

Media Strategies and Coverage of International Conflicts: The 2003 Iraq War and Al-Jazeera

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**This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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***In the memory of my father
For his endless love and support ...***

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Abstract

In 2003 the United States of America led an international coalition to topple Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. The war on Iraq followed the war launched on Afghanistan in 2001, designed to topple the Taliban regime. In both conflicts a wide range of media strategies were implemented by the Coalition forces to sway domestic and international public opinion and to construct support for the US-led military campaigns. This research explores the media strategies implemented in the 2003 Iraq war and the policies of coverage that were used to report the conflict by the Al-Jazeera satellite channel. The major research question is to ask what developments took place in wartime media strategies during these conflicts and to investigate the way media conditions changed, especially around the rise of Al-Jazeera, and the role it played in covering the war. In order to answer these questions, it was essential to review conflicts of a similar nature, such as the 1956 Suez Canal war, the 1991 Gulf war, the 1999 Kosovo war and the 2001 war in Afghanistan. The thesis argues that the toppling of regimes was a common feature in these conflicts, and thus, that media strategies and techniques followed similar patterns in each case.

Lessons from these conflicts had considerable impact on the 2003 Iraq war. Media strategies in this conflict were a product of lessons from previous experiences, the outcome of remarkable developments in communications technologies, and a result of the increasingly complex influence of political, economic and social factors on the way modern conflicts are mediatized. In this thesis the mediatization of conflicts is the research thematic approach which is used to make sense of the role of these various complex factors in the production of media output. The overlapping of these factors contributes to the presentation and the perception of modern conflicts. In the case of the 2003 Iraq war, Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite channels expanded the news agenda to include an alternative perspective to the western mainstream media. This thesis argues that this was a major development which had a critical effect on the flow of information, and radically challenged existing mainstream news management policies. Thus, studying Al-Jazeera in relation to the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war became a crucial element in understanding the changes in the way contemporary conflicts are communicated and reported, which is the central focus of this research.

A triangulation of qualitative research methods has been applied to examine the issues this thesis is critically assessing. Documentary research, including on-line research, was used to explore media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war and to establish the patterns within these. The same method was applied to explore Aljazeera's policies of coverage. In addition, the research used in-depth interviews and an ethnographic approach, spending time for example in Al-Jazeera's newsrooms, in order to answer the main research question. This was to assess the challenges Al-Jazeera, as an Arab news provider, posed to US policies of information control and news management during the conflicts discussed above, and how, as a result, the emergence of a new mediascape in the Arab world came to challenge policy makers, media strategists and media organisations alike.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The role of the media during armed conflicts is becoming increasingly significant, particularly with the rapid development of new and different kinds of communication technologies. This development has contributed to challenge the traditional understandings of flows of information and influenced the international mediascape by providing other perspectives to conflicts, allowing for different media outlets to contribute to the narrative of wars and to provide their own political, cultural and social interpretations. These features of the current media environment have become more evident in the conflicts that have followed the atrocities of September 11 in the United States, most notably at the time of the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and during the 2003 Iraq war.

In these conflicts, it is argued that the impact of modern technologies has also influenced the conduct of media strategies. Wartime propaganda appears to be at the core of modern media strategies in wartime. This therefore explains the need of governments and policy makers for news management and information control policies that can support their war efforts. The expansion of communication technologies has offered real challenges to developing such policies, since it has ended the monopoly over information and has offered the potential for wider perspectives about conflicts. However, such media strategies continue to play a significant role in the way modern wars are perceived and reported.

In these new contexts, the question of coverage and the perception of conflicts becomes fundamentally important for policy makers, media strategists and media organisations alike. For this reason, the news industry becomes one of the crucial fronts on which winning domestic and international public support is an ultimate goal. For the media, reporting conflicts becomes the product of a complex relationship, where political, economic and cultural factors influence the production of news.

This thesis discusses media strategies implemented in military interventions that have specifically aimed at toppling opposing regimes. The 2003 Iraq war is the main case study, which examines the developments of media strategies and subsequent coverage. The major research question is focussed on these developments, asking how they worked and why and

then asking questions about the impact and influence of the emergence of the Al-Jazeera satellite channel and its very different coverage of the same war.

This thesis will argue that Al-Jazeera represents one of the major features in the changing conditions of the international media environment, since this channel represents and embodies the impact of developments in communication technologies on ending information monopolies during conflicts. Unlike the 1991 Gulf war, when CNN dominated the coverage of the conflict, the emergence of Arab satellite channels and of Al-Jazeera in the course of the 2003 Iraq war challenged the flow of information, by offering alternative perspectives on the conflict. The presence of various broadcasters covering the war allowed for different interpretations of the conflict, and Arab satellite channels, including Al-Jazeera, were part of this media spectrum covering the war for Arab audiences but which were also beginning to influence global audiences. The thesis will explore how Al-Jazeera challenged the flow of information, and how it provided alternative perspectives to the narrative of the war.

Furthermore, the 2003 Iraq war became a testing ground for various policies, methods and techniques which all contributed to the way the war was presented and reported. With regard to Arab media, the question of credibility in covering the war was addressed, a key element in examining how Arab satellite channels, particularly Al-Jazeera performed to win the trust of Arab audiences, especially in competing with other international broadcasters in reporting war incidents, and in challenging military claims and information control policies.

In this Iraq war, new media strategies were developed that were based on the experience of the military in previous conflicts. These strategies, like the embedding policy, were implemented to influence the flow of information from battle zones and to create a favourable coverage of military activities. In the case of the embedding policy, reporters had to join military units and cover the war from their side. However, such a policy gave rise to controversial discussions among many journalists, scholars and analysts, who argued that reporters were too close to the military and that their movements were strictly limited. This policy also influenced the way field reporting was conducted by focusing on military advances rather than accommodating a wider perspective of the battles. In addition to this policy, the use of language aiming at the demonization of the enemy, and the increasing involvement of the PR industry in the conduct of media strategies, were all patterns that were developed to bring this conflict to domestic and international audiences in a manner

favourable to the US administration's war efforts. The thesis will discuss these media strategies and explore how they contributed to influence the media coverage of the war.

As argued above, the rise of Arab satellite channels, such as Al-Jazeera, challenged these forms of information flow and information control by providing alternative news coverage of war incidents, notably by focusing on civilian casualties and the real devastation generated by the conflict. This coverage followed a similar pattern, such as when Al-Jazeera was covering the 2001 war in Afghanistan from Taliban-controlled areas. For this reason, this thesis argues that the advent of Arab satellite channels marked a new era, one in which military interventions and modern conflicts are capable of being reported very differently.

The thesis offers a critical discussion of the developments in media strategies and the coverage of international military interventions that took place in the second half of the twentieth century, aiming specifically to topple opposing regimes. The assessment of cases such as the 1956 Suez Canal War, the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 Kosovo war and the 2001 war in Afghanistan forms the theoretical basis for the main argument, which focuses on media strategies in the 2003 Iraq war and the rise of Arab satellite channels, such as Al-Jazeera. Other conflicts, such as the Vietnam and the Falklands wars, are also discussed for their significance in terms of media performance and coverage.

The discussion of the emergence of Arab satellite channels in the early 1990s underlines the changing patterns of ownership in the Arab media, which brought about new styles of news coverage and current affairs programmes, allowing for political, economic and cultural issues in Arab life to be discussed more broadly than before. It is argued here that such changes within the Arab media influenced the way these channels covered military interventions in the region. Moreover, the thesis argues that, from 2003, and by the end of the Iraq war, the Arab media's performance encouraged other non-Arab, regional and international powers to invest in launching their own satellite channels, broadcasting in Arabic, as part of their communication policies in addressing the Arab world.

The remaining chapters of this thesis therefore examine the development of media strategies during international conflicts and the development of the mediascape in the Arab world as follows:

Chapter Two: International Conflicts and the Toppling of Opposing Regimes: A Review of Media Strategies and War Coverage.

The first part of this chapter discusses developments within international communication in relation to conflicts. It addresses the issues of wartime propaganda and the political economy of media organisations within international communication strategies. The following parts of the chapter then critically examine the media strategies and information management employed during military interventions in four major conflicts - Egypt 1956, Iraq 1991, Kosovo 1999 and Afghanistan 2001. It has been established that toppling the regimes was a common reason for these military interventions. Each of these campaigns was accompanied by the implementation of media strategies, techniques and methods to win over domestic and international public support. The chapter underlines similar patterns in the conduct of these different media strategies, such as the demonization of the opposing regimes and the exaggeration of the threat posed by these regimes regarding international stability. In addition to these four conflicts, the chapter argues that other cases - such as the American military intervention in Vietnam in 1965 and the British military intervention in the Falklands in 1982 - also proved to be significant in relation to information control and news management, although military interventions in these two conflicts were not part of international or multinational military coalitions, as in the other conflicts discussed here. The reason for reviewing Vietnam and the Falklands relies mainly on their importance in terms of the development of media strategies and coverage and also because lessons from these two wars influenced other conflicts, such as Grenada 1983 and Panama 1989. The discussion of the Vietnam and the Falklands wars are also significant to the arguments in this thesis because the United States and Britain played a central role in them, as well as in the military interventions in the Arab world and the Middle East, such as in the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars, as well as the 2001 war in Afghanistan, which are a central focus in this thesis.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter illustrates a combination of several research methods that were used in this thesis. Documentary research (on written strategies and policies), interviews and participant observation were chosen to investigate the major questions. In addition, translation was also considered as a key research tool, since part of the data was collected in Arabic and therefore needed to be translated. This chapter discusses the qualitative research approach used in examining media strategies and policies of coverage at the Al-Jazeera satellite channel and the integration between the research methods, to allow for not only the examination of the

media strategies that were implemented by the US administration during the war, but on the other hand, to scrutinise Al-Jazeera's experience of that coverage, as well as critically examining the development of Arab media, with a particular focus on the expansion and growth of Arab and Arabic-language satellite channels, which became part of the media spectrum in the Arab region.

Chapter Four: Arab Satellites and Al-Jazeera: Their Roles and Developments

This chapter explores the development of Arab satellite television since the early 1990s, with a particular focus on channels such as Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), Arab News Network (ANN), Abu Dhabi, Al-Manar and Al-Jazeera, and continues to explore the growth in the number of Arab satellite channels since 2003, with a focus on the changing scene in the Iraqi media since the 2003 Iraq war and on the emergence of regional and international satellite broadcasting in Arabic. This chapter argues that, just as the 1991 Iraq war marked the advent of Arab satellites, the 2003 Iraq war marked the advent of regional and international broadcasters investing in the launch of various Arabic language news and current affairs channels, funded variously by the US, Britain, France, Germany, Russia, China and Iran. The chapter argues that the mushrooming of Arab and other satellite broadcasters is one of the direct consequences of the war on the Arab media scene in the region.

