), went public with the conclusion that the Serbs did not want peace and had therefore refused to sign the agreement (see for example Chomsky, 1999:107 pp). It was indeed a case of propaganda 'by deeds' to quote a classic work on propaganda techniques (Lasswell, 1927/1971:199). The white and black picture portraying the Kosovo

Albanians as the 'worthy victims' and the Serbs as the villains was effective in the media discourses for some time. In saying this we acknowledge, of course, the fact that Milosevic was responsible for crimes against humanity and had blood on his hands. But the issue to be discussed is whether one injustice (ethnic cleansing) can justify another (bombing without a UN mandate and causing civilian casualties). The propaganda images in the media before the bombing started were more obvious in some countries than in others (Nohrstedt, Højer & Ottosen, 2002). Our comparative study of Norwegian and Swedish media indicates that media in the former country switched from a low-profile, pro-NATO view to a NATO-critical view during the later part of the war, whereas the Swedish media held a steadier NATO-critical perspective in their coverage all along. Research on this matter is hardly conclusive, so we can only hypothetically assume that in at least some NATO member states the media were critical to the official NATO propaganda of the bombing campaign as a climical operation.

An even clearer instance of mobilisation for war based on lies is, of course, the 2003 Iraq War. 'Lies' might seem too strong a word, connoting conscious manipulation of facts and of general opinion. But, based on the available evidence, it is difficult to reach any other conclusion, particularly regarding the aftermath of the war, when Bush and Blair jump without regret from one argument to the next. When the occupying forces in Iraq failed to find weapons of mass destruction, the line of argument for justifying the war changed. Now, at the time of writing, in December 2004, after George W. Bush has declared the battle of Iraq 'won' by the 'alliance of the willing', the argument for the necessity of military intervention is that the world has become a safer place without the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad. But whatever will come out of the 2003 Iraq War, only the most devoted optimist could claim that the country – and the surrounding region – are safer now than previously.

To briefly summarise: in the autumn and winter of 2002-2003, the Bush and Blair administrations argued that Iraq must be forced, by military means if necessary, to disarm, because its weapon of mass destruction (WMD) were a threat to the entire world. Another accusation against the regime in Baghdad was that it had been involved in and supported the al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 9/11, 2001. But even then it was more than possible to reveal that these charges against Iraq lacked validity since the only thing that journalists and others needed to do was to go back to the files and check what representatives of the Bush administration themselves, and documents the administration had issued, had said about the military capacity of Iraq before 9/11. For example, in a press conference with the Egyptian Foreign Minister on February 24 2001 (six months before the terrorist attack), the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, had said – in response to a question from the audience about sanctions against Iraq – that "frankly, they have worked. Saddam Hussein has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project

conventional power against his neighbours." (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2001/933.htm>; <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/09/28/iraq/main575469.shtml>; here from Mral, 2004:48, n. 69).

Other public disavowals of the American and British charges were also available for those who did not take such statements for granted but who realised that the propaganda war had started long before missiles were launched against Iraqi cities and military installations (Curtis, 2004); about war propaganda in peace time, see for example Luostarinen, 2002). More than a year after the war, leading US media regretted publicly that they had not been more critical towards the Bush administration's war propaganda (the *New York Time* May 26, 30 2004; the *Washington Post* August 12 2004; see Nohrstedt's chapter for details). Remarkable as it is for prestigious media openly to admit shortcomings, this self-criticism is overdue, and should have been raised before the war in order to affect the process of escalation – not after it. That, however, would have meant interference in the administration's handling of what it described as a matter of national interest, and for that to happen – in contradistinction to ineffective lip-service afterwards – the media and journalists would have needed a great deal of civic dedication and courage (cf. Hallin, 1986 about legitimate media critique of the political establishment). That said, it is nevertheless of some historical relevance that leading US media after the 2003 Iraq War confess to have been neglecting their watchdog role in relation to the government in a very serious phase of the 'War on terror'.

Whether this is an entirely new phenomenon is debatable. We will not take up that discussion here because of limited space but will, rather, point out that in many other analogous instances the media have retrospectively corrected their previous reports – without, however, bothering to express regret. So perhaps the only new thing about the confessions of the *New York Times* and other major media is the explicit mention of mistakes. What is more important is that outside the USA the accusations against Iraq were challenged in the media before the war. Suspicions were frequently raised that such accusations were based on false and fabricated facts and were part of a campaign of war propaganda, and not raised out of concern for the safety of the Middle East and the international community. This scepticism was often quite prominent in, for example, European media, not to mention media in the Arab and the Third World countries.

In this book we have, together with media scholars from a number of countries and cultures, made an attempt to provide a more global view of the Iraq War and the War on Terror than is usually present in the news media. It is also a test of whether media reflexivity is perhaps best encouraged by a journalism which draws on perspectives from many directions and viewpoints, national and transnational. Thirdly, the book aims at grasping some basic traits of the current global discursive order with respect to international military conflicts.

A Global Discursive Order

The media discourses studied in the following chapters should be regarded as instances of a global discursive order. We have borrowed the concept 'discursive order' from Norman Fairclough (1995) and his critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach. Here, the general objective is to study media content contextually, this also includes an inter-discursive approach – media content in relation to other discourses such as public diplomacy, propaganda and humanitarian work. Hence the centre of attention here is the relationship between media discourses and other discourses on the Iraq War. By adding 'global' to the notion we want to emphasise the necessity of a transnational or even a world-wide perspective in trying to understand the context of today's media discourses.

In this book it is primarily the *discourses of media* in relation to *public diplomacy*, *war propaganda* and *compassion* that are relevant. For all practical analytical purposes the abstract concept 'discursive order' is applied to the complex of inter-textual relationships between four public discourses – public diplomacy, war propaganda, humanitarian appeals and the media. The notion 'public diplomacy' refers to the political debates around issues of legality and legitimacy – for example whether a new UN resolution was needed to make the military intervention in Iraq legal. By 'war propaganda' we basically refer to the discourse on possible Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction, but also to the respective parties' views as to the nature of the conflict, the warfare as such, military operations, and so on. The compassion discourse, finally, is the discussion around the humanitarian aspects of the war such as civilian casualties and human suffering. We are particularly interested in the ways in which the political conflicts connected to the Iraq War are discursively constructed by the media.

The theoretical perspective in this book aims, further, to demonstrate that the concept of a global discursive order helps us to grasp the implications of the War on Terror as declared by George W. Bush after 9/11. Apart from other aspects of this strategic step (not to treat the terrorist attacks as criminal acts but as a military onslaught on the USA), discursively, the implication was to set an agenda for how to discuss – and even how to think of – the situation, and the proper response. Social, political and ideological consequences were forceful: criticism of the administration's actions was immediately labelled unpatriotic for in war the first objective is to defeat the enemy, not to bring him to court, and as a citizen one is supposed to accept far-ranging restrictions on one's ordinary life if this is declared necessary by the authorities. In effect, the declaration of a War on Terror (WoT) was a performative discursive act intended to get the American people and allies around the world to rally around the flag, to come together as a united 'we', fighting back the evil-doers who had attacked 'us'. This was easier because the terrorists had indiscriminately murdered thousands of civilians. In the

USA in particular, the calculated effects on the media of the declaration of war against terrorism were only as expected.

Of course this affected American media more than media in other countries but nonetheless there can be no doubt that national and local media generally constructed imaginary relationships between a national 'we' and the global situation in conjunction with 9/11 and the WoT. Indeed, this is probably one of the most relevant theoretical aspects of how media discourses have ritual meanings (cf. Carey, 1989). Not only do media tell you what to think about and how to think about it, but when it comes to international crises they even, by implication, tell you what to do. For instance it seems to be ever more common, in recent international conflicts, for popular newspapers to instruct readers to demonstrate their commitment and patriotism in public (cf. Hallin & Gitlin, 1994).

It is very important for us that the notion of a global discursive order does not subscribe to a deterministic and unchallenged discourse on the WoT. As Norman Fairclough has emphasised again and again, a discursive order is contested terrain. Although well adapted for the analysis of dominance and hegemony, the concept 'discursive order' implies that more often than not the discursive order is challenged by some opposing social forces. Nothing is predestined in the 'dialectics of discourse' (Fairclough, 2003:3). This is all the more essential considering some of the results reported in this book, as well as in other studies about media discourses on the Iraq war (e.g. contributions in Miller (ed.) *Tell me lies*, like Knightley, 2004: 104, Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 142; Kellner, 2004:151, 152; Solomon, 2004:160 and Snow, 2004:60). The discursive order does not exclude the possibility of critical reflections from opponents. On the contrary, *reflexivity* is explicitly mentioned by Fairclough as a dimension of the dialectics of discourse: "people do not only act and interact within networks of social practices, they also interpret and represent to themselves and each other what they do, and these interpretations and representations shape and reshape what they do" (Ibid:4). Hence, the concept of a global discursive order does not give the answers but, on the contrary, helps us raise the relevant questions when it comes to media content and its relationships to the surrounding setting of ideological, political and other forces. And not least there is the question of whether globalisation leads to global reflexivity, as stated by some media researchers (e.g. Hjarvard, 2001:24).