In order to achieve a structured examination of the development of Arab satellite channels, this chapter consists of three main sections: the first discusses the chronological development of Arab satellite channels, as well as the development of news formats. The second examines the satellite channels that emerged since 2003, such as al-Arabiya, as well as the mediascape in Iraq after the 2003 Iraq war. It also discusses the rise of Arabic language satellite channels funded by regional and international powers, such as Al-Alam, Al-Hurra, BBC Arabic, France 24 Arabic, Deutsche Welle DW-TV Arabic, Russia Today Arabic, and China Central Television CCTV-Arabic and explores their popularity among Arab news consumers. The third section examines the impact of political agendas and ownership on the performance of Arab satellite channels. It also discusses the rise of Al-Jazeera, its sponsorship, news coverage and the gradual expansion of the station since the 2003 Iraq war, which included the inauguration of additional channels such as Al-Jazeera Sport, Al-Jazeera English, Al-Jazeera Documentary and others.

Chapter Five: Media War or War on Media: Lessons from Iraq

This chapter critically scrutinizes the major media strategies which were implemented by the US and UK governments during the war on Iraq, starting on 20 March 2003 until 9th April, 2003, the date Saddam's statue was toppled, marking the defeat of the Iraqi army and the collapse of the regime. The chapter argues that the role of media strategies was remarkable in shaping the messages of the coalition during the military campaign against Saddam Hussein's regime. Thus, it examines the means of government control over information and the media to project a positive image about the war. In this regard, it illustrates and discusses certain aspects of control, such as the implementation of the embedding policy, the role of the Media Centre at the Central Command in Doha, the particular use of language and the involvement of the PR industry during the war in manufacturing stories such as the Private Jessica Lynch rescue operation and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue at Al-Ferdaws Square in central Baghdad.

Chapter Six: Covering the 2003 Iraq War on Al-Jazeera

This chapter explores Al-Jazeera's policies of coverage and how the channel critically addressed the issues of accuracy, objectivity and impartiality during the course of the war. This is done by focussing on particular incidents, such as the Fall of Um Qasr, the Basra uprising, the Basra Tank Column, the surrender of the 51st Iraqi Division, and the Scud Missiles fired on Kuwait. The chapter argues that these incidents illustrate the differences between Al-Jazeera and Western broadcasters in covering the war. It demonstrates clear examples of the challenges that face reporters and broadcasters during coverage from the front lines. In addition, this chapter discusses the issue of broadcasting the footage of American and British POWs and that of civilian casualties and the language used by Al-Jazeera to report such events: all these issues were very controversial at the time. The chapter also discusses the attack (at the outset of the Iraq war in 2003) on Al-Jazeera's Bureau in Baghdad which was targeted by the coalition troops with a missile fired from a jet fighter, causing the death of one of Al-Jazeera's reporters (Tareq Ayoub) in the Iraqi capital.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The originality of this research rests with the critical examination of the ongoing controversial discussion about the media and international conflicts. However, it positions the Iraq war within the specific type of armed conflict that aims at toppling regimes and argues that these bring about special patterns in terms of media strategies to win public support. The

research contributes to an understanding of the development of the Arab mediascape since 2003, represented by the emergence of non-Arab broadcasters, broadcasting in Arabic, and to understandings of the ways in which Al-Jazeera's reporting contributed to and shaped its policies on coverage.

The conclusion suggests that the development of media strategies in the 2003 Iraq war was remarkable in terms of selling the war and managing and controlling information, and that the coverage of the war marked a new era in reporting military interventions, especially given developments in communication technologies. The conclusion also argues that the changing conditions in the mediascape in the Arab world since 2003 include the advent of non-Arab broadcasters, broadcasting in Arabic. These have become an additional feature of the media scene in the Arab world and underline the importance for western and regional powers in developing communication policies to address the Arab world, not least because they provide disparate and competing versions of the news.

Chapter Two: International Conflicts and the Toppling of Opposing Regimes: A Review of Media Strategies and War Coverage.

2.1. Introduction

Since the end of WWII, the role of the media during armed conflicts had developed significantly, especially in the coverage of military interventions that took place during the second half of the twentieth century, most notably - among other conflicts - the Vietnam War (1965-1973) and the Falklands war in 1982 (see Mercer et al, 1987; Hallin 1989; Page 1996; Hudson and Stanier 1997; Yong and Jesser 1997; Hammond 1998; Taylor 1998; Knightley 2000; Carruthers 2000; Connelly and Welch 2005). The experience of these conflicts revealed the growing impact of communication strategies, media control, censorship, and information management, which could all be seen as influential factors in shaping media coverage. Another factor was the relationship of the media to military, political and corporate organisations. These factors require comprehensive examination, particularly regarding the development of international communication in relation to wartime propaganda, and media strategies, as well as the political economy of media organisations, and the possible connections of these organisations to political, economic and military institutions, some or all of which might affect their news content and consequently could influence the perceptions of news consumers toward the reported wars.

While this thesis examines media strategies and coverage of international conflicts, with a particular focus on the 2003 Iraq war and the rise of Arab satellite channels such as Al-Jazeera, this chapter discusses developments of wartime propaganda in the context of international communication. It focuses on the media strategies and information management employed during military interventions in four major conflicts, Egypt 1956, Iraq 1991, Kosovo 1999 and Afghanistan 2001. It could be argued that the common reason among these military interventions was the toppling of the regimes in these countries. Such an assumption was an encouraging factor to examine the media strategies and coverage of such conflicts in order to explore the policies, techniques and methods used in the circumstances of toppling the opposing regimes. By recognizing these media strategies, it becomes as significant to examine the 2003 Iraq war in relation to communication policies, as well as media coverage.

Furthermore, the wide range of comprehensive literature on wartime propaganda and war reporting was beneficial to centralise the argument of this chapter on the toppling of opposing regimes. Clearly, other military interventions, such as the American invasions of Grenada in 1983, and Panama in 1989, provided remarkable lessons in terms of media strategies and coverage (Yong and Jesser 1997; Knightley 2000). The quest for legitimacy to restore law and order within governmental institutions in Grenada in 1983 or the demonization of the Panamanian president, Manuel Noriega, in 1989, were notable patterns that marked the American media strategies in both conflicts, in addition to the secrecy of planning and firm control over media coverage (Yong and Jesser 1997). The toppling of the regimes in these two countries after the American military interventions was an added reason to explore media strategies in conflicts with an international dimension. Therefore, and since the pattern in this research, is focusing on multinational military interventions aiming at toppling opposing regimes by the use of force, the cases of Grenada and Panama were not critically examined. Yet other cases such as the American military intervention in Vietnam in 1965 and the British military intervention in the Falklands in 1982 were critically reviewed. Although these two conflicts were not under the umbrella of international or multinational military coalitions as the other discussed conflicts in this chapter, however, the reason for reviewing Vietnam and the Falklands relies primarily on their significance in terms of media strategies and coverage. Arguably, it would be hard to discuss media strategies and war reporting without recognising the significance of Vietnam and the Falklands since the experience and lessons from these two wars have influenced other conflicts, such as Grenada 1983 and Panama 1989 (Young and Jesser 1997).

Furthermore, it is known that lessons from the Suez Canal war against Egypt in 1956 were taken into consideration by the British government during the Falklands (Shaw 1996). Thus, discussing both these conflicts serves to explore the development of media strategies during subsequent conflicts. Poignant to this is the prolonged Vietnam war, from which lessons were learnt by the American administrations in their other military interventions (Knightley 2000). The discussion of all these conflicts are significant because the United States and Britain have been central to military interventions in the Arab world and the Middle East, such as in the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars, as well as the 2001 war in Afghanistan.

With regard to the Arab world, it could be argued that the region witnessed two remarkable multinational military interventions: the 1956 Suez Canal war against Egypt, and the 1991

Gulf War against Iraq. These two conflicts could be viewed as crucial events in terms of their political and media impact in the Arab world. This chapter explores media strategies that were implemented during these conflicts, as part of the military interventions campaigns. Thus, by considering the 2003 Iraq war as an extension to a series of Western military interventions in the Arab region, these two conflicts would become exceptionally important in terms of their historical, political and media significance. In other words, for us to understand the media strategies and coverage of the 2003 Iraq war it is essential to examine other military interventions and media strategy techniques that were implemented in previous conflicts in order to help in exploring the development of communication and media strategies that occurred in the 2003 Iraq war.

Further, with regard to the 1999 Kosovo war and the 2001 war in Afghanistan, the chapter also explores the media strategies adopted in these conflicts - particularly given the political-military aim of toppling the regimes, respectively of Milosovic and the Taliban - and how this influenced reporting. In chronological terms, the 1999 Kosovo war lies between the 1991 Gulf war and the 2001 war in Afghanistan, and patterns of media strategies which were used in this conflict could be similar, if not part of, the lessons learnt from previous conflicts such as the 1991 Gulf war. Exploring these patterns can be seen as an essential context in discussing media strategies implemented in the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the 2003 Iraq war.

In the 1999 Kosovo war, the media strategy of Nato focused on demonizing the Milosovic regime - similar to the coalition's media strategy in 1991 against Saddam Hussein, and bin Laden, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in 2001- and sought to maintain control over the media coverage (Goff 1999; Hume 2000; Knightley 2000; Macarthur 2004; Rutherford 2004; Young and Jesser 1997; Willcox 2005; Kellner 2003; Bessaiso 2005). However, these strategies were challenged by one news provider in 2001 in Afghanistan with the rise of the Arabic satellite channel Al-Jazeera from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, which posed a challenge to the American and British media strategies to control the flow of information from the battlefield and equally provided an alternative coverage of the war, such as by focusing on civilian casualties.¹

¹ This chapter does not discuss the media strategies that were implanted *after* the course of battles in Afghanistan and Iraq. The focus of this research is to explore media strategies and coverage of the war periods, so the post-war media strategies were excluded from this research. However, Chapter Four discusses the

2.2. International Communication, War Propaganda and Political Economy: Approaches to Media and Conflicts

As conflicts and military interventions continued to be part of the major features that shaped the international politics of the twentieth century, developments in international communication, continued to play a pivotal role in understanding media and communication strategies and policies, as well as media performance during these conflicts.

According to McPhail (2010), international communication refers to the cultural, economic, political, social and technical analysis of communication and media patterns and effects across and between nation-states.

International communication focuses more on global aspects of media and communication systems and technologies and, as a result less on local or even national aspects of issues (McPhail 2010: 2).

McDowell (2003) stated that the field which emerged as communication studies or international communication at the end of 1950s was US-Based and US-centric, and it was shaped by the choices made in the ideological and historical contexts of two decades earlier (McDowell 2003: 7).

The propaganda efforts of the National Socialist party in Germany in the 1930s, and the beginning of war in Europe, eventually provided a threat to the United States. It was an opportunity for tools of analysis of public opinion and the processes of mass communications to be applied to war fighting (ibid: 6).

As McDowell argued, this involved research on how to mobilize the public and obtain consent for the war at home in the United States and developing methods of communication to sow doubt, suspicion, and misinformation with the enemy population:

Psychological warfare was one more tool in the toolbox of the military strategist, and more specifically, strategists based in the United States (ibid: 6).

developments within Arab satellite television and part of this discussion examines the rise of Arabic languages satellite channels, funded by Western and regional powers, as one of the major impacts that marked the media scene of the post-2003 Iraq war period, both in the region and internationally. This discussion aims to explore additional elements of media strategies, as part of the developments within international communication. Thus, the discussion will also include the rise of the Saudi-funded satellite channel Al-Arabiya and the Iranian satellite TV in Arabic, Al-Alam, which both emerged just before the 2003 Iraq war, in addition to the expansion of Al-Jazeera network after the 2003 Iraq war.