Answers should come from empirical studies, not from theoretical speculations. We hope the studies in this book will not only help us with answers concerning the level of reflexivity in the media coverage of the Iraq War but, furthermore, help journalists and media workers to reflect upon their own tradecraft and to change it when motivated. For media research it also seems that the cumulative experiences from the WoT makes it urgent to analyse some crucial aspects of media reflexivity. The conception management, or conscious lying to media and public opinion before the 2003 intervention in

what does
what means
is probably
all
then the
discursive

what does
what means
is probably

what does
what means
is probably

Iraq, is a huge challenge – not only for journalists but also for media researchers. We see at least four important themes to address in current research in relation to media reflexivity. Namely media coverage of:

- Conception management methods and their effects on news reports, debates and public opinion;
- relations between the defence industry, fiction industry and news media, especially with regard to instant news reports as well as to popular revisions of recent history in movies, television series and soap operas;
- the practical conditions for media war coverage, in particular correspondents' situations and embeddedness through ground rules, pool systems, and dependence on military protection;
- self-criticism of pitfalls and shortcomings in supplying fair and accurate reports – with respect both to immediate corrections and to comprehensive evaluations retrospectively after major operations or wars.

Concerning the first point, this book will reveal some glimpses, at least, of the impact of the propaganda manipulation on media coverage as documented by media researchers and journalists. More of that should, in our view, be available in the actual media coverage of military conflicts, and not only in research reports. The second point is to a large degree a 'white spot' in news media. To what extent it is actually taken up by media is a blind spot for most media research as well – including this book. But below we indicate some of the experiences found in the literature with regard to the links between media and the defence industry. The third aspect of reflexivity seems to receive more media attention today than, say, two decades ago, although it is too early to tell whether this applies mainly to media in a few countries or whether it is a more general pattern. Some chapters in this volume provide empirical findings as a starting point for general conclusions about the future. The fourth aspect could be exemplified by the mentioned articles in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, but so far not studied much by media researchers.

The normative standpoint from where we want to emphasise the importance of media research on reflexivity is evident: we believe that a lot more is to be asked from media coverage on these points. We are concerned about media in general, and news media in particular, being a 'lame duck' when targeted from various directions, for example by conception management or by war propaganda. And furthermore we suspect that epistemological relativism is a general threat to news journalism that can only be cured by improved reflexivity on the part of the media. As an indication of this risk we will next raise some questions concerning the institutional blurring of the distinction between fact and fiction in the media industry.

News and Entertainment – Breaking News from Hollywood?

Some of the contributions in this book discuss the relationship between fact and fiction in the media coverage of certain countries. This reflects an approach to war journalism that should be taken seriously by media researchers because it builds an interesting bridge between news and entertainment. When Michael Moore received the Academy Award for his film "Bowling for Columbine" he said in his acceptance speech that "we live in a fictitious world", referring, inter alia, to the fact that George Bush was in the White House without having won the presidential election. As we have pointed out, the issues of truth and lies seem to be less important than winning over opinion in favour of military interventions. The importance of the entertainment industry should not be underestimated in the process of shaping public opinion. The relation between entertainment and news should be analysed at several levels.

As Edward Herman and Robert McChesney showed in their book *The Global Media. The New Missionaries of Global Capitalism* (1997), motion pictures and radio technology were among the first industries to compete in a global market. As early as 1914, 85% of the world's film audience was watching American movies (Herman & McChesney, 1997: 13-14). One of the early players in this broadcasting market was CBS. They started their global career in radio and helped create *Voice of America* as a propaganda tool for the US government during the Second World War. The experience with film, broadcasting and propaganda in general elevated the importance of communication in the minds of policy-makers during the inter-war years and has continued to do so to this very day. As a result, US-based film companies still have commercial and political global hegemony. The global film industry was controlled by a few US companies like Columbia, Twentieth Century-Fox, United Artists, MCA (Universal), Warner Brothers, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Paramount (Ibid:19)(based on Ottosen 2004).

Historically, under US broadcasting regulations (subsequently partly eliminated and under constant pressure), the US networks NBC, CBS and ABC have been restricted in what they are allowed to produce for domestic broadcast. Thus, the major US programme producers, and therefore the major global TV production studios, were actually the film studios of Hollywood (Ibid:21). The present global market is dominated by the studios owned by Disney, Time Warner, Viacom, Universal, Sony Polygram and News Corporation.

The merging of the entertainment and film industry and the news industry was evident when Time Warner bought CNN and when Disney bought the television network ABC. Rupert Murdoch had his breakthrough in the British media market (primarily newspapers) in the 1960s. When he became big in the US market in the 1980s, his company News Corporation purchased Twentieth Century Fox, which led to the creation of the Fox Television Network. Fox Television is an interesting phenomenon in this borderline

between entertainment and news. Its news programme created history during the first phase of the war against terror when a so-called reporter sat on top of a US tank during the war in Afghanistan, shooting his pistol into the air to prove his patriotism.

Key news networks have to an increasing extent been bought by conglomerates whose primary interest is the entertainment business. One of the effects on the corporate level of the merging between the news industry and the entertainment industry is that in the US a growing share of the news is about entertainment and includes stories about celebrities and movie stars. In the total picture news loses ground to entertainment. International reporting is losing ground on the priority lists in television news. Fewer correspondents get time to inform about world events. The exception is during global wars like that in Iraq, for war is big business in international news. CNN made its international breakthrough during the 1991 Gulf War. At that time, CNN was the only actor on the 24/7 (24 hours 7 days a week) market (Thussu 2003), but nowadays there are several players competing in this market, including the Arab channels, with al-Jazeera as the most important, offering Arab perspectives as an alternative to the Western way of interpreting world events. One of the winners in the new global market is BBC World, which increased its number of viewers from ten million in 1996 to 244 million in 2000 countries in 2003.

Another dimension in the relationship between entertainment and war coverage is the significance of strategic cooperation between the military industrial complex and the entertainment industry. As Jonathan Burston pointed out:

As far back as 1996, the US National Research Council (NRC) had already acknowledged the importance of cooperation between the Department of Defence (DOD) and the entertainment industry on issues such as modelling and simulation technology. This technology is central for video games and other entertainment products, and for the military industry the benefit is the low costs of simulation in comparison to real tests and training exercises (Burston, 2003:163).

The significance of this cooperation manifests itself in, for example, computer games on sale commercially. In 2002, the computer game Desert Storm was launched on the commercial market more than ten years after the Gulf War took place and a year before the war on Iraq. To be a winner in this game you have to act as the US soldiers in 1991. If you are on the Iraqi side you lose and get killed.

Another link between the Pentagon and the entertainment industry is the strategic cooperation between DOD and Hollywood (based on Ottosen, 2004). *The New York Times* revealed, in January 2002, that the US Minister of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, had created the Office of Strategic Influence – authorised to manipulate media with lies if necessary to rally the media behind

the war against terrorism. It was apparently closed down after this public exposure, but the operation continued under the name Operation for Special Plans and was under the direct control of Central Command at the headquarters in Qatar during the war against Iraq (Arkin 2003). At the press centre in Qatar, the stage was designed by Hollywood consultants to make the 'performance' of the military spokesmen more convincing. This is, of course, not the first time Hollywood consultants were used to polish up the Pentagon's information strategy. After the terrible attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, the Pentagon consulted Hollywood in order to handle the new situation for US society (*Verdens Gang* 9.10. 2001). Among those called in to assist were screenwriter Steven E De Souza (responsible for the movie "Die Hard"), director Joseph Zito (creator of "Delta Force One: Missing in Action") and the TV writer David Engelbach (responsible for the MacGyver series). The irony of this is that makers of fiction were consulted to help the US administration face reality (Grossberg, 2001).

It is no news that the Pentagon has professionalised its information strategy since the Vietnam War when the military lost its grip on public opinion (Ottosen, 1994). The Pentagon-Hollywood relationship is one part of the new strategy. In his book *Operation Hollywood. How The Pentagon Shapes and censors the Movies*, David L. Robb revealed that the Pentagon has its own officers whose job it is to be consultants on media scripts and to decide whether or not the Pentagon will take part in a production. Once the decision on cooperation is made, their job is to be helpful in providing military personnel and technical assistance in the form of equipment, planes and ships (Robb, 2004).

The Pentagon receives about 100 movie scripts every year and decides to cooperate in about a third of the cases. Negotiations and compromises are often necessary in order to satisfy the Pentagon. There is also competition between the different branches of the military in this field. A liaison officer from the Air Force is working full-time to "sell" the Air Force to Hollywood; for the major movie "Air Force One", the US Air Force lent six F-158 planes free of charge (Gunn, 1999).

The most interesting cases are, of course, movies based on real wars. The most recent example is "Black Hawk Down", based on the failed "Operation Restore Hope" in Somalia in 1992, in which 18 American soldiers died (Ottosen, 1997). In this case, the Pentagon liked the script because the heroic images of the soldiers dying in battle helped to rewrite the image of a failed operation. And the film got their support, but at what price? "If you want to use the military's toys you've got to play by their rules," said military technical adviser John Lovett (AP 2001). The military historian Lawrence Suid explained in detail how this system works in the book *Girls & Glory*. Suid called it a "system for mutual exploitations" (ibid.).