Thus, according to Mowlana (1996), the growth of international communication was influenced by the climate and tempo of the World War II and Cold War period. This climate can be summarized into four main elements:

The first is international conflict, war, and the use of propaganda. The second is the development of international organizations and diplomacy. The third is the spread of competing ideologies and the use of communication to disseminate messages. The fourth is the development of new communication technologies (Mowlana 1996: 3).

The use of these factors, as Mowlana stated, contributed to give the rise to international communication:

For some, international communication was first seen as an issue of propaganda. Others saw international communication essentially as an issue of education, cooperation, and understanding (ibid).

As for international conflicts and the use of propaganda, developments in international communication and information technologies allowed for developments in the execution of wartime propaganda and media strategies, which all serve as influential apparatuses for foreign policies. According to Whaley (1980), when propaganda is applied to the international arena, it goes by many other names:

Psychological warfare, political warfare, international political communication, or, most recently public diplomacy. By whatever name, it is one means by which various groups (usually a nation's foreign policy elite) seek to influence the behaviour of one or more foreign groups, ranging from general public to particular elites. Deception is an often important and sometimes dominant element of such efforts to control and influence (Whaley 1980: 339).

In addition, as Mowlana (1997) stated, technological advancements in communication allowed governments to direct their messages to large national, as well as international audiences:

For example, the development of radio, and more recently television and satellite systems, led to the implementation of international broadcasting. National boundaries were no longer barriers to international political and diplomatic messages. This was only the beginning. Almost all governments around the world set up "information" and "propaganda" agencies, hired public relations firms, and organized regular and systematic "briefing" meetings and lavish diplomatic parties in order to influence their foreign and domestic audiences (Mowlana 1997: 8).

With regard to conflicts, efforts to approach domestic and international public opinion were seen as prime, but the enemy was also seen as equally important. As O'Shaughnessy (2004)

stated, “war is communication” and that the aim of war “is seldom the complete extermination of the enemy” but to persuade them to surrender:

The object of war is therefore the enemy’s morale. The activity of warfare is structured by propaganda objectives, and partly because of this, wars are conducted inefficiently (O’Shaughnessy 2004: 35).

O’Shaughnessy contended that propaganda and war are inseparable. For this reason war in the twentieth century “had meant the mobilization of vast civilian populations” (ibid). Having said this, Taylor (2003), has also contended that “if war is essentially an organised communication of violence”, propaganda and psychological warfare are “essentially organised processes of persuasion” (Taylor 2003: 9).

Numerous attempts to define propaganda covered a wide range of literature in the fields of politics, international relations, military, sociology, media, communication and history studies (Ellul 1973; Hatem 1974; Lasswell, Lerner and Speier 1980; Pratkanis and Aronson 1991; Herman and Chomsky 1994; Jackall 1995; Lasswell 1995, 2010; Lippmann 1997; Thomson 1999; Jowett and O’Donnell 1999; Taithe and Thornton 1999; Taylor 2003; Bernays 2005; O’Shaughnessy 2004; Connelly and Welch 2005). Therefore the question of definition could be subjected to the interpretation of propaganda as a technique or process of persuasion, and its various forms of use in domestic, national and international politics, including wars and conflicts. Accordingly, Lasswell (1995) stated that propaganda in the broadest sense is the technique of influencing human action “by the manipulation of representations” (Lasswell 1995: 13). For this reason, Lasswell (2010) argued that propaganda objects must be chosen with extreme care, as the primary objects are usually quite distinct (Lasswell 2010: 331). This is evident in wartime propaganda, which usually involves different parties represented by the enemy, the ally and those seen as neutral (ibid).

It involves leaders on both sides and the support of certain policies and institutions. It implies the control of attitudes toward various forms of participation – enlistment, bond buying, and strenuous exertion (ibid).

Yet Lasswell also argued that in wars there are some relatively immovable conditions, which could influence the execution of propaganda. These conditions are:

Communication networks, similarities and differences in customs and institutions, interpenetration of population economic ties, relative military power, organised prejudices (Lasswell 1995: 18).

With regard to the representation of the enemy, Lasswell argued that “the mobilisation of national hatred” required representing the enemy as “menacing, murderous aggressor, a satanic violator of moral and conventional standards, an obstacle to the cherished aims and ideals of the nation a whole and of each constituent part” (ibid: 18-19).

Through the elaboration of war aims the obstructive role of the enemy becomes particularly evident. The maintenance of hostility depends upon supplementing the direct representation of the menacing, obstructive, satanic enemy by assurance of ultimate victory, thus preventing diversion of attention (ibid: 19).

Alternatively, with regards to alliance, propaganda plays a pivotal role in the preservation of friendly relations. This role depends upon representing an allied nation as strenuously prosecuting the war and thus protecting common values:

The ally must appear to assent heartily to the cherished war aims of the nation and to conform to all the mores (ibid).

Jowett and O'Donnell (1999) contended that “hate propaganda” was the most significant feature of World War I propaganda, which relied on wide dissemination of atrocity stories as means of discrediting the enemy (Jowett and O'Donnell 1999: 219). According to them, most atrocity stories concentrated on three types of alleged cruelties:

(a) Massacre, such as the slaughter of the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire, supposedly under the encouragement of the Germans; (b) mutilation, such as the gouging out of the eyes of German soldiers; and (c) the mistreatment of both soldiers and civilian populations by starvation or actual torture (ibid).

These forms of propaganda, according to Jowett and O'Donnell, were designed to serve various purposes such as: to stiffen the fighting spirit of entire nations, to create fear and defeat, and, as a more practical means, to raise funds and encourage enlistment to halt these inhuman acts. It also served to prolong the fighting and create more severe conditions for surrender (ibid). In World War II radio became the principal means of sending propaganda messages to foreign countries (ibid: 248).

The traditional propaganda media of pamphlets, posters, and motion pictures were again used but with an increased awareness of the psychology of human behaviour (ibid: 248-250).

Furthermore, “hate propaganda” was also applied during World War II, though emphasis on its use “was to be downplayed”, except where this served a deliberate purpose, such as

“President Roosevelt’s delayed announcement of the Japanese execution of the American flyers shot down over Tokyo” (ibid).

Based on the above, the notion of “hate propaganda” came to constitute an essential part of wartime propaganda, which aims at winning the support of domestic and international public opinion. The rapid development in communication technologies contributed through various media and information channels to expand the use of hate and atrocity propaganda during armed conflicts as a tactic in approaching public opinion. According to Welch (2005), the advent of total war in the twentieth century led to the use of media for political purposes:

In ‘total war’, which required civilians to participate in the war effort, morale came to be recognised as a significant military factor, and propaganda began to emerge as the principal instrument of control over public opinion and an essential weapon in the national arsenal (Welch 2005: x).

Welch asserted that, in both World War I and World War II, the democracies and totalitarian regimes imposed constraints on the flow of information and used the media for their own ends (ibid). Further, following the end of World War II, the post-1945 period witnessed the widespread utilization of the lessons drawn from the wartime experience within the overall context of the Cold War and the ‘communication revolution’ (ibid: xii).

In addition, Ellul (1973) also stated that political circumstances have been effective and immediate causes of the development of massive propaganda:

The first World War; the Russian revolution of 1917; Hitler’s revolution of 1933; the second World War; the further development of revolutionary wars since 1944 in China, Indochina, and Algeria, as well as the Cold War – each was a step in the development of modern propaganda (Ellul 1973: 89).

Ellul argued that, with each of these events, propaganda developed further, increased in depth, and discovered new methods. At the same time it conquered new nations and new territories:

To reach the enemy, one must use his weapons; this undeniable argument is the key to the systematic development of propaganda. And in this way propaganda has become a permanent feature in the nations that actually despise it, such as the United States and France (ibid).

In conflicts, Mowlana (1997) argued in the years following the First World War and continuing to the end of the Second World War, a new communication strategy was developed:

Encouraged by the potential applications of future propaganda, governments enlisted the cooperation of communication and political scientists. The goal was now to develop analytical frameworks. Strategic warfare was now aimed at destroying a country's infrastructural basis as well as the morale of the population for carrying on the war (Mowlana 1997: 9).

According to Mowlana, this strategy is a "structural and sociological strategy", and although it dates back a few decades, it continues to the present. Its purpose is "multidimensional - political, economic and cultural" (ibid).

In conjunction with developments in warfare technologies and international political communication strategies, the rapid developments in media and information technologies have clearly contributed to the developments of media and communication strategies. Thus, Ellul contended that the development of mass media, communication and transportation technologies played a significant role in shaping modern propaganda policies:

Modern propaganda could not exist without the mass media – the inventions that produced press, radio, television, and motion pictures, or those that produced the means of modern transportation and which permit crowds of diverse individuals from all over to assemble easily and frequently (Ellul 1973: 89).

With regard to television, Jowett and O'Donnell (1999) asserted that television has a major propaganda function in the area of news reporting (Jowett and O'Donnell 1999: 144).

Complaints have always been voiced about misrepresentation in the reporting of international (as well as domestic) news, but this issue has recently received an unprecedented amount of attention as a result of complaints from Third World countries that their images are being distorted in the Western press (Jowett and O'Donnell 1999: 144).

For this reason, Jowett and O'Donnell stated that the issue of imbalance in the "free flow" of information "between industrialized and developing countries" became a major topic at international meetings and a significant issue on the agenda of the fundamental political and economic issue in contemporary society (ibid). Particularly, UNESCO has been the arena of many ardent discussions on the necessity to develop what has been called the New World Information Order (NWIO) (ibid).

Ultimately, the concept of developing a new world information order that would provide more balanced coverage to news from developing countries has not had wide acceptance in the West, and images of famine, corruption, and conflicts still predominate on our nightly news broadcasts. In this way, the powerful visual images are presented to television viewers—in broadcasts that seldom have enough time to develop stories to provide adequate explanations (ibid: 145).

Jowett and O'Donnell asserted that this problem of distortion is an inherent part of a free media system in which market forces dictate the content of the media (ibid).

The difficulties in reconciling this free market media system – in which commercial mass media allow audience preference to shape content – with the understandable desire by countries and individuals to present their “best” images are almost insurmountable (ibid).

Having said this, the development of communication policies and technologies, had consequently led to different approaches to theorise the progress in international communication and the media performance. According to Thussu (2000), after the Second World War, theories of communication multiplied in response to new developments in technology and media, first radio and, then television, and the increasingly integrated international economic and political system (Thussu 2000: 54). Thussu argued that two interrelated approaches to theorizing communication can therefore be discerned:

The political economy approach concerned with the underlying structure of economic and political power relations, and the perspective of cultural studies, focusing mainly on the role of communication and media in the process of creation and maintaining of shared values and meanings (ibid: 54).

With regard to the political economy, McChesney (2003) stated that the political economy of communication entails two main features. First, it is concerned with the relationship of media systems to the broader social and power relations of society (McChesney 2003: 27).