Commercial television is of course the main link between the entertainment and the news industries. The television series "The Agency" produced by CBS was sponsored by the CIA. This series, in which heroic CIA agents save

the world from Arabic terrorists and villains, is produced in close cooperation with the CIA. The CIA had consultants working on the manuscript and the agency put their locations and manpower at the disposal of the series. According to *The New York Times*, the CIA explained this by claiming that it was a part of the agency's strategy to get through to the public with 'the truth about the CIA' and persuaded the sceptics to increase the funding for a budget of 30 billion dollars. These are but fragments of the politico-economic context into which the market- and propaganda-driven forces embed the news media. Commercial factors will probably make media reluctant to give these trends – blurred lines between the entertainment and news industries – paramount positions on the media agenda. We suspect that gradually, the merger between producers of fiction and of fact will undermine the epistemological claims and rationality of news production. If so, news media reflexivity is badly needed.

News Media and Reflexivity

According to well-known theories of late-modernity, globalisation and reflexivity are two connected trends of present day society – in the richer parts of the world, that is. In the works of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck, to mention two of the most influential theorists, both these trends are related to the saturation of media's impact in all sectors of late-modern society (Beck, 1997; Giddens, 1999). It is doubtless reasonable to believe that increased inter-cultural and transnational exchange through the media or otherwise (for example through trade and tourism) will not only nurse deeper understanding of social and cultural conditions, worldviews and mentalities in other parts of the world, but will also contribute to relativisation and reflections concerning one's own societal conditions and cultural mores. This theoretical link between globalisation and reflexivity is sometimes taken almost as self-evident and as if the latter is an automatic and unavoidable effect of the former (Hjarvard, 2001:24-25). In our view this is to blur the theoretical content of the two concepts, almost into synonyms. We believe that the dimensions of ontological and epistemological self-reflection in the notion of reflexivity are essential in order to make it relevant for theories of post-modern society and globalisation processes.

Thus, to the extent that the book contributes to increased reflexivity it is because its analyses reveal, not only that global events are brought to the awareness of national media audiences and public spheres, but that the authors give insights into *how* the Iraq War is related to national policies and local conditions. As we see it, it is a crucial task for media research to find out if, to what degree and in what ways, reports about global events, in particular the WoT, are related to reflections about the links to, and consequences for, the political, ideological and social agenda at the national level, i.e. to what extent media facilitate understanding of mediated global continuances. But it is even

more important, for the ways in which these global events affect the national-local level, to analyse the media discourses with reference to whether or not the media elaborate on their own role. This aspect of media reflexivity is, today, perhaps more crucial from a democratic point of view than ever before, considering the regime of lies on both sides that has surrounded the Iraq War from the start. Self-criticism on the part of media and journalists is a virtue the realisation of which should be another important topic for media research.

Content of the Book

Comparative media analysis – internationally or between different types of media – is certainly one of the ways in which to improve global perspectives and reflexivity on international conflicts, and the WoT as indicated above.

In particular such analyses are necessary for developing professionalism, accuracy and integrity in war journalism. Probably the only hope for future reconciliation in the WoT can be sought in internationally and interculturally broadened perceptions of the world amongst the powerful states, politicians, and institutions, not least the media. Hopefully this book can make a small contribution with its broad spectrum of studies and possibilities for comparative reflections. Together the authors provide a series of media studies starting from the dominant transnational television news channels, proceeding then to Arab, African, European and New Zealand media.

Transnational television channels have established a central role in the global media landscape since the Gulf War 1990-91, when CNN took the lead as the provider of instant and around-the-clock news to a world-wide market. Today, the competition has grown and besides CNN there are the BBC World, and Arab channels like al-Jazeera which offer alternatives for television consumers. For the transnational news flow from the 2003 Iraq war this development obviously widened the spectrum of factual news, views and specialist comments. Lars Lundsten and Matteo Stochetti compare two of the major television channels, CNN and BBC World, with a special focus on two narrative metaphors: crusades and soccer games, which provide the template for the CNN and BBC World coverage respectively. Hence, their narrative analysis confirms the importance for global news reporting of the rhetorical devices used by the 'war alliance'. Whether journalists are aware of the implications of the narrative models they are using is an urgent question raised by Lundsten and Stochetti, and one left open for further scrutiny.

In a German-Turkish cooperation, Serif Ates, Jong Becker, Richard Brunhart, Hüseyin Cicek, Thomas Oberhofer, Arzu Onay-Ok and Gülsel Taskara have studied two daily newspapers from each country using quantitative and qualitative methods. As with several other European media, the team of researchers find that the American and British propaganda did not penetrate the media coverage. The authors explain this partly with reference to revi-

As's Crisis -
not on media
Cicek
Taskara

talisation of anti-American sentiments, owing to the moral debacle of the intervention in Iraq, and to changes in the foreign-policy context of the two NATO members after the Cold War, with the European Union emerging as a new platform for their security- and foreign-policy *modus operandi*.

Julius Mucunguzi focuses on the Ugandan press in a study of the privately owned newspaper *The Monitor* and the government owned *The New Vision*. The coverage of the Ugandan press is especially interesting since Uganda is one of the US's closest allies in Africa. While the editorials and commentaries in both newspaper expressed criticism from an African perspective, the sources in the news and photographs were mainly the US-dominated western agencies. Thus while the newspapers were dependent on Western sources they attempted to angle and frame the stories to reflect the brutality of the war.

Tawana Kupe and Nathalie Hyde-Clarke, in a study of the South-African media, reveal the ambiguity in media discourses torn between international news agencies with agendas dominated by the Western powers, and local commentators providing an anti-war perspective in analytical and editorial articles. The two authors express some hope that, with more voices such as the South African expressing disapproval of military conflict resolutions, and with new media available on the Internet, the global dominance by Western powers will be reduced to a certain degree.

Mohamed El-Bendary discusses the coverage of the Iraq War in the London-based pan-Arab daily *al-Hayat*. In using frame-analysis, El-Bendary shows how issues linked to regional issues in the Middle East dominated the coverage. Issues linked to the relationship between Europe and the US also played an important role in the coverage. The Arab perspective of US hegemony was an important feature in the overall coverage in *al-Hayat*, linked to issues like access to oil and US support for Israel. *Al-Hayat*'s articles portrayed the Iraq War as a killing field and admonished the Bush administration as much as Saddam Hussein's regime.

Angelika Canfora, Christian Platz, Martin Hartlieb and Armin Lanzinger, in their review of the Iraq War coverage in the Austrian press, document a divided picture. The tabloid newspaper, the *Neue Kronen Zeitung*, used a right-wing Austrian nationalist platform for its strong opposition to US policy in Iraq. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, the authors show how the tabloid paper combined sensationalism with being a spokesman for 'the man in the street', thus reflecting the strong opposition against the war in Austrian public opinion. The partly Springer-owned broadsheet *Der Standard*, with a liberal-left platform, took a more neutral approach, combining the role of neutral moderator with balanced news coverage.

In their analysis of Greek media, Sophia Kaitatzi-Whitlock and Christos Frangonikolopoulos show that severe conflicts and crises do not necessarily imply media manipulation and limitations on the public debate between politicians, journalists and citizens. Certainly their conclusion – that the Greek media discourses on the Iraq War were as near as one can come to the ideal of a

public sphere – has to be related to the specific national (and regional) setting. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in this national and international crisis situation pluralist ideals obtained in the Greek press, at the same time as these media, more than in previous conflicts, converged around an anti-war stance.

Sean Phelan shows how Irish media was divided in its war coverage. While the Public Service broadcaster RTE and *The Irish Times* reflected the anti-war sentiments of the majority of the Irish people, *The Sunday Independent* aligned itself with a closed pro-war and pro-American position. The Irish government's decision to allow the use of Shannon airport for US warplanes on the route to Iraq becomes a symbolic issue that reflects how the three media framed the coverage of the Iraq War along political lines.

Rune Ottosen analyses the two Newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Verdens Gang* and clarifies how the Norwegian media was divided in its attitudes towards the war. While the traditionally liberal-conservative morning paper *Aftenposten* reflected the resistance towards the war on the part of the Norwegian government and the majority of the population, the tabloid newspaper *Verdens Gang* chose a more pro-American line. Ottosen also studies how the mainstream media covered the Norwegian military presence in Iraq after July 2003, and the case of a law professor who claimed that the Norwegian military presence in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq was illegal and unconstitutional. The mainstream media avoided this debate, but it was reflected in the left wing newspaper *Klassekampen*. According to Ottosen, the mainstream media self-censored themselves on an issue that disturbed the image of Norway as a peace-maker in the international arena.

The Slovenian media studied by Karmen Erjavec were divided, as were many other media in Europe. One leading daily and two national television news programmes are compared. The results support the interpretation that ownership, together with institutional as well as professional practices, explain the differences in reporting the Iraq War. Whereas the state-owned media – without being the foreign ministry's voices – took an anti-war position, the commercial television channel owned by American capital was more ambivalent and eventually sided with the 'war alliance'. The latter also depended more on market conditions and had an 'embedded' reporter, with marked effects on its war coverage.