Nowadays that means possibly the question: what is the relationship of media to capitalism and the global corporate economy? Political economy immediately and always asks the question that is all forgotten in mainstream qualitative research: what role do the media play in reinforcing and/or undermining political and economic inequality? To what extent are media a democratic force? Cultural studies has a distinct interest in these questions as well (ibid).

The second feature, according to McChesney, is what makes the political economy distinct from cultural studies:

Political economy of communication specifically examines the structure of media industries – questions of ownership, market structure, and commercial support – and how these affect media content, performance and impact (ibid).

McChesney argued that the starting point for the political economy of communication is the recognition that all media systems are the direct and indirect result of explicit public policy:

Powerful interests invariably attempt to make the media system appear as if it is 'natural' and therefore necessary, but that is never the case. For that reason, the political economy of communication takes particular interest in examining the nature of the political debates over media and communication policies. Much of this research is historical in nature (ibid: 28).

Thus, the political economy, as an approach to understanding developments in international communication, becomes one of the major patterns in evaluating the process of media and communication developments in the second half of the twentieth century. According to Thussu, the establishment of a bi-polar world of free market capitalism and state socialism post-Second World War, theories of international communication became part of the new Cold War discourse:

For the supporters of capitalism, the primary function of international communication was to promote democracy, freedom of expression and markets, while the Marxists argued for greater state regulation on communication and media outlets (Thussu 2000: 55).

For this reason, the concept of the "free flow of information", according to Thussu, reflected Western, and specifically US, antipathy to state regulation and censorship of the media and its use of propaganda by its communist opponents:

The 'free flow' doctrine was essentially a part of the liberal, free market discourse that championed the rights of media proprietors to sell wherever and whatever they wished (ibid).

Furthermore, the concept of 'free flow', as Thussu indicated, served both economic and political purposes:

Media organizations of the media-rich countries could hope to dissuade others from erecting trade barriers to their products or from making it difficult to gather news or making programmes on their own territories. Their argument drew on premises of democracy, freedom of expression, the media's role as 'public watchdog' and their assumed global relevance (ibid).

Having said this, the concept of the 'free flow' contributed to help Western governments to ensure the continuing and unreciprocated influence of Western media on global markets, as well as strengthening the West in its ideological battle with the Soviet Union (ibid: 56).

The doctrine also contributed to providing, in generally subtle rather than direct ways, vehicles for communication of US government points of view to international audience (ibid).

Thussu stated that complementary to the doctrine of the 'free flow' in the post-war years was the view that international communication was the key to the process of modernization and development for the so called 'Third World' (ibid). Thus, for Thussu, the modernization theory arose from the notion that international mass communication could be used to spread the message of modernity and transfer the economic and political models of the West to the newly independent countries of the South (ibid).

Communications research on what came to be known as 'modernization' or 'development theory' was based on the belief that the mass media would help transform traditional societies. This pro-media bias was very influential and received support from international organizations such as UNESCO and by the governments in developing countries (ibid).

Thussu argued that Daniel Lerner, a political science professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was one of the earliest exponents of the theory of 'modernization'. Lerner's work in the field, *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) was a product of research conducted in the early 1950s in Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iran, in which he examined the degree to which people in the Middle East were exposed to national and international media, especially radio (ibid). According to Thussu, "in this first major comparative survey", Lerner proposed that contact with the media helped the process of transition from 'traditional' to a 'modernized' state, characterizing the mass media as a 'mobility multiplier', which enables individuals to experience events in far-off places, forcing them to reassess their traditional way of life:

Exposure to the media, Lerner argued, made traditional societies less bound by traditions and made them aspire to a new and modern way of life (ibid).

According to Mosco (2009), modernization or "developmentalist theory" originated in Western, particularly American, attempts to incorporate communication into explanatory perspectives on development congenial to dominant academic and political interests (Mosco 2009: 72-73).

The developmentalist thesis held that the media were resources which would, along with urbanization, education, and other social forces mutually stimulate economic, social, and cultural modernization in the less developed world. As a result, media growth was viewed as an index of development (ibid: 73).

Furthermore, Mosco asserted that in place of the modernization theory, political economists came to elaborate a theory of cultural imperialism (ibid). This identified “an array of structures and practices” that functioned as “instruments of transnational corporate and state power” (ibid).

Having mentioned this, Thussu also asserted that the modernization theory emerged in the Cold War context, which was a time that was expedient for the West to use the notion of modernization to bring the newly independent nations of Asia, the Middle East and Africa into the sphere of capitalism (Thussu 2000: 58).

Despite its numerous influence in the field of international communication, Lerner’s research had more to do with the East-West ideological contest of those days of Cold War, when the Middle East radical voices were demanding decolonization – Iran had nationalized its oil industry in 1951, leading to the CIA-backed coup, two years later, which removed the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammed Mussaddiq. Given the prominence of radio propaganda during the 1950s, this research could also be seen as an investigation of radio listening behaviour in a region bordering the Soviet Union. In this context it is interesting to note that Lerner had worked for the Psychological Warfare Division of the US Army during the Second World War (ibid: 59).

In addition, Thussu argued that mass media were assumed to be a neutral force in the process of development, ignoring how the media are themselves products of social, political, economic and cultural conditions (ibid: 58).

In many developing countries economic and political power was and remains restricted to a tiny, often unrepresentative, elite, and the mass media play a key role in legitimizing the political establishment. Since the media had, and continue to have, close proximity to the ruling elites, they tend to reflect this view of development in the news (ibid).

According to McPhail, the United States has historically orchestrated international communication policy and the many activities relating to transborder communication activities:

During the 1950s and 1960s, the US State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the National Security Council, and the Pentagon played central roles

within international organizations to promote policies to suit Cold War agendas and objectives (McPhail 2010: 3).

Nevertheless, McPhail stated that the current international communication landscape is in a state of flux:

The vacuum created by the demise of the old Soviet Union had been filled by an atmosphere of economic determinism influenced by the reality of the increasing global economy. Economic determinism and free market beliefs, including global mergers and pursuit of foreign markets, moved from Main Street to Wall Street. Even the stock markets became transnational entities (ibid).

Thussu argued that there is a danger that, rather than being used by governments for propaganda purposes, as in the case during the Cold War years when anti-communism defined Western media's ideological orientation, in the era of globalization and increasing corporate control of the channels of international communication, the media may become the mouthpiece of global corporations and their supporters in governments (Thussu 2000: 164).

If during the heydays of radio, governments could use the airwaves to promote their viewpoint, in the era of the round-the-clock global news, they have refined their public diplomacy to the extent that it can be marketed successfully to international publics (ibid).

In this view, Thussu stated that this became true as much for the Bush administration's attempts to "sell the war" during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis as for the subsequent "humanitarian interventions" which defined US foreign policy in the 1990s:

The world's view of US military interventions were, to a very large extent, moulded by the US-supplied images of Operation Just Cause in 1989 in Panama; Operation Provide Comfort (in Northern Iraq, following the Gulf War in 1991); Operation Restore Hope in Somalia in 1992 and Operation Uphold Democracy in Haiti in 1994 (ibid).

According to Wilkin (2001), military research and development has long been at the forefront of communications technology as states have sought ever more elaborate systems of command and control in preparation for and during conflict (Wilkin 2001: 36).

Ongoing developments in global communication are no exception and the power of communication and information technology is now explicitly recognised by senior military and political figures alike (ibid).

Furthermore, Wilkin stated that communications and information technology have always been an important part of military strategy, whether "it is through the use of propaganda

against domestic or enemy audiences or in terms of “the construction and running of defence systems” (ibid: 37). Given these circumstances, the need for alternative media coverage that could challenge military and communication strategies became fundamentally essential. For this reason, Thussu contended that, in the absence of a credible alternative media system, the US position – given the reach and influence of Western media – often becomes “the dominant position, whether on nuclear issues, trade policy, human rights or international law” (Thussu 2000: 166).

Yet Thussu asserted that with the rise of new communication technologies, it became possible for broadcasters from many developing countries to successfully export their media products (ibid: 207). Such an expansion has been possible because of the availability of satellite platforms (ibid: 208). This was evident in the emergence of Arab satellite channels in the early 1990s, particularly with the establishment of Al-Jazeera in 1996.² These emerging channels attempted to provide an alternative perspective to the Western main stream media, particularly in covering conflicts in the Arab world.³ Further, the gradual expansion of Arab satellite channels began to influence further flung audiences, beyond the predictable Arab audiences, by providing a counter flow of information to international events, including conflicts. Accordingly, Pintak (2010) stated that these emerging models began to influence the balance of power in international media:

In some ways, the balance-of-power in international media was shifting from the West to the Arab world, with its vast wealth and newly emergent media. A decade after launching Al-Jazeera, Qatar created an English language sister channel, Al-Jazeera English, in the hopes of gaining the same kind of influence in the “global south” that the Arabic channel had given in the Arab world (Pintak 2010: 302).

Therefore, it could be said that the emergence of satellite technologies has taken communication technologies and media performance into new heights, allowing for further interpretation and coverage of international and domestic events. For this reason, Pelton (2010) argued that communication satellites “have redefined our world”:

Satellites and other telecommunications networks, together with TV, have now altered the patterns and even many of the goals of modern society (Pelton 2010: 13).

² Arab satellite channels and Al-Jazeera will be discussed in Chapter Four.

³ Further details will be discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Six which discusses Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the 2003 Iraq war.

According to Pelton, the world becomes “global, interconnected and interdependent”, as worldwide access to rapid telecommunications networks via satellites and cables creates widespread Internet links, enables instantaneous news coverage, facilitates global culture and conflict, “and stimulates the formation of true planetary markets” (ibid).

As for conflicts and the media, these developments in communication and media technologies marked a significant role in the conduct of media strategies for military interventions in the twentieth century. Lessons from these conflicts influenced international communication policies, media strategies, and coverage of the international conflicts that followed the atrocities of 9/11. The development of these policies and strategies is examined below - encompassing such disparate conflicts as Suez, Vietnam, the Falklands, Kosovo and the Gulf War, drawing particularly on where lessons were learnt by governments and the military in one conflict and changes to communication policy in another.

2.3. Vietnam and the Falklands: A Question of Media Control

2.3.1. Vietnam War and the power of television

The American involvement in Vietnam would be seen as one of the most remarkable aspects of the post-Second World War period. According to Page (1996), the war itself and its results were felt well beyond the realms of either the USA or Vietnam:

The political, social and military consequences of American involvement and defeat in Vietnam have been keenly felt in America and the international community, and ‘lessons’ learned have continued to exert and influence up to the present day (Page 1996: 1).

In addition, one of the reasons, as stated by Page, that the war became so important was that America chose to make Vietnam the battleground “for a ‘decisive’ confrontation on behalf of its free democratic bloc, with the ‘unfree’ communist bloc”:

Without the American intervention it seems unlikely that the outcome of a conflict in a remote (from Europe) part of the world would have been the focus of such widespread attention (ibid).

The need for explanation and justification for its military intervention in Vietnam, as well as the need for handling the information from the battlefronts, required successive American administrations to adopt information and communication policies that sought to win domestic support for its actions.

The administration most often portrayed the conflict politically as a straightforward contest between communists and non-communists and hence America's role in it was part of a moral crusade against communist expansion (Page 1996: 91).