Stig A. Nohrstedt provides an analysis of how three Swedish dailies reported about the Security Council meetings in the pre-war period and the initial phase of the military intervention, with a special focus on forms and limits of media reflexivity in the context of the War on Terror. The good news is that the Swedish newspapers were quite sceptical in their framing of the US/UK accusations about Iraqi possession of WMD and involvement in the 9/11 terror attacks. The bad news is that in spite of their critical stance with respect to the official *causa belli* in many other discursive ways they indirectly confirmed the fabricated excuses for invading Iraq, e.g. in graphical illustrations and taken-for-granted assumptions behind the reports.

- Hodge, Robert & Kress, Günther (1993) *Language as Ideology*. London: Routledge.
- Kellner, Douglas (2003) *From 9/11 to Terror War: Dangers of the Bush Legacy*. Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Kellner, Douglas (2003) *Spectacle and Media Propaganda in the War on Iraq: A Critique of U.S. Broadcasting Networks*. www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/papers/mediapropaganda.htm.
- Simpson, Paul (1993) *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London and New York: Touchstone.
- Titscher, Stefan; Meyer, Michael; Wodak, Ruth & Vetter, Eva (2000) *Methods of Text and Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Pan, Xiaping (2002) 'Consensus Behind Disputes: a Critical Discourse Analysis of the Media Coverage of the Right-of-above Issue in Postcolonial Hong Kong', *Media, Culture & Society* 24(1): 49-68.
- Thompson, John B. (1984) *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Trew, Tony (1979) 'What the Papers Say: Linguistic Variation and Ideological Difference' in Fowler, Roger; Hodge, Robert; Kress, Günther & Trew, Tony (eds) *Language and Control*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Teo, Peter (2000) 'Racism in the News: a Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reporting in Two Australian Newspapers', *Discourse & Society* 11(1): 7-49.
- van Dijk, A. Teun (1980) *Macrostructures*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- van Dijk, A. Teun (1988) *News as Discourse*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- van Dijk, A. Teun (1991) *Racism and the Press*. London: Routledge.
- van Dijk, A. Teun (1995) 'Discourse Semantics and Ideology', *Discourse & Society* 6(2): 243-89.
- van Dijk, A. Teun (1998) *Ideology*. London: Sage.

fantasy: the chapter poses many intriguing and intelligent (or perhaps relevant questions). The analysis leaves the reader hungry for more. That's both good and bad.

Chapter 11 discusses the methodological challenges of applying a CDA inspired content analysis approach with the subject matter (which is a huge amount of text). This Media Reflexivity in the War on Terror Study is used as a modest Three Swedish Dailies and the Iraq War sample. Is there not a problem here? How do we situate it in media balance studies in the business? Provide a table with also reference, one p. 11? →

the media present on the page before the conclusion that media balance because contradictory is intended. How do we situate media studies or not?

In contrast to the previous Gulf War in 1991, the Iraq War in 2003 had already, before it started, been questioned on both legal and political grounds. It was criticised for being a violation of international law and also for being illegitimate, morally and politically, even by allies that seldom deviate officially from the side of the USA. European political leaders were outspoken and urged the Bush administration to move carefully and in concert with the traditional friends of America and the international community.

One of the most significant indications of legitimacy problems with this military intervention was that even prestige media in the USA later expressed uneasiness about their support for President Bush's Iraq policy. Between late May and mid July 2004, leading American newspapers confessed publicly that their reporting of the Bush administration's accusations against Iraq before the actual military intervention was launched in March 2003, had been uncritical and flawed. On May 26 2004, *The New York Times* foreign desk editors published an article in which they wrote that after having criticised the failings of intelligence reports, "especially on the issue of Iraq's weapons and possible Iraqi connections to international terrorists" over the last year it "...is past time we turned the same light on ourselves" (NYT 26-05-04). The major mistakes, according to the above mentioned article, were lack of aggressive examination of claims about the threats from Iraq; trust in a circle of Iraqi informants, defectors and exiles bent on 'regime change' in Iraq, "people whose credibility has come under increasing public debate in recent weeks"; and that the charges against Iraq were more prominently displayed than the doubts about whether these accusations were valid. Four days later, the press ombudsman of NYT added that the problem was institutional and not individual, not a question of placement of articles, and that the editors' *mea culpa* would serve its function only if it was followed-up with "a series of aggressively reported stories detailing the misinformation, disinformation and suspect analysis that led virtually the entire world to believe Hussein had WMD at his disposal" (NYT 30-05-04).

Six weeks later, *The Washington Post* expressed regrets that pre-war articles raising questions about the threats of which Iraq had been accused did

not make the front page. Howard Kurtz, the newspaper's media writer, signed the confession and the assistant managing editor, Bob Woodward, a journalistic legend after the Watergate revelations, was quoted as saying: "We did our job but we didn't do enough, and I blame myself mightily for not pushing harder... we should have warned readers we had information that the basis for this was shakier than widely believed. Those are exactly the kind of statements that should be published on the front page." He thought that he, as well as the intelligence officials, had been victims of 'group-think'.

Examining the newspaper's coverage retrospectively, one reviewer concluded that the US government had privileged access to front page appearance whereas critical views were far less prominently placed – if placed at all. Karen DeYoung, a reporter and former assistant managing editor who covered the pre-war diplomacy, said in the article: "We are inevitably the mouthpiece for whatever administration is in power." This was evident the day after Colin Powell's speech before the UN Security Council, according to the WP ombudsman. "Not until the ninth paragraph did they offer a 'however' clause, saying that 'a number of European officials and U.S. terrorism experts' believed that Powell's description of an Iraqi link to al Qaeda appeared to have been carefully drawn to imply more than it actually said." (WP 12-08-04)

These professional self-confessions are as clear-sighted as one could wish for. The problem, of course, is that they came so late. But they are remarkable because it is rare for leading media to admit their shortcomings, even in retrospect; although mistakes almost as spectacular have been noticed in the records of the trade. For example, to my knowledge none of more prestigious news media, either in the US or in Europe, have publicly regretted the way the 1991 Gulf War was depicted as a clinical war; afterwards they only released fragments of information contradicting that image, as for example when noticing long afterwards that only some 7% of the bombs were so-called smart bombs.

If such are the results for some of the leading American newspapers' involvement in the propaganda war before Iraq was invaded in March 2003, what was the case with the European media? As mentioned by the WP some European officials had certainly raised doubts about American and British accusations against Iraq. Did the media on this side of the Atlantic display a more reflective and sceptical attitude towards the official motives of the 'war alliance' than their American counterparts? Is that why we have not seen any similar self-confessions for mistakes and things neglected from them? In other words: were they not as much a mouthpiece of the superpower's propaganda as were the American media?

And did they develop reflexivity at a higher level than the US media managed at the time? These are the bottom-line questions behind this study of media reflexivity in connection with 'the new wars' in late modernity (Kaldor, 1999; see also Ignatieff, 2000).

A few introductory remarks should be added about the general aims and background of this study. It takes three Swedish newspapers' images of the Iraq War 2003 as the empirical basis for a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach to the 'war on terror'. (By applying some specific concepts from the CDA on a limited sample of media texts I will try to illustrate how contextual analysis can be conducted without neglecting detailed examination of the concrete media material. However, such an approach has necessarily to rely on a theoretical understanding of the fundamental conditions and the institutional setting of war journalism, because otherwise a relevant focus would be missing. As explicated in this article, this means contextual reading of the texts in relation to the historical and political setting, including the national and regional (e.g. European Union) levels, but also in relation to the international political situation and the diplomatic and ideological controversy released in conjunction with US/UK pressure for military intervention in Iraq in the autumn of 2002 and spring of 2003. In methodological terms, this means that I have based the analysis mainly on headlines and leads, although the entire texts have been thoroughly studied.)

In this chapter I will concentrate on media reflexivity in three Swedish newspapers in the Iraq War 2003 against the backdrop of how they covered the Gulf War 1990-1991. In a comparative study of the media war at the time in more than five countries, we concluded that the war had never ended – and today one can only regret how true that prediction was. Furthermore, we concluded from the analyses that the national political contexts of the media affected the content. For example, the security and foreign policy traditions of the respective countries meant that the media in non-aligned countries (e.g. Finland and Sweden) were more reluctant to relay the US war propaganda than, for example, the German and Norwegian media – not to mention the American media (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001). In a study of the media war in connection with the Kosovo conflict 1999 we showed similar results, i.e. 'nationalised images' (cf. Riegert, 1998) and varying degrees of susceptibility to the NATO propaganda in British, Norwegian and Swedish media, particularly in the initial stage of the military intervention (Nohrstedt, Höjjer & Ottosen, 2002).