Television was the medium that was used to convey the message and also to report the frontlines. As Culbert (2005) stated, America became "a televisual society" in the 1960s - with a total population of some 202 million and 78 million television sets (Culbert 2005: 205). By 1968, television emerged as the principal source of news for a majority of Americans (ibid: 205-206). Williams (1987) stated that the Vietnam War expressed the power of television, as it was "the first television war" that directly brought horrific images of the conflict to audiences back home in the US (Williams 1987: 221). Even after many years, the war is still remembered by images which appeared on television screen:

The pictures of a US Marine using his Zippo lighter to set fire to a Vietnamese village, the execution of a Vietcong suspect in a Saigon street, a Vietnamese girl running down a road after being burned in a napalm attack. These images dominate our recollections of the Vietnam War (ibid).

This dimension of reporting the Vietnam War could be seen as significant in shaping military perceptions of the effects of war reporting on the public:

Extensive coverage of the war, and television's emergence as the dominant source of information for most Americans, had a profound impact on those seeking to explain the erosion of public support for the war. Many saw a correlation between the outcome of the war and the fact that the public learned about the war primarily through the medium of television (ibid: 223).

However, Williams also argued that, by understanding the power of television as a medium, it would be possible to argue that television also promoted support for the war:

The nightly presentation of pictures of American soldiers fighting and dying for their country could have resulted in an increase in patriotic sentiment and caused the public to react sympathetically to the armed forces and military efforts (ibid: 225).

Thus, in addition to the images of war discussed by Williams which television conveyed to the audiences, Hallin (1989) also stated that television's visual images "are extremely ambiguous" (Hallin 1989: 131).

Television images, for one thing, are tiny fragments torn out of streams of experience and causation unknown and, in the case of war in a distant culture, extremely unfamiliar to the audience. They leave out one dimension of the visual and three of the sensory field and they contain nothing of the historical, social, or cultural context

of the events they show. Television images, moreover, pass very quickly, leaving the audience little time to reflect on their meaning, and are accompanied by nearly continuous voiceover narration, which they are edited to illustrate (ibid).

Further, with regard to reporting civilian casualties, Hallin stated that television reports dealing with civilian casualties caused by American actions were usually very specific, rather than being explained or investigated, unlike reports dealing with civilian casualties caused by the Vietcong:

In keeping with the usual conventions of “objective” reporting, they described a single incident and were not concerned with larger policies or patterns. No television report I encountered ever suggested that the United States might have any sort of general policy of targeting civilians. Attacks on civilians by the enemy, on the other hand, were routinely assumed as to result from a calculated *policy* of terror. They were also—in some ways television’s stereotype of the enemy was contradictory, as outgroup stereotypes often are—treated as manifestations of a savage and irrational nature (Hallin 1989: 156).

Nevertheless, Culbert (2005) stated that American television coverage of the Vietnam war, for the most part, offered little of visual significance, and more often reinforced or followed elite opinion that attacked the status quo (Culbert 2005: 204-205).

It is inaccurate to remember America’s Vietnam War as a so-called ‘living-room war’ in which nightly images of violence turned viewers from hawks to doves. Most shots were taken far from the scene of an actual fire fight, and there are far more instances of helicopters taking off and landing than of close-range fighting (ibid).

It was not until the 1968 Tet Offensive that television coverage began to change. The offensive, according to Williams, shattered the impression created by the coverage of an American military in control, gradually making progress and holding the initiative (Williams 1987: 228). According to Robinson (2008), the Tet Offensive involved an uprising throughout South Vietnam “organised by communist forces”. During this crisis, widespread fighting occurred across major cities in South Vietnam and in full view of US journalists:

A war that had been presented by the US military as one that was being won, suddenly appeared out of control (Robinson 2008: 168).

Thus, Williams argued that if Vietnam was television’s war, Tet was television’s super-battle; it brought the war to television (Williams 1987: 228).

The psychological impact of Tet made some television producers change the emphasis of the reporting. Military scenes after Tet were accompanied by “the rhetoric of stalemate, not victory” (ibid).

Hammond (1998) argued that adjustments in the way the US government dealt with the news after the Tet Offensive, also had an effect on the press, as is evident in Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford's instructions to General Earle Wheeler⁴ and General William Westmoreland⁵, which were to avoid "all forms of exaggerated optimism and to take a low-key approach when assessing events or theorizing about the future tempered the news by lowering the shock effect of problems in the field" (Hammond 1998: 127).

The question of information policy and the media's handling of the war's events posed serious challenges to the American administration and to the military. Williams asserted that although the Vietnam War is often described as "the first open war", as access journalists had to the war in Vietnam "was unprecedented" (Williams 1987: 245), journalists relied heavily on the military for transportation to and from the fighting zones:

The American military not only allowed reporters to move freely about the combat zone but actually assisted them to do so (ibid).

Further, Williams contended that by being unable to censor reporters directly, the military tended to overcompensate by trying to manage the news more strictly. Therefore, a whole series of informal pressures was used, "including visa and customs regulations and transportation:

The image of journalists freely roaming around the battlefield in Vietnam is slightly misleading. Use of military transportation was greater than in any other conflict; but unlimited use of helicopters, for example, only lasted for a couple of years in the late 1960s. Prior to Tet, when the fighting came into Saigon, reporters were usually taken to battle sites selected by the military. The difficulty of the terrain made reporters dependent on the military for transportation for certain parts of the country. The military could to an extent, through the transportation of reporters, influence the image presented of the battlefield⁶ (ibid: 254).

In agreement with Williams, Hallin also asserted that the absence of censorship did not necessarily mean the absence of restrictions on the flow of information that might have damaged public support for American policy in Vietnam. However, the system of "control" that kept the media "in line" with the war effort was "impersonal" (Hallin 1989: 133).

⁴ General Earle Wheeler was the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (Page 1996: 13).

⁵ General William Westmoreland was the US military commander in Vietnam (Page 1996: 9).

⁶ This approach of depending on the military for transportation would be seen, years later, developed into the policy of embedded reporters which was implemented during the 2003 Iraq war. The policy of embedded reporters will be discussed in detail later in the thesis.

This system also included, in addition to controlling access, controlling the time for journalists to spend in the battle zones. According to Williams, the number of correspondents who spent a large amount of time in the field was limited; for example, out of 647 reporters accredited in March 1968, “only approximately seventy-five to eighty regularly went to the field” (Williams 1987: 254). This could be viewed as another way to manage the images presented from the battlefields, without imposing a direct form of censorship on reporters. Further, the absence of formal censorship made military officers less willing to talk to the media, and this paradoxically led “to more self-censorship among correspondents” (ibid: 253-254). In the words of Hammond, rather than censoring the press, the military preferred “a system of voluntary guidelines that respected the willingness of reporters to avoid releasing information of value to the enemy” (Hammond 1998: 291). The impact of this system, as Williams argued, encourage self-censorship, as with little or no guidance reporters on occasions were uncertain of what to write “for fear of endangering life or giving away vital military intelligence” (Williams 1987: 253-254).

Therefore, and as an attempt to compensate for the absence of censorship was the government’s decision to sell the war through a high-powered public relations campaign:

The authorities attempted to put a gloss on U.S. efforts in the field and promote an image of progress at the expense of all else. Successes were played up, negative information downplayed (ibid: 254-255).

For this reason, the American government, according to Williams, was not only involved in the presentation of the most optimistic version of events, it also participated in the creation of a particular image of the war through propaganda and covert action operations (ibid: 259).

Americans, according to Hallin, went into Vietnam believing it was “a replay on a smaller scale of World War II: a struggle to defend democracy against aggression” (Hallin 1989: 209), which they would win, not because they were more powerful but because the right was clearly on their “side” (Hallin 1989: 209-210). Television, according to Hallin, held this view strongly, “perhaps more strongly than the public itself” (ibid: 210).

It did not work out this way, and eventually television brought the bad news. But it never explained why: it never examined the assumptions about the nature of the war it helped to propagate in the early years (ibid).

Nevertheless, if the Vietnam War provided a model of media strategies, that could influence the way this conflict was reported, then in other conflicts, media management and control

were exercised in a different manner. Knightley argued that “the freedom” given to correspondents in the Vietnam War “to go anywhere, see everything, and write what they liked” was not seen again in other conflicts (Knightley 2000: 482). The Falklands war, for instance, proved a model of how to make certain the government policy was not undermined by the way the war is reported:

The rules turned out to be briefly simple: control access to the fighting; exclude neutral correspondents; censor your own; and muster support, both on the field and at home, in the name of patriotism, labelling any dissidents as traitors (ibid).

2.3.2. The Falklands and the restricted coverage

According to Dodds (2005), the Falkland Islands had long been an object of dispute between Argentina and Britain. In 1968 a Memorandum of Understanding set out the terms for transfer of the sovereignty to Argentina once the “interests” of the Falkland Islands community were secured (Dodds 2005: 219). However, after fourteen years of meetings and proposals, the Argentine military controlling the republic began to contemplate a more radical action for solving this territorial dispute:

In January 1982, a new military junta headed by General Leopoldo Galtieri undertook a fundamental review of the Falklands/Malvinas question in a climate where there was considerable public pressure for a resolution prior to the 150th anniversary of the British occupation of the Falkland Islands (ibid: 220).

Thus, as Dodds stated, when the Argentine military regime invaded the disputed Falklands in April 1982, British defence and foreign policy suffered arguably its worst crisis since the 1956 Suez campaign (ibid: 219). However, British military intervention consequently began and lasted for seventy-four days, supported by a British political campaign domestically and internationally, to lead to the defeat of the Argentine army (ibid: 218).

In addition, information management and information control techniques were employed to win domestic and international public opinion. According to Mercer (1987), the British PM Margaret Thatcher sought to rally party, national and international opinion:

Abroad, Britain actively propagated its case, winning support not only in Europe, but also from countries such as Japan. Most important of all Britain was to “win” the propaganda war in the United States (Mercer 1987: 19).

Nevertheless, Yong and Jesser (1997) argued that during the Falklands war, the British government and military exercised the full range of direct and indirect control over the information flow and by every means at their disposal (Yong and Jesser 1997: 118). Thus, it exploited to the full its monopoly on access, transport and communications, and instituted a censorship system that went well beyond the valid needs of operational security (ibid).

Mercer argued that, unlike the Suez Canal War in 1956,⁷ when several British newspapers had opposed the Eden government's intervention in Suez and faced an acute dilemma over maintaining their opposition after British servicemen had gone into action, in 1982, the British press gave broad support to the government, "albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm" (Mercer 1987: 7).

On the other hand, Shaw (1996) stated that the British PM, Margaret Thatcher, was adamant that Britain would not "lose the propaganda war" in the Falklands War. This caution had arisen from the way that Anthony Eden had lost the information war during the Suez Crisis in 1956, where there was "no clear cut propaganda policy" in the sense of some sort of hastily revitalized ministry of information or a coherent set of guidelines detailing what should (and should not) be told to the media (Shaw 1996: 1-2). Thus, in the Falklands war, restrictions were placed in order to manage and control the media. Cottle (2006) stated that the British government and military operated a 'pool system', which consisted of a number of journalists operating under strict military guidelines while accompanying the troops, and who were expected to share available information with journalists who were not in the pool. The number of journalists and their crews accompanying the British task force to the occupied islands was restricted, according to Cottle, to only 29 British nationals⁸ (Cottle 2006: 75):

All were assigned to a military 'minder' (Public Affairs Officer), had their copy 'cleared' by a censor (the word 'censored' in media reports was censored), and they remained dependent on military communication systems to despatch their reports (often delayed up to two to three weeks)⁹ (ibid).