In the Iraq War 2003, military intervention without a UN resolution was, according to the official Swedish position, a violation of international law that Sweden could not support. But this position was not expressed loud and clear. Rather, the Swedish government kept a low profile and let the leading EU powers, such as France and Germany, stand for its opposition against the policy of 'the war alliance'. To many Swedes that was a surprise and disappointment considering the non-alignment foreign- and security-policy tradition reaching as far back as the Napoleonic wars. And within the Social-Democratic party some members were uncomfortable that the legacy of the late Olof Palme, a former Prime Minister with a worldwide reputation as a spokesman for the non-alignment movement during the Cold War, had

a methodological dimension

The context is that the same as a theoretical understanding

What does this mean?

Can that general conclusion be proven?

Analytical Framework: 'A Global Discursive Order'

The contextual approach applied in this chapter takes advantage of the concept 'discursive order' as explicated by Norman Fairclough in his application of critical discourse analysis (CDA). As indicated in the introduction of the book, the general idea of using the concept 'discursive order' in studies of media content is to also include inter-discursive relationships, i.e. media content, in relation to other discourses such as public diplomacy, propaganda and humanitarian work. Given the rapid development and changes of the media landscape on the global level in the last two decades, these inter-discursive relations are not limited to the nation-states. On the contrary, important globalisation-promoting processes within the media sector – for example concentration of ownership, advent of international satellite television channels with global reach and technical convergence between previously separate media forms (e.g. press, radio, television) due to Internet and telecommunication inventions – have connected media discourses beyond national borders. This is not to say that the notion of national media is definitely obsolete, but rather that national-local media discourses are interacting much more with global media discourses, and in far more complex ways than ever before.

A 'discursive order' is the actual configuration of a certain complex of discourses or "... a particular social ordering of relationships amongst different ways of making meaning, i.e. different discourse and genres and styles" (Fairclough, 2003:2). The reason why this concept is needed in discourse analysis is that various discourses are usually mixed and interact with each other in certain ways. It is, however, important to clarify that when applying the notion of discursive order I do not subscribe to a deterministic structuralism which would deny any leeway for agents and discursive opposition. As Norman Fairclough has emphasised, a discursive order is contested terrain, and is more often than not challenged by some opposing social forces. Nothing is predestined in the 'dialectics of discourse' (Fairclough, 2003:3). Thus, to use the analytical concept discursive order does not imply that one excludes the possibility of critical reflections from opponents to it. On the contrary, reflexivity is explicitly mentioned as a dimension of the dialectics of discourse: "... people do not only act and interact within networks of social practices, they also interpret and represent to themselves and each other what they do, and these interpretations and representations shape and reshape what they do" (Fairclough, 2003:4).

The emphasis on the reflexivity dimension is also related to globalisation theory, the backdrop on which the historical setting of this study is based. In Sigmund Hjarvard's discussion of how the public sphere is de-territorialised as a result of globalisation processes, reflexivity is another related consequence:

... due to the public sphere's increased openness and connectedness to a world beyond national borders, including other public spheres, a *global reflexivity*

gradually gains foothold... Thus, globalisation of the public sphere is not about the creation of the global public sphere, but rather about the increased presence of global connections within the national framework. This introduces a global reflexivity in the public sphere that, in the long run, will influence and alter the structure of the national public sphere and its relation to both political institutions and civil society. (Hjarvard, 2001:24-25; emphasis in original)

Quoting a few lines like this may give the false impression that Hjarvard belongs to the naive *globalists* (cf. Held & McGrew, 2000). He does not and he underlines contradictory trends, i.e. that globalisation may widen and narrow views of the world at the same time. But when it comes to reflexivity it seems that Hjarvard sees a direct causal relationship that could be problematic. **The aim of this study is to analyse the conditioning of global reflexivity in media discourses in particular, with regard to self-reflections within the context of the Iraq War 2003.** The concept of discursive order is helpful in that endeavour, because it throws light on the institutional settings of media war reporting.

Which discourses, then, are 'ordered' in the present case? Focus is primarily on *media discourses* in relation to *public diplomacy*, *war propaganda* and *compassion* (cf. Nohrstedt, Højjer & Ottosen, 2002). The notion 'public diplomacy' refers to the political debates around issues of legality and legitimacy; for example, whether a new UN resolution was needed to make the military intervention in Iraq legal. By 'war propaganda' I basically refer to the discourse on possible Iraqi possession of weapons of mass destruction, but also to references from the respective parties in the conflict as to the nature of the conflict, the warfare as such, military operations, and so on. The compassion discourse, finally, constitutes the discussions around the humanitarian aspects of the war – for example civilian casualties and human suffering (cf. Højjer, 2004). The format of this article only permits a summary of the results from the other dimensions of the discursive order except the reflexivity dimension and for further details see Nohrstedt 2004.

Material

Three daily Swedish newspapers have been selected for the analysis: *Aftonbladet* (AB) is the largest daily newspaper, not only in Sweden but also in the Nordic countries, with a circulation of 442 100 copies on weekdays¹, and the leading tabloid. Its editorial position is independent Social-Democratic and it has defended the non-alignment tradition of Swedish foreign and security policy, and usually expresses rather strong critique of the USA in relation to international politics. *Dagens Nyheter* (DN) is the leading quality paper, with readers mainly in social and cultural elite groups. Its circulation amounts to 362 500 copies daily in weekdays. On page four DN pub-

strong idea of reflexion here

lishes debate, and is generally regarded as the most important agenda setter in the country. Its editorials are officially claimed to be independent liberal, and during the 1990s they have urged Sweden to apply for NATO membership. Expressen (EXP) is the second tabloid in the sample. Before 1996 it was the largest daily paper in Sweden (Hadenius & Weibull, 1999: 64), but was then pushed back in the competition with AB and now sells 226 400 copies every weekday. Like the two other papers it is officially independent, and claims to promote liberal ideas. It belongs to the same leading media conglomerate in Sweden – the Bonnier sphere – as DN and, like DN, it has strongly argued for Sweden to become a member of NATO.

The periods from which the material has been selected are:

1. 5, 6, 7 February 2003: Colin Powell's report to the UN Security Council.
2. 14, 15, 16 February 2003: Blix's report to the Security Council; peace demonstrations worldwide.
3. 20, 21, 22 March 2003: the military attack on Iraq.
4. 2, 3, 4 May 2003: Bush declares end of the battle of Iraq.

The media material consists of editorials, debate articles and news, including feature items such as analyses and commentaries. Letters to the editor are not included. Visual images are not studied specifically, but have been integrated in the text analyses.

How many articles, or what sort?

Inter-discursive Representation, Positioning and Identification in the Media Discourses

For a start I will present briefly the main findings with respect to the following three themes of particular relevance for a CDA analysis of the media content. Firstly, representation of other discourses has been studied, i.e. inter-discursive relationships between the media discourses and media-external discourses as manifested in the former. Secondly, the positioning of the papers' stance in relation to the international and national levels. With respect to the international level, emphasis has been placed upon how, in particular, the editorials take sides in the conflict between the members of the so-called war alliance and the various agents arguing for a peaceful solution to the conflict and criticising the military intervention policy. On the national level, the discursively constructed relationship to the government, public opinion and the peace movement was the prime focus. Thirdly, identification of a certain Swedish attitude to the conflict and its parties and main actors in the media discourses has been analysed. This was basically deduced by close readings of the cases where Swedish citizens or opinions are mentioned. An evident example is when Hans Blix appears in the ma-

not clear what was written

terial – is his national identity emphasised and is he depicted as a representative, not only of the weapons inspectors, but of a Swedish way of handling conflicts as well? But there are also other items where Swedish people are mentioned and it seemed worthwhile to take a closer look at whether these items are indicative of identity paradigms. After the summary of the findings concerning these themes, I will elaborate on the reflexivity dimension of the media discourses.

With respect to the inter-discursive relationships the following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis:

1. The Swedish newspapers relate both to the 'war alliance', Iraq and the peace movement's diplomacy and propaganda, i.e. although the US/UK alliance has a prominent position in the media discourses it is not dominant.
2. In the first period, i.e. in connection with the UN Security Council session in which Colin Powell presented accusations against Iraq for possession of WMD, criticism and questioning of the accuracy of the charges are frequent, based on experts' opinion and Iraqi denials.
3. In the second period, when the heads of the weapons inspectors presented their reports before the UN Security Council, the French and other European nations' critique against the war policy of the US/UK alliance became highly exposed in the media, together with news reports from peace demonstrations almost world-wide.
4. In the third and fourth periods the US/UK news sources attained a dominant position owing to the media focus on the military operations and the marginalisation of Iraqi and Arabic sources. The Iraqi voices heard in the Swedish dailies are civilians fearing the consequences of the war. In Aftonbladet and Dagens Nyheter the peace activists still get quite a substantial amount of attention.

In terms of the newspapers' positioning in the conflict the findings are:

5. From the first to the second period the Swedish dailies gradually take a more explicit stand against the US/UK war policy.
6. On the domestic political scene the newspapers take different positions: Aftonbladet sides with the Swedish government's (read: Foreign Minister Anna Lindh's) line which is described as critical towards the war-alliance, while Dagens Nyheter and Expressen give voice to strong opposition against the government (read: Prime Minister Göran Persson).
7. In addition to points five and six, a humanitarian pathos is evident in the Swedish newspapers, mostly articulated in the two tabloids.

this was done by analyzing the texts

not possible to analyze the respective. What does the head of these paragraphs?