According to Willcox (2005), the requirement of journalists to travel with the Task Force during the Falklands campaign had eliminated most scope for diversity in war coverage:

⁷ The Suez Canal War is discussed below.

⁸ The pool system will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

⁹ According to Cottle, the US imposed total exclusion of all journalists when it invaded Grenada (1983), firing warning shots at journalists who attempted to reach the Caribbean island by speed boat. Also when invading Panama (1989) the US followed the Falklands experience and permitted a small "pool" only for journalists who operated under strict guidelines and were expected to share available information (Cottle 2006: 75). The pool system was also used in the 1991 Gulf war against Iraq (ibid).

The only conflicting stories were emanating from Argentina as no foreign news correspondents were allowed to travel with the fleet. This meant no journalists were able to travel independently such as had been the case during the Vietnam War (Willcox 2005: 64).

In addition, unlike the Vietnam War, Dodds (2005) stated that the absence of visual material and the containment of the media characterised Thatcher's political management of the Falklands crisis. Thus, with few visual materials, little attention has focused on the almost "universal geographical ignorance of the Falkland Islands in 1982" (Dodds 2005: 219). According to Dodds, images of the British armed forces were absent for "fifty-four days of the seventy-four days campaign" (ibid). The control of visual information during the Falklands crisis was, according to Dodds, due to an extraordinary combination of factors ranging from technical and human consideration to active government intervention to control the flow of information:

More, disturbingly, perhaps, for a democratic culture was the media's self-imposed form of censorship, which ensured that no pictures of British defence facilities and or casualties were shown to domestic viewers even if some may have been relatives of the dead or injured. As a consequence, newspaper such as *The Scotsman* contended that the reason for was to reassure public opinion that the conflict was relatively blood-free (Dodds 2005: 226).

Therefore, according to Willcox, the Falklands War was an anomaly concerning media relations:

The remoteness of the islands, some 8000 miles away from Britain, handed the initiative to the military coordinators. Images and text could be delayed and transmitted at intervals suited to media-military plans, with the average story arriving back in Britain two days after initially being written. The lack of footage available saw the reinvasion of the war artist and this exacerbated the perception of the conflict in terms of a traditional form of imperialist adventure¹⁰ (Willcox 2005: 64).

Thus, for British audiences, the Falklands conflict was dominated by radio rather than television reports (Dodds 2005: 230). Further, similar to the Vietnam war, due to the nature of the conflict, journalists were dependent on the military for transport to and from the conflict zone as well as communication facilities, especially with their close proximity to the British troops, which played, according to Dodds, a part in ensuring a collective loyalty to

¹⁰ Willcox, however, argued that with the development of modern technology, achieving such a monopoly over the dissemination of information as in the Falklands, would be far more difficult in the future. However, contemporary media policy "resonates with many of the same concerns and influences encountered during the Falklands campaign" (Willcox 2005: 64).

one another (ibid: 231). Moreover, the control of the media was extended to accuse news managers in London of unpatriotic behaviour if they relied on Argentinean footage in the absence of British material:

When news managers in London and elsewhere resorted to using Argentinean material in the absence of British footage, they were accused of unpatriotic behaviour (ibid).

In addition, Dodds asserted that in the absence of wider wartime coverage, the role of journalists in deliberately or accidentally “participating in military deception campaigns becomes all the more significant” (ibid).

2.4. The Media and Military Interventions in the Arab World: The Suez Canal and the 1991 Gulf War

With regard to the Arab world, two conflicts represented multinational foreign intervention: the first was the Suez Canal war in 1956, where Britain, France and Israel launched a war against the Egyptian regime (Hewedy 2003, Shaw 1996, Morris 2001, Philo and Berry 2004). The second was the 1991 Gulf War, when the US led an international coalition to liberate Kuwait (Taylor 1998, 2003). Lessons from these two conflicts, in relation to media strategies, war time propaganda and reporting were hard to ignore, especially when discussing the relationship between the media and the military and also in exploring the impact of these particular conflicts on other wars.

2.4.1. Suez Canal War: The regime that remained

According to Shaw (1996), the Suez crisis was centred around funding the Aswan high dam near the Egyptian Sudanese border. The United States, Britain and the World Bank offered to finance the project, which was designed to boost the Egyptian economy, through a loan to the Egyptian government. However, negotiations with the Egyptians were stalled, as the Egyptian president, Gamal Abdel Nasser, was seen to be increasingly courting the Russians and Red China. Consequently, on 19 June 1956, the Americans, swiftly followed by the British, announced their decision to withdraw their offer of a loan (Shaw 1996: 3). Gamal Abdel Nasser therefore turned his thoughts to the revenues from the Suez Canal, which was “the only other credible source of finance he and his advisors knew” (ibid: 4).

In July 1956, Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, and therefore Britain and France, “who were shareholders in the Canal”, decided that Nasser had to be removed from power (Philo and Berry 2004: 27).

Having talked privately of ‘destroying’ him [Nasser] in March, Eden (and many others) now saw the Egyptian leader as an insurmountable obstacle to the progress of the British policy in the Arab world. As such, he [Nasser] had to be removed. Moreover, by expropriating the Suez Canal Company, the Egyptian had not only launched a personal assault upon Britain and France, the company’s major shareholders, but he had also threatened the smooth operation of arguably the single most important international waterway (Shaw 1996: 8).

Further, in addition to the reasons mentioned above, according to Hudson and Stanier (1997), France hoped also to topple Nasser, through a combined military intervention with Britain and Israel. Additional strategic interests existed for France, as Nasser was supporting “their enemies, the rebels in Algeria¹¹” (Hudson and Stanier 1997: 122).

Nevertheless, Philo and Berry asserted that Israel too wanted Nasser to be deposed (Philo and Berry 2004: 27). Interestingly, Shlaim (2000) revealed that the war against Egypt in 1956 was intimately connected with the French orientation in Israel’s foreign policy. The reason was due to the American final rejection of Israel’s request for arms in April 1956. Israel, therefore, looked to France to satisfy its needs for modern arms (Shlaim 2000: 162-163).

Having a common enemy in Egypt brought the two countries together. The French military had three priorities: Algeria, Algeria and Algeria. Israel not only passed on what intelligence it had on Egyptian support for the Algerian rebels but also exaggerated the extent of this support. The French assumed that if only Nasser could be knocked out of the game, the Algerian rebellion would collapse (ibid: 163).

The relationship between Israel and France began with the supply of arms and developed into political and military cooperation, and reached its climax in the joint war against Egypt in 1956 (ibid).

In understanding the joint interest of Israel and France to topple Nasser, Shlaim stated that in a secret conference of the senior military echelons of the two sides towards the end of June

¹¹ As stated by Knightley, the French colonisation of Algeria ended after eight years of fighting (1954-1962) [known as the war for independence]. During this period, France’s fourth republic was toppled and General De Gaulle came to power (Knightley 2000: 391). De Gaulle, who was not in power during the Suez crisis, however, supported the French action and the military intervention against Nasser, though it was during his presidency that France pulled out of Algeria in 1962 (Hudson and Stanier 1997: 122).

1956 [before Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company] in a chateau in Vermars, south of Paris, Moshe Dayan, the Chief of Staff of the Israeli army, expressed the Israeli view of the danger:

In a carefully prepared introduction, Dayan spoke about the danger Nasser posed to the entire Middle East and North Africa. Nasser's goal, he said, was to eliminate all European influence from the region and to turn Egypt into a forward base for Soviet power. Israel had no general quarrel with the Arab world. Its quarrel was with Nasser, and its main aim was to overthrow Nasser. Preventing the establishment of a Soviet Base was an international as well as an Israeli interest. Israel was prepared for joint action with France against Nasser in the military and political spheres. The Arab empire that Nasser dreamed of could not rise without his subduing Israel first (ibid: 164).

Coordination between Britain, France and Israel, since the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company, reached its peak, as on 23 October 1956, British, French and Israeli representatives met in Paris to devise a military plan (Philo and Berry 2004: 27). According to Morris (2001) the aim was taking over the Canal Zone, and ousting the "Egyptian dictator":

Britain's Prime Minister Anthony Eden considered him [Nasser] a reborn Hitler, whose "aggressions" had to be stopped (Morris 2001: 296).

Therefore, as stated by Philo and Berry, on 29 October 1956, Israeli forces launched an attack on the Egyptians in Sinai, and the next day Britain and France issued an ultimatum to Egypt and Israel to withdraw their forces to a distance of ten miles of the Suez Canal. "Israel complied, Egypt refused, and the following day Britain and France began an aerial bombardment of the Egyptian airfields" (Philo and Berry 2004: 27).

By capturing Gaza, which was under Egyptian administration at that time, on 2 November 1956, and the whole Sinai peninsula, three days later, Israel secured an overwhelming military victory (ibid). However, under strong pressure from the US and the USSR and threats of United Nations sanctions, Israel was forced to withdraw from all of the Sinai after six months (ibid: 28).

As for the British and French forces, Morris stated that the situation on the ground on 7 November 1956 was embarrassing for both London and Paris:

The Anglo-French force had failed in its goal of conquering the length of the Suez Canal and a ten-mile-deep buffer area on either bank, let alone toppling Nasser (Morris 2001: 297).

Moreover, on 22 and 23 December 1956, the Anglo-French forces evacuated Egyptian soil under UN Emergency Forces (UNEF) guard. “Eden resigned two weeks later” (ibid: 298). The consequences of the war, according to Morris, were profound. Nasser persuaded his people and many others that Egypt had won and the Canal was more Egyptian than before, and “his regime was firmly in the saddle, with great popular support throughout the Arab world” (ibid: 300).

According to Khalidi (2003), throughout the Arab region, Suez gave a decisive impetus to the growing Arab nationalist trend, led and symbolised by Nasser, whose regime in 1954 had achieved the extraordinary feat of securing a British military withdrawal from Egypt after seventy-two years of occupation. Such an achievement had a powerful resonance in the Arab world, though still dotted with French bases in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, British bases in Libya, Jordan, Iraq, Aden, and the Gulf, and American bases in Morocco, Libya, and Saudi Arabia (Khalidi 2003:382).

This nationalist trend and the accompanying radicalization provided the main impetus for a wave of fundamental regime changes and other upheavals in the Arab world in the middle and late 1950s. The outcome of the Suez war reinforced the power of Nasser’s already persuasive rhetoric, to which many Arabs were already listening (ibid).

According to Eugene Rogan (2009), the Suez Crisis was the classic example of a military defeat turned to a political victory:

Nasser’s bold rhetoric and defiance were not matched by any military accomplishments. The very act of survival was deemed a major political victory, and the Egyptians – and Nasser’s mass following across the Arab world – celebrated as though Nasser had in fact defeated Egypt’s enemies. Nasser knew that his nationalization of the Suez Canal would face no further challenge and that Egypt had achieved full sovereignty over all of its territory and resources (Rogan 2009: 304).