When it comes to the discursive construction of Swedish identity the main results are:

8. Identity constructions of this kind are more common and prominent in the tabloids than in the quality morning daily.
9. The 'Swede' is depicted as committed to peace and motivated by humanitarian compassion. *is it? Bur? Little? The words in Mrs. L. Benn. tonight?*
10. Further he or she is brave, reliable and firm.

Problem of Widenius also for alternative results about the topic is so widely reported and the example so strong

Reflexivity – Discursive Construction of Validity Claims

One theme that seems to receive more attention over time in the media coverage of war is the risk of flawed reporting because of propaganda and of manipulation by the involved parties. International studies report that this topic was more extensively covered by the media in the Iraq war 2003 than before (Media Tenor, May 2003; here from Buchinger et al., 2004:218; see also Tumber & Palmer, 2004:7). The experiences of the Gulf War 1990-91 are often recalled in the Swedish newspapers, and with them the illusions of clinical warfare and smart weapons. Media experts and researchers are interviewed about the problems for journalists giving a dispassionate image of the events in wars, and audiences are urged to be critical in their news consumption. Therefore, a crucial aspect of the discursive order is what regime of truth is created in the relationships between the media and various other claimants of possession of a correct image of reality (cf. Ekström, 2004).

The classic liberal press idea about fair reporting is to balance partial views with each other, thus achieving an objective report. It is, however, intriguing to notice that this principle is more often than not lost when it comes to war reporting. Rarely, if ever, will one find media coverage that devotes equal space and equal credibility to both sides in war, or even a reasonably fair balance between them (cf. Nord, et al., 2003). As Daniel Hallin has convincingly argued, there are norms in the media for what are regarded as legitimate and illegitimate conflicts and from that distinction it follows that only some views will count as relevant for the media (Hallin, 1986). There could be a number of reasons why some descriptions and some sources of information are not regarded: for example that they are connected with previously untrustworthy agents, or that they cannot be checked out as in the case of totalitarian regimes. Here I am not aiming at a discussion about whether the media has made rational choices and assessments when trusting, or not trusting, some sources of information. My objective is rather to study the ways in which media indicate in what sense and why its content should be trusted as valid and relevant, fair and credible. With the advantage of hindsight this has become much more important after the debacle of the accusations about Iraq weapons of mass destruction and links to al-Qaeda that were displayed

as major reasons for launching the attacks on Iraq in spring 2003 (cf. Tumber & Palmer, 2004).

The analysis below will look specifically at three aspects of the epistemological problems: first, how the media discourse relates to truth claims from the involved parties in the conflict *when they are explicitly discussed* (in the major part of the material the validity of presented information is not addressed at all); second, how the professional conditions of journalists reporting from the war and the implications for the credibility of their reports are presented; third, (and if so) what is said in the media about attempts from the parties in the conflict to change the epistemological foundations for assessing the validity and trustworthiness of their claims. Such an analysis will not produce any conclusive findings with regard to truths and lies in the Iraqi propaganda war, or even tell us much about the degrees of truth in the media content. But it will hopefully give some empirical findings from which journalism practices and professional moral positions on ethical standards can be compared (cf. Ekström & Nohrstedt, 1996).

Owing to the limited material from the fourth period, only media material from the first three periods will be used in the the reflexivity analysis.

the question is to what extent the media are able to do this

of the kind of a survey a few years later

First Period: Comments on the WMD Evidence as Presented by Colin Powell

On February 5, the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, presents the accusations against Iraq for obstruction of the UN demands on the country to dismantle all weapons of mass destruction. The following day, February 6, Colin Powell appears in a first page headline of *Dagens Nyheter*: "USA provided Iraq evidence. Secretary of State Colin Powell accused Saddam of hiding weapons and threatening researchers". According to an expert quoted in the article, the information was more serious than expected, but no definite proofs were produced. One full foreign news page is devoted to the speech by Powell and his allegations against Iraq. But the headlines of three commentaries on the very same page indicate that the speech was met with doubts: "No clear swing of opinion" is one example. The other two are: "Drawings were obviously no direct proof" and "Satellite pictures do not impress".

Aftonbladet (AB), the Swedish tabloid newspaper with the largest circulation, has the story about Colin Powell's speech in the UN Security Council as the major news on its front page on February 6: "All the US evidence against Saddam". The editorial also addresses the Iraqi conflict and Powell's argumentation in the Council: "A General searching for his war". The argumentation by the US Secretary of State is described as spasmodic and said to throw long shadows back in American history – more specifically to 1964 and the lie about the Tonkin attack from North Vietnam on the US Navy that was used as a pretext for the start of the Vietnam War. The editorial rejects the

any doubts about the accuracy and credibility of the presentations by the UN inspectors, Hans Blix and Mohamed El-Baradei. In *Dagens Nyheter*, an analysis on the news page is headed "Both sides find support for their line" and it is noticed that positive as well as negative conclusions may be drawn. Nor are any critical comments of the reports to be found in *Aftonbladet* which, under a seven-column picture of Hans Blix, calls him "The world's most important Swede" (15-02-03). *Expressen* deviates slightly from the other two dailies by publishing a debate with the headline: "Chili Mallat wants to give Hans Blix a holiday. Liberating Iraq is more important than the UN's disarmament". The weapons inspections are only a pretext for making the military intervention look more like a multilateral concern and acceptable to the world outside the USA. Even if the Middle East expert suggests that Blix should be released from his 'mission impossible' there is no questioning of the credibility or accuracy of his report. Nor is there in the news coverage in *Expressen*. For the three Swedish newspapers in this sample the credibility of Hans Blix is beyond doubt, thus in accord with how Swedes in general are depicted (see above). What is discussed to some extent is the political context of his mission and whether the weapons inspections are in reality more of a smoke screen than a real attempt to search for the 'smoking gun'.

Third Period: The First Days of the War

Following the expiry of the deadline issued by the Alliance, the media tension rises in the face of the outbreak of war. Front pages proclaim that the war has started (AB 20-03-03) and that time is up for Saddam Hussein (EXP 20-03-03). During the Gulf War in 1990-91, there was within Swedish media an ambition to show the 'true face of the war', i.e. to maintain independent reporting by focusing on the suffering and sacrifices of the civilian population. But as that war broke out, the media reporting was in all essentials dominated by the image of the 'clinical war', in which the consequences for the civilian population were more or less conspicuous by their absence. The question is what conclusions have been made since in the newsrooms, and what measures were taken as a result when the Iraq War started on March 20 2003. Were the media able to avoid becoming a passive tool for war propaganda aiming at concealing innocent victims? And how did they inform readers of the risk that the news could become a channel for the propaganda of the parties involved? Since the experiences of the Gulf War 1990-91 clearly point to the media as being most vulnerable to manipulations at the initial phase of the war, I have chosen to study more closely the occurrence of media critique during the period March 20-22.

In *Dagens Nyheter*, Per Jönsson, DN's correspondent in the Middle East and at the time stationed in Amman, had, on March 19, already declared that he intended to stay in Jordan and perhaps later cross into Iraq. His

motivation was that "the chances are that Saddam would sacrifice his own population and release chemical and biological weapons...". The heading emphasises that DN is not the only one making this assessment: "Many media leave Iraq". Like other journalists, Jönsson is providing accounts of how the Coalition propaganda of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and recommendations to leave Iraq, had an effect on where the media stationed their correspondents, thus determining a certain framework for the reporting (cf. Slaggard, 2003). When the war breaks out, DN as well as several other Swedish media base their reporting on the accounts of freelance journalists who have made their way into Iraq, such as the Norwegian female reporter Asne Seierstad.

Media critique in DN during the period March 20-22 is made up of four articles published on March 21 and 22 respectively. In addition, there is an indirect allusion to the propaganda war on March 20 in an article on some Swedish citizens with immigrant backgrounds travelling to Baghdad because, as cited in the headline, "We are the eyes that the US do not want there". However on March 21, the first article during the period in which the conditions of media reporting is a central theme, is published, with the heading "Censorship and lies part of the game". The problems of the media are here discussed in the same way as in a somewhat more exhaustive article the following day (see below). When DN in a short editorial article on the same day under the heading "Weapons of mass persuasion" discusses the war propaganda, attention is focused on attempts to influence the Iraqi resistance fervour with the help of flyers and fax machines. "Balancing act for the media" on March 22 is a headline referring to the difficulties of the media in connection with, *inter alia*, the report that 'a large number of Iraqi soldiers have surrendered to the British-American troops. The article emphasises that the newsroom staff are making an effort not to become defenceless victims of the propaganda war, by asking sceptical questions as well as by giving detailed accounts of the source material and drawing attention to media's vulnerability to propaganda influence.

The article claims that mediation of disinformation can, however, not be avoided, as unconfirmed reports may also be of importance in their effects on public opinion. The article concludes with an observation that it would be wrong to interpret openness about the difficulties and uncertainties in reporting as resignation on the part of the media. "Doubts and reservations are part of all truths" (DN 22-03-03). On the same day, DN follows this up with an article giving an account of some of the conditions for media reporting: "Bold American TV venture on the front-line". The introduction states that the Iraq War is covered by five hundred journalists, including several TV crews, who are part of the military forces. The significance of the so-called embedded journalists is, however, played down. The arrangement does not necessarily result in more information for the viewers and has "...so far mainly resulted in low-quality digital images of desolate desert landscapes". In Baghdad, the threatening attitude towards the TV companies is growing.

the result of which might be that the only options left will be filming in secret, and image-free phone reports, or reliance on al-Jazeera. The Arabic TV channel is described in the following way: "The Arabic TV station, consistently used by Osama bin Laden, is the only station with permission from the Baghdad regime to film in large parts of Baghdad" (*DN* 22-03-03).

On the same day as fighting erupts, *Aftonbladet* chooses to give considerable column space to the problem of manipulated information (20-03-03). An entire spread is dedicated to the propaganda war and its consequences for the possibility of providing a fair image of the war. The main part of the spread discusses American psychological warfare in a report from the embedded reporter at a base in Kuwait. But two other articles discuss the conditions in Baghdad and how readers can defend themselves against propaganda. The former is written by the CNN reporter Nic Robertson from his experience from working in Baghdad, both during the Gulf War 1991 and now at the outbreak of war in March 2003. He tells that all Western media in Iraq have to work through the Iraqi Ministry of Information, but that censorship of the material has been removed. Media experts in the second article recommend the readers to, *inter alia*, compare different media reports and to make their own probability assessments. One of these experts is the author Philip Knightley and his prediction is that the Pentagon will be considerably harder on the journalists now than during the Gulf War and that many journalists will probably be killed; this because the big TV stations want to show the fighting live and because the Pentagon has warned the media that the military will not make allowances if journalists get in the way. The editor-in-chief, Anders Gerdin, is also interviewed, on what measures *AB* takes in order to resist propaganda. He emphasises the importance of source critique, of careful sifting, of comparing different sources and of making sure that the sources are given. He admits that there is a problem in that the paper mainly uses Western news sources, but points out that the newsroom staff also have access to al-Jazeera and Iraqi TV. The importance of having one's own reporters on site in order to secure reliable reports is emphasised. Gerdin is also humble with respect to the paper's ability to be impartial: "No, that is of course not possible. When war breaks out, no media company can claim that they are 100% free from propaganda". He also expresses a certain resignation in the light of experiences in 1991. To the question "Is anything different this time compared to the last Iraq War?" he replies: "I think that we and other media are more aware of the difficulties involved and are thus more critical. Before the last war, we all had good intentions, but once the war broke out it was not easy to resist the propaganda" (20-03-03).

Expressen also brings up the theme of media critique but waits to publish this material until the day after the outbreak of war. Three articles discuss different aspects of the media's vulnerability to the propaganda of both sides. As in *AB*, there are retrospectives of the Gulf War 1990-91, but in this case a considerably more optimistic conclusion is made. A column by Per

Andersson with the heading "Bombshell" discusses the central role played by CNN in the Gulf War 1991. Many then believed that this was the beginning of a period of extreme concentration of media power. But it was in fact the opposite, and he claims that nobody any longer believes in clinical warfare (21-03-03). Over an entire spread with the headline "Iraq shows its victims" the paper exposes pictures of the injured. It is stressed that the reports of civilian casualties of George Bush's attack on Saddam Hussein originate from the Iraqi authorities. In an adjacent article, the conflicting war descriptions of the opposing sides appear in the headline: "Propaganda flows from both sides". The preamble provides an example: "Civilian targets", claims Iraq about the bomb attacks. 'Military installations', claims the US. 'Manipulation is becoming increasingly elegant. It is almost impossible to defend yourself against it', says Michael Nydén, PhD in Political Science." As do the other newspapers, *Expressen* depends upon experts being able to immunise readers against the infectious effect of propaganda. The third article on this day on the media critical theme promises a quick fix in the headline: "Experts help you to be more critical" (*EXP* 21-03-03). On the following day *Expressen* returns to Iraqi propaganda efforts to deceive the media and public opinion – the casualty bluff. The eye-catching article splashed over the paper reports on the Iraqi Ministry of Information's attempts at magnifying the number of casualties in the nightly bomb raids. A number of false cases are uncovered by the reporter who has paid visits to a nearby hospital (*EXP* 22-03-03).

The conclusion of this survey is that while *Aftonbladet* mostly focuses its media critique on US attempts to influence reporting, *Expressen* distributes attention more evenly between the media manipulations of the opposing sides, which means that the Iraqi attempts at manipulating the media receives more attention in *EXP* than in *AB*. To a greater degree than the others, *Dagens Nyheter* avoids pointing fingers at any one side in the conflict when discussing the vulnerability of the reporting in the propaganda war's crossfire of accusations and counter-accusations, disinformation and lies. The paper achieves this in part by expressing itself in general terms, and in part by focusing mainly on how the media act in order to avoid becoming disinformers themselves.

However, the study of the papers' explicit indication of source critique and their claims for truth would not be balanced without a discussion of the spreading of rumours and disinformation of which they, at the same time, are guilty. If the biggest propaganda stunt in connection with the Iraq War was the official American and British motivations for intervention, to which the papers remain relatively sceptical, there are quite a number of other examples of how the papers are pulled into the haze of disinformation, half-truths and staged news events of the propaganda war.

As already mentioned, the accusation about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction led many Western media, including *DN*, to refrain from sending their own correspondents to Baghdad at the initial stage of the war (cf. Knightley, 2004). *Aftonbladet* writes that "Working Swedes may become

it was the
analysis of the
pages 2003

more than a simple choice

Saddam's targets", the graphics and the text describing Iraq's missile arsenal as extensive, containing both Al Huseyn and Scud missiles - the former with a range of 650 km and the latter with a range of 300 km (AB 20-03-03). On the next day, the paper's correspondent in Kuwait gives accounts of gas attacks from Iraqi missiles: "The gas alarm sounds - in the desert. *Aftonbladets* reporter taken unawares by attack - kilometres from cover" (21-03-03). In other words, the paper is conveying the impression that there has hardly been any disarmament of Iraq's military capacity since the Gulf War 1991.

In the same way, or perhaps to an even higher degree, *Expressen* has fallen victim to misleading propaganda from the war alliance. The reporting of the first day of war offers, among other things, insights into Saddam Hussein's resistance strategy: "Saddam's strategy. How he will strike back against the US". The newspaper knows for a fact that Saddam is becoming 'more and more desperate' and that the strategy includes chemical counter attacks, blown-up oil wells, destroyed bridges and 'murdering his own men'. The sources of this imaginative inside information are only referred to in terms of "...according to reports to the *Evening Standard*..." and "Iraq has, according to American information, access to hundreds of tons of poison gas...". Another example is the reports that Iraqi soldiers have started to surrender. With a reference to American military sources the paper states that at least 17 Iraqi soldiers have deserted. The problem with this report is not whether the information is true or false but that the journalist - in this case Mats Larsson - uncritically and one-sidedly relies on these sources, which leads to a biased description of reality. A Captain Darrin Theriault is given the opportunity to say that the US Military believes several Iraqi soldiers will surrender. The journalist knows, however, that this can create problems: "During the Gulf War, large groups of Iraqi soldiers chose to raise the white flag. The American forces were not quite prepared for this. Soldiers intended for combat in great haste instead had to take care of starving and exhausted Iraqis." A lot can be said about the way in which surrendering and fleeing Iraqis were treated during the Gulf War, for instance at what came to be known as the Killing Fields of that war, but a more one-sided account than Larsson's retrospective can scarcely be found (20-03). On another spread, *EXP* highlights the risk of gas attacks on Israel from Iraq with an eye-catching headline: "Fear of gas. Nursery turned into shelter". As in the other papers, the journalist has deemed the reports of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction true, as have probably the civilians in the article who have turned their nursery into a gas-proof shelter. Thus, everything that is conveyed in the report about the family's efforts to protect themselves against possible gas attacks may be true in detail and yet the whole article is grossly misleading since the grounds for the protection measures, as well as for what the reporter implicitly holds to be true, are unfounded. In this way, this article well illustrates how vulnerable war journalism is vis-à-vis the manipulating menacing picture constructed by the Bush and Blair regimes as the propaganda platform for the war. The problem is not only, nor even primarily, that journalists convey an exagger-

but how they feel is

ated threat against Iraq's neighbouring countries, but that entire populations' behaviour and opinions are governed in a way which, via the media, seems to confirm the seriousness of the threat. A final example from *Expressen* has to be the story of Tariq Aziz's alleged escape. According to David Miller, who bases his analysis on reports in the *Sunday Mirror* and *The Independent*, this was one of the Iraq war's psychological operations in which disinformation played a central role in order to lure the enemy into a trap. By announcing a false report about the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, the idea was that he would be forced to deny this on TV and then be traced as he returned to Saddam Hussein's bunker (Miller, 2004: 93) In splashing the rumour of Aziz's escape all over the paper, *EXP* is thus joining, probably unaware, a game with more than one layer: "Tariq Aziz: We are ready to fight". In the preamble, the conflicting reports are mentioned: "Tariq Aziz is dead? Tariq Aziz has escaped? The reports caused a rise on the Paris Stock Exchange yesterday afternoon - but last night he appeared in his military uniform, pistol in hand, vowing to fight for Iraq" (EXP 20-03-03).