Further, Philo and Berry argued that the colonial powers, prior to the Suez crisis, feared the effects of Nasser’s Arab nationalism on their oil interests and geostrategic control of the Middle East and Africa. This was especially since Nasser became president of Egypt in 1954, as he attempted to make himself the champion of a pan-Arab renaissance, and the leader of the decolonisation movement across the Middle East and Africa. France was hostile because of his support for Algeria’s fight for independence (Philo and Berry 2004: 27).

Nevertheless, the Egyptian media continued to portray the outcome of the war as a major victory for the Egyptian regime and Nasser, and such a portrayal contributed strongly to Egyptian efforts to promote an image of Jamal Abdel Nasser as an Arab hero. Thus, Rogan stated that Nasser's remarkable "string of successes" propelled him to a position of dominance in the Arab world:

His anti-imperial credentials and calls for Arab solidarity made him the champion of Arab nationalists across the region¹² (Rogan 2009: 304).

Yet the political outcome was also remarkable on the international stage. According to Khalidi, the United States emerged from the Suez Canal crisis as the dominant Western power in the region, having benefited from the disaster of the Anglo-French-Israeli aggression on Egypt, to replace Britain and France, and soon "to inherit Israel from Britain and France as a privileged regional client and ally" (Khalidi 2003: 378).

For France, Rogan argued that it lost a great deal from the Suez Crisis. Its position in Algeria was undermined and its influence in the Arab world more generally decreased:

For the remainder of the 1950s, the French gave up on the Arab world and threw their support behind Israel. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis the French armed the Israelis and helped them to establish their nuclear program, providing a reactor in 1957 twice the original capacity promised (Rogan 2009: 304).

¹² According to Rogan, Nasser took his message to the Arab masses across the airwaves, as the power of long-distance radio broadcasting combined with the spread of affordable and portable transistor radios in the course of the 1950s (Rogan 2009: 305). Rogan argued that in an age of widespread adult illiteracy, Nasser was able to reach a vastly broader audience via radio than he ever could have through newspapers (ibid). It was the Cairo-based *Voice of the Arabs* (Sawt Al-Arab) radio station that promoted the ideas of Nasser and the Egyptian revolution. Launched in 1953, the *Voice of the Arabs*, combined news and entertainment. It connected Arabic speakers across national boundaries through a common language and promoted the ideas of pan-Arab action and Arab nationalism (ibid). In addition, Laura James (2006) stated that the *Voice of the Arabs* created "a sense of national identity that had previously existed in, at most, a latent form" (James 2006: np).

Ahmad Said, the radio station's best-known presenter and general manager, remembered that their mandate of promoting Arab unity was laid out quite clearly in the original plans and studies made in early 1953. Addressing the Arab people in their own language for the first time, the station would explain to them the ideas of the July revolution, making them aware of the many plots they faced. The main aims of *The Voice of the Arabs*, therefore, were to liberate the Arab people; to unite Arab countries; to liberate Arab resources from imperialism's grasp; and to encourage the use of those resources for the development of Arab civilisation, science and culture (ibid).

This would clearly indicate that the *Voice of the Arabs* was one of the major media tools that the Egyptian regime had used during the Suez Canal crisis in 1956. Yet James argued that although the radio station was a weapon wielded by the Nasser regime, rather than a genuine collective voice, so the weapon "was as fatal to its makers as to their enemies" (ibid). This was the case during the six days war in 1967, when the *Voice of the Arabs* continued to broadcast news of an Egyptian victory, while Egypt was defeated by Israel (ibid). Regarding the role of the *Voice of the Arabs* during the Six Days War of 1967, see Chapter Six on the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, in the section: Patriotism, culture and journalistic objectivity.

For Israel, Rogan argued that the Suez war represented “a stunning military victory and political setback”, although it retreated from territory occupied by force of arms, yet the Israeli army “demonstrated prowess to Arab neighbours once again” after the 1948 war. However, the Israeli participation in the “Tripartite Aggression” reinforced the widespread view in the Arab world that Israel was an extension of imperial policy in the region (ibid).

Further, as Rogan stated, Britain which had hoped to preserve its position as a major influence in the Arab world, was “the greatest loser” of the Suez Canal debacle:

The decision to go to war had engendered tremendous domestic opposition in Britain and provoked a number of high-level resignations from both government and Foreign Office officials. Anthony Eden suffered a major breakdown in the aftermath of Suez and resigned his premiership in January 1957 (ibid).

Thus, it could be said, that the Suez Canal crisis had a substantial impact on the politics both in the Arab region and internationally. According to Gordon Martel (2000), it has come to be regarded as “one of the turning-points in the history of Europe” (Martel 2000: 403). The failure of the intervention “is often seen as the end of the colonial era”, as it opened the “floodgates” to anti-colonial movements and “the tidal wave” of independent states that were created in the 1960s (ibid).

For Martel, the Suez Canal Crisis symbolised “the end of the age of European dominance”:

The failure of the combined British, French and Israeli forces to impose their control over the canal and to bring Nasser to his knees demonstrated that European imperialists no longer wielded the power that was required if that were to continue to act as if the twentieth century was no different than the nineteenth, or that the era after the Second World War was no different than that which had followed the first (ibid).

Further, it could be argued that this impact has contributed to shape the political scene in the region for many years after, where Egypt gained a significant role in leading the political process in the Arab region.¹³

¹³As discussed earlier, with Egypt succeeding in nationalising the canal company, and the failure of the multinational military coalition of Britain, France and Israel failing to topple the regime of Jamal Abdel Nasser, whose image as an Arab nationalist leader was reinforced in the Arab world after this war, it could be argued that the outcome of this war also reinforced the Arab nationalist stream supported by the Egyptian regime. These impacts resonated in the following years and provided the impetus for political and media developments in the Arab world (author’s note).

With regard to media control in Britain during the Suez Canal war, Shaw argued that Eden employed a combination of three tried and tested manipulative techniques:

Personal contacts between ministers and key press figures, consistent exploitation of the lobby-system of non-attributed political briefing, and the dubious use of wartime censorship powers. His [Eden] aim throughout was to use the newspapers to create and maintain a climate of opinion at home in favour of war, whilst simultaneously obscuring his hatred of Nasser, and the true scale and nature of the military preparations for the war (Shaw 1996: 15).

Shaw stated that by encouraging the press to advocate the need for force on the grounds of the dangers posed to Britain and to the Middle East by Nasser, and yet at the same time giving the impression that it was itself surprisingly moderate, the government hoped it could justify a progressively aggressive policy by claiming that it was merely yielding to public opinion, as manifested in a 'free' and 'independent' press. This in turn, would increase the pressure on Nasser, "who was known to be a voracious reader of the British and American press" (ibid). In addition, Shaw asserted that the government managed to control the broadcasters' coverage of the bombing campaign very well. This can be attributed to "a combination of positive, selective guidance and censorship, much as was used to manage the press" (ibid: 138).

Given that the majority of the bombing raids on and around Cairo had been carried out under cover of darkness, realistically one could not have expected a series of detailed and precise eye-witness reports of how accurate (or otherwise) these sorties had been (ibid: 139).

On the other hand, as asserted by Shaw, by relying almost entirely and apparently without question on second-hand reports, served up courtesy of the MoD, the BBC hardly revealed an accurate image of the impact of these raids:

Rather than insisting on seeing for themselves what had been the cost in people and property of these raids, and why, if they had been as accurate as the authorities claimed, all airfields bar Cairo West were still serviceable for operations afterwards, reporters repeatedly stressed the "unprecedented precautionary measures" which the RAF, under government orders, had taken to save lives. Not one news bulletin gave an estimate of the Egyptian casualties, military or otherwise, that would be expected to accrue from an attack on such a scale (Shaw 1996: 139).

With no film of the actual bombings, the BBC's Television Service could only show "comparatively innocuous scenes of aircraft either taking off from or landing in Cyprus" (ibid).

Another media feature that played a role during the Suez crisis was the BBC Arabic Service, which, according to Shaw, became an integral part of the Foreign Office's psychological campaign against Gamal Abdel Nasser:

A report by the director of External Broadcasting in September outlined how the talks output of the Arabic Service had consistently stressed the solidarity of the views expressed in Parliament, the "futility of Nasser's economic plans", the danger of running the canal without experienced pilots, and the threat posed by the seizure to Asian as well as Western interests ... The service also broadcast jokes produced by its Features Unit alluding to the oppressiveness of Nasser's regime and the dangers of living under communism (Shaw 1996: 128).

All these techniques of controlling the media during the Suez conflict formed solid examples of censorship, manipulation and deception in order to win the support of domestic public opinion in Britain and also internationally. Thus, lessons were learnt when the UK went in to another war in the south Atlantic in 1982. Shaw argued that memories of Suez particularly haunted British ministers, civil servants and the military during the 1982 Falklands crisis, by what they perceived as the "failure to keep the British public united and international opinion sympathetic" when the country went to war (Shaw 1996: 1).

According to Moorcraft and Taylor (2008), the Suez Crisis split Britain and its press in a way that "foreshadowed the divisions over the 2003 Iraq War":¹⁴

With fewer than five million British television viewers in the first half of the 1950s, heavily read British newspapers cheered on the invasion, led by a particularly aggressive *London Times*. The *Manchester Guardian*, the *Observer*, and the *New Statesman*, opposed it. The *Daily Mirror* demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Anthony Eden, which he did two months later (Moorcraft and Taylor 2008: 74-75).

Thus, the political lessons which emerged from the Suez Crisis, concerning France and Britain, were remarkable. Moorcraft and Taylor stated that France, "never again trusted the United States", while the lesson for London was "not to wage a war without the Americans"¹⁵ (ibid). In other words, it could be argued that the military strategy during this campaign may have worked, however, as Moorcraft and Taylor asserted the "political policy failed" (ibid).

¹⁴ The 2003 Iraq War will be discussed in detail later in the thesis (author's note).

¹⁵ In the following Western military interventions in the Arab world, in the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 Iraq war, Britain was the US's major ally, especially in the 2003 Iraq war, where the UK coordinated its efforts with the American administration to topple Saddam Hussein's regime (see Chapter Five on the media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war). Having said this, the UK had also fought next to the US, as part of the Nato forces, to topple Slobodan Milosevic's regime in the 1999 Kosovo war, and as part of the coalition led by the US in 2001 to topple the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These conflicts are discussed more in detail later in this chapter.

2.4.2. The 1991 Gulf War: A regime yet to be toppled

The 1991 Gulf war represented another example of multinational intervention in the Arab region. However, in this war, it was the United States which led an international coalition to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi forces. It was 35 years since the Suez Canal war, yet there were similar features in the motives that led to the 1991 Gulf War. Ali (2003) argued that Saddam Hussein thought that by annexing Kuwait, he could boost his economy and his standing in the Arab world. Thus, it would be “a replay of Nasser and the Suez Canal” (Ali 2003: 133). However, unlike the Suez war, which led to the expansion of the Arab nationalist trend, this war revealed the divide when troops from Arab countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Qatar joined the international coalition to fight the Iraqi army.