To sum up the reflexivity analysis: it is evident that the Swedish newspapers contain crucial and media-critical information which should facilitate reflections on the part of the audience about the accuracy and objectivity of the war coverage. The way in which this is achieved is both through well-exposed critical comments by experts on the even more heavily exposed US and UK accusations against Iraq of WMD possession, and through specific articles with media-critical information about attempts to manipulate the reports and other propaganda activities. In dealing with this theme attention is divided slightly differently in the analysed newspapers: Where *Aftonbladet* focuses mainly on attempts by the war alliance to control the media, *Expressen* is more occupied with Iraqi manipulation. *Dagens Nyheter* takes a neutral position when it comes to media manipulation, by expressing its comments on this topic in rather general terms and without pointing out any specific side in the conflict, and by concentrating on the measures taken by the paper in order to stop disinformation. But at the same time as the papers give attention to attempts at manipulation and criticise key components of the US/UK war propaganda, in particular the accusations of Iraqi possession of WMD, they contain a lot of material - especially visual - which actually presumes that the allegations against Iraq are true. This material includes speculations as to possible Iraqi counter-attacks with WMDs and the severe consequences for civilians both in Iraq and neighbouring countries. The media coverage of possible Iraqi WMD possession then becomes very contradictory, if not indeed totally confused.

The professional challenge for war journalism of how to manage the war propaganda, lies, half-truths and staged events, is discursively handled in an interesting way by the studied newspapers. By no means do I wish to disavow the difficulties involved in war journalism; but it seems that there are some epistemological problems that have not been properly considered

what you say you disagree

what do you mean?

so far. Some instances of a peculiar logic have been mentioned above, for example the *AB* journalist who argues – after having rejected the US accusations of Iraqi WMD – that the only way Saddam Hussein could avoid war is to destroy a substantial number of such weapons. Or the *DN* journalist who writes that disinformation must also be part of the news, because it might have an important impact on the development of the conflict, and then ends with the conclusion that doubts and reservations are part of all truths. In retrospect, I assume that these are the kinds of comments in which the respective journalist will not find much consolation. I shall come back to this matter of professional concern in the conclusions below.

ask com to elaborate
on the 21st message
in the article

Conclusions

In this study, three Swedish dailies' discourses on the Iraq War 2003 have been examined with a critical discourse analysis approach. The main theoretical focus has been on the ways in which the media discourses are contextually situated within the global discursive order and the forms of reflexivity they express with respect to these conditions.

The conclusions with regard to *reflexivity* are basically three:

1. There are ~~many~~ examples in the newspapers of reservations as to the validity of statements and information from the parties in the conflict. Above, it has particularly been noticed how the accusations from the US/UK side against Iraq for possession of WMD, and the allegations of Iraqi involvement in the terrorist attacks on September 11 2001, are framed with scepticism and doubts expressed by experts and journalists. Hence, the Swedish media obviously offer their audiences contextual information about the propaganda war and issue warnings that the media content can be infected by disinformation.
2. In comparison, the three dailies take different angles when addressing the topic of propaganda activities directed at media and public opinion. Both the two tabloids focus on how the parties in the conflict try to manipulate the news reports, but where *Aftonbladet* primarily notices the activities of the 'war alliance', *Expressen* is more occupied with Iraqi propaganda. In *Dagens Nyheter*, however, the coverage of media management efforts in the propaganda war is less concrete than in the tabloids. Here the angle is more on the anti-disinformation measures in the newsroom – as if this quality paper is anxious to assure its readers that its reports are credible.

3. The general problem from the reflexivity point of view is whether the media can protect themselves against a 'regime of lies' of the kind that was put in place by the 'war alliance'. When the superpower USA, to-

gether with its allies, releases its massive resources – political, military and propagandistic – for actions of a global magnitude like the Iraq War 2003, based on consciously false premises, then the contingent effects are likely to look like confirmations of the mendacious propaganda construction of reality. As exemplified above, in many ways the propaganda about Iraqi WMD did have discursive repercussions which – probably without the media's intention – tended to confirm the fabricated accusations. Examples are the risk assessments when the media take decisions on where to place the war correspondents, graphic displays of Iraqi weapons, premature reports about Iraqi missile attacks on Kuwait and other neighbouring countries, speculations about how and when the dictator in Baghdad would use his WMD resources. These are all examples of discursive instances that at the time seemed to validate the US/UK charges against Iraq.

It is quite worrying that even media, such as the Swedish newspapers in this study, that reported extensively on the doubts and critique against the *causa bellum* arguments, in a somewhat similar way as later regretted by, for example, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, were carried away by the war drums. Bob Woodward mentions group-think as an explanation of why *The Washington Post* did not fulfil its duty as watchdog of the administration's war policy. It seems that an almost global professional group-think of a kind influences media discourses in pre-war periods. As expressed by the Pentagon correspondent of the same newspaper about the psychological-political climate: "There was an attitude among editors: Look, we're going to war, why do we even worry about all this contrary stuff?" (WP 12-08-04). Epistemologically, this amounts to nothing less than acceptance of a view that the White House security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, allegedly expressed when asked about the proofs against Iraq. She implied that the threat from Iraq was so great that verification of the accusations was not needed (Slapgard, 2003:52). As an epistemological position this is an extremely wide-ranging relativism: if the threat is serious enough the question of truth is subordinated. In order to legitimise pre-emptive strikes it would be sufficient that a state perceiving a threat could make it seem plausible that it is sincerely convinced of its seriousness. Besides the horrifying implications of this 'logic' for future conflicts, one should also notice the possible indications for journalistic practices. The exemplars mentioned above may indicate an epistemological drift from the justified reporting of *imagined* threats as such to representations of these threats as if *verified and real* in the mediated framing of the conflict.

Do the Swedish newspapers also have reasons to regret their reporting, in spite of having called attention to the flimsy evidence behind the accusations? The point here is not to reduce or neglect the importance of these doubts – it would of course be much worse if the US/UK charges had not been challenged in the media discourses – but to indicate that the relative

a discursive instance
what that is
- what does this mean
what happens to this
- can we see it

I'm not
sure I can
conclude

21st message
in the article

- Nohrstedt, Sug A. & Rune Ottosen (eds.) (2001) *Journalism and the New World Order: Gulf War, National News Discourses, and Globalization*. Göteborg: Nordicom.
- Nohrstedt, Sug A., Birgitta Höjer & Rune Ottosen (2002) *Kosovokrigen, medierna och medietiden*. Stockholm: SPF.
- Nord, Lars, Adam Shehata & Jesper Strömback (2003) *Från osäker källa*. Stockholm: Krisberedskapsmyndigheten, Temaserie 2003:4.
- Riegert, Kristina (1998) *'Nationalising' Foreign Conflict*. Stockholm: Department of Political Science, Stockholm University.
- Slapgaard, Sigrun (2003) *Krig og lagd*. Gjøvik: Gyldendal.
- Tidningsstatistik* (2004) Tidningsstatistik, www.tis.se, 27 February 2004, last visited 04/06/04.
- Tumber, Howard & Jerry Palmer (2004) *Media at War*. London: Sage.

Chapter 12

Through a Distanced Lens New Zealand's Coverage of the Iraq Conflict

Margie Comrie & Susan Fountaine

New Zealand's centre-left government was opposed to the invasion of Iraq without a United Nations mandate and this, accompanied by strong public support, undoubtedly influenced media coverage of the conflict. The major media reflected opposition, which was expressed in terms of support for the UN and international law, fears for the civilian population of Iraq and some cynicism about United States' motives. At the same time, opposition to the invasion of Iraq was tempered by repugnance toward Saddam Hussein's regime, and concern that New Zealand was abandoning its traditional allies – combined with a more self-interested fear that this would threaten trade agreements and security arrangements.

Local newspapers and television stations relied heavily on international news providers. However, the nature and balance of the news selection reveals local sentiment about the conflict and a certain introspection about what it meant for the country's role in the 'global village'. Balance was present on two levels: in the media's attempt to be generally even-handed in selection of 'pro' and 'anti' articles; and in New Zealand's own diplomatic tightrope, which involved the government balancing international obligations and 'schmoozing' with key powers, while retaining its commitment to multilateralism.

Background

New Zealand is both small in size and in population with just over 4 million people. It is also an isolated country, which is perhaps why its people are such avid media consumers, among the top readers of newspapers in the world (Le Duc, Niemi & Norris, 1996). Although television has replaced newspapers as the major source of news and information for voters (Roberts & Levine, 1996), the print media are currently enjoying a period of readership growth, with 55% of people over 15 years reading a daily newspaper (Chapple, 2002).