This conflict led to fragmentation in the Arab world, since international alliances and different political visions emerged as a consequence of this divide. Thus, it could be said, that one of the remarkable features of the two conflicts was that while the Suez Canal war boosted the Arab Nationalist trend in the Arab region, the 1991 Gulf War marked its decline.

In relation to the media, the 1991 Gulf War represented another example of information management and media control and reporting of international conflicts (Taylor 1998; Knightley 2000; Carruthers 2000; Macarthur 2004). As became apparent, this war embodied lessons learnt from previous conflicts, and the controlling mechanisms put in place – particularly in terms of the part played by PR – showed that the US administration had been preparing for such an event for some time.

The crisis itself began when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on 2nd August 1990. Knightley (2000), argued that the Iraqi president had been quarrelling with Kuwait for some time, accusing the Kuwaitis of flooding the international market with low-cost oil, thus costing Iraq billions of dollars in revenue “just at a time it [Iraq] needed increased oil revenues to recover from the Iran-Iraq war” (Knightley 2000: 485). Also, Saddam Hussein accused Kuwait of “taking too much oil from the Rumalia oil field along the disputed border between the countries and demanded compensation” (ibid).

A few days before the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait, Saddam Hussein had a long interview with the American ambassador in Baghdad, April Glaspie, in order to explore the American reaction to his action:

I admire your extraordinary efforts to rebuild your country, I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have the opportunity to rebuild your country. But we have no opinion on Arab-Arab conflicts like your border disagreement with Kuwait (Glaspie cited in Knightley 2003: 485-486).

However, once Iraqi forces occupied Kuwait, on 2nd August 1990, the American response was swiftly powerful, calling it “naked aggression” and calling for “the unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops” (ibid). Accordingly, President Bush compared Iraq’s take-over of Kuwait “with the Nazi blitzkrieg in Europe in the 1930s and Saddam Hussein with Adolf Hitler” (ibid). This comparison was a signal to the media:

Hussein had to be demonised. He was painted as being ruthless, another Hitler, a fanatic, deranged, a psychopath, hated by his own people and despised in the Arab world. Further, from the moment his troops had arrived in Kuwait they had committed unspeakable atrocities (ibid).

The most important of these atrocities, according to Knightley was the “Kuwaiti babies story”, which, once exposed, had a clear impact on public opinion and a political influence on the consequences of the conflict:

Its origins go back to the First World War when British propaganda accused the Germans of tossing Belgian babies into the air and catching them on their bayonets. Dusted off and updated for the Gulf war, this version had Iraqi soldiers bursting into a modern Kuwaiti hospital, finding the premature babies ward and then tossing the babies out of incubators so that the incubators could be sent back to Iraq¹⁶ (ibid).

According to Macarthur (2004), in modern wars, exaggerated or manufactured enemy atrocities “have frequently played an important part in boosting war fever at home”:

There is no more spectacular example of this than the alleged crimes committed by German soldiers against Belgian civilians in World War 1 (Macarthur 2004: 51).

¹⁶ Knightley stated that the story was first reported by the *Daily Telegraph* in London on 5th September 1990 and two days later by the *Los Angeles Times*, which attributed it to Reuters. However, the story lacked the human element –it was an unverified report, there were no pictures for television and no interviews with mothers grieving over dead babies (Knightley 2000: 487). That was soon rectified, as an organisation calling itself Citizens for a Free Kuwait (financed by the Kuwaiti government in exile) appeared to have signed a \$10 million contract with the giant American public relations company, Hill and Knowlton, to campaign for American military intervention to oust Iraq from Kuwait (ibid).

In the US, the Human Rights Caucus of the US Congress was meeting in October and the PR firm, Hill and Knowlton arranged for a fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti girl to tell the babies story before the congressmen:

She did it brilliantly, choking in tears at the right moment, her voice breaking as she struggled to continue. The Congressional Committee knew her as “Nayirah” and the television segment of her testimony showed anger and resolution on the faces of the congressmen listening to her. President Bush immediately picked up on the story and referred to it six times in the next five weeks as an example of the evil of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Amnesty International lent its weight to the atrocity in its report of human rights violations published on December 19 [1990] (Knightley 2000: 487).

Furthermore, in the Senate debate on whether to approve military action to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, “seven senators specifically mentioned the incubator babies atrocity and the final margin in favour of war was just five votes” (ibid).

However, it was not until two years later that it was discovered that the story was “a total invention, a fabrication and a myth” (ibid: 488) and “Nayirah”, the teenage Kuwait girl, “coached and rehearsed by the PR firm Hill and Knowlton for the appearance before the Congressional committee”, was in fact the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States (ibid). Yet, during the period prior to the war in 1991, Knightley stated that the incubator babies atrocity was a definitive moment in the campaign “to prepare the American public for the need to go to war” (ibid). According to Macarthur (2004), the significance of the baby incubator story in the larger propaganda campaign against Saddam Hussein and for the war option cannot be underestimated. Without it the comparison of Saddam Hussein with Hitler loses its lustre; “to make the case effectively, one had to prove Hussein’s utter depravity”¹⁷ (Macarthur 2004: 68).

In retrospect, it should be noted that comparing “the enemy” to Hitler was a technique that was used against the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser during the 1956 Suez Canal crisis (Shaw 1996; Morris 2001), as well as against Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War and in the 2003 Iraq war (Rutherford 2004). According to Rutherford, the reputation of

¹⁷ Having mentioned the baby incubator story, Macarthur stated that there is no doubt that “Saddam Hussein did terrible things in Kuwait”. However, given the “record of distortion and propaganda” it would require detailed investigation to discover what really happened during the seven months of his occupation of Kuwait:

The perceived degree of violence and terror committed have everything to do with America’s choice of war, and even with the acceptance of the distortions it was a narrowly won decision. Who is to say whether minus the incubator story the administration would have carried the day? How many other reported atrocities are false? (Macarthur 2004: 69).

Saddam Hussein had been blackened in 1990 and 1991, and the stain was renewed in the preparations for the 2003 Iraq war. Thus, “the successful demonization of Hussein” was a crucial element within the pro-war propaganda, “the hinge of the whole exercise” (Rutherford 2004: 35).

The pro-war rhetoric reflected the success of Washington’s marketing campaign: writers looked upon Saddam Hussein as both evil and dangerous, yet another Adolf Hitler whose aggression menaced the world, just as in 1939, and they saw America and Britain embarking on a just war to free Iraq of his brutal tyranny (Rutherford 2004: 148).

In addition, El-Rayyes (2006) compared the accusations used against Nasser in 1956 and Hussein in 2003 to assert that they followed the similar patterns in supporting terrorism and of being another Hitler:

Britain invaded an Arab state [Egypt] that was ruled by a president described by the [British] Prime Minister as a dictator similar to Hitler and supporting terrorism, as well as threatening Western interests in the Middle East. This was half a century ago, when Antony Eden reacted to Gamal Abdel Nasser’s decision to nationalise the Suez Canal. His successor Tony Blair did the same after fifty years, when invading another Arab state, Iraq, with similar accusations. In the Egypt of Abdel Nasser, Britain invaded without the knowledge and the support of the United States. In the Iraq of Saddam Hussein, Britain invaded under the wing of the United States and with its approval. The allegations to invade the two countries were similar: Dictatorship, threatening Western interests and terrorism (El-Rayyes 2006: 72-73).

Yong and Jesser (1997) also argued that the exploitation of the media to demonise “an enemy” is a strategy often pursued “as a precursor to limited conflicts”. Thus, in the 1991 Gulf war, and “in the absence of any direct threat to the home nation”, and to justify the conflict as a moral act of liberation for Kuwait, popular outrage must be focused on the leader of the target nation (Yong and Jesser 1997: 169). By doing this, public perceptions of the war would develop into supporting military action against Saddam Hussein, and consequently would turn to become supportive of the warfare efforts.

According to Willcox (2005), one of the most striking elements of propaganda techniques utilized during conflict is the metonymic role of the leader figure:

The cultivation of a particular public attitude towards the enemy leader is a desired war aim for political and military planners and constitutes a vital component of the war narrative. The identification of the enemy leadership provides a focal point towards which the war effort can be targeted. Once the leader is identified, the

character and perception of that individual can be cultivated and presented to the public to support the policy aims of government (Willcox 2005: 92).

Further, Willcox argued that when portraying the role of the opponent's leader figure the propaganda takes two forms:

First, the war or crisis is specifically personalized with the enemy leader so that the introduction of their name becomes synonymous with the conflict. Second, the individual, once directly associated with the conflict, is demonized, provoking negative connotations through the invoking of their name (ibid).

The two aspects, as Willcox stated, complement each other and provide a necessary framework for constructing a positive public attitude towards involvement in international crises (ibid). Further, the significance of demonizing the enemy leader figure is in keeping with the narrative formula of casting the combatants in the roles of "good" and "evil":

Once the enemy has been identified and linked with the conflict through personalization, the demonizing strengthens the negative connotations associated with him. For propaganda to be effective, it needs to address basic human elements, which stimulate emotions (ibid: 102).

Thus, it could be said, that the demonization of Saddam Hussein during the 1991 Gulf War, was a key element in the media strategy during the conflict, which was widely resonated in the media¹⁸ (Willcox 2005).

Furthermore, Mowlana (1992) asserted that in the 1991 Gulf War, the propaganda and communications strategy surrounding the conduct of the war entered a new dimension by destroying Iraq's civilian communications and power infrastructure:

While the United States and its allies were ready to mobilise and control communications media to their advantage, producing press conferences, bulletins, in-field interviews, and home audience and citizenry participation in support of their war efforts, their further strategy called for a new total destruction of Iraq's civilian communications and power infrastructure. Of equally high priority on the allied target list were Iraq's telecommunications sector, telephone, and other utilities. AT&T's telecommunications building in Baghdad was one of the first targets of the multinational forces warplanes, as was one of Iraq's multibillion-dollar state-of-the-art telecommunications facilities, the losses of which damaged the civilian economy. In short, unlike previous conflicts, conventional confrontation in the battlefield did not come until after the propaganda and communication strategy had succeeded both domestically and internationally (Mowlana 1992: 35).

¹⁸ The technique of demonization was also used in the Kosovo crisis in 1999 against Slobodan Milosevic. The Kosovo war will be discussed later in the chapter (author's note).

Targeting the telecommunications building was on the third day of the war. Regarding this incident, Peter Arnett of CNN - who was in Baghdad - wrote:

The skyline of Baghdad was changing before our eyes. Late that morning the telecommunications centre, one of the larger buildings of the city, was reduced to rubble. It just disappeared from the southern horizon. Our four-wire link with Atlanta died along with the centre and with it our instant communications. But we still had the satellite phone, its shiny metal case hidden behind the canned tuna boxes in the supply room (Arnett 1994: 377).

Having said this, it can be emphasised that managing the media and controlling the flow of information from the frontline battles would play an integrated part in war efforts. Therefore, it could be said that media strategies and information management would become essential to win the actual battles on the ground. The 1991 Gulf War represented an example of the importance of the role of media strategies to create a supportive public opinion about the war. The United States, as the leading player in the campaign against Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War, was particularly determined to ensure that its “information policy” was managed every bit as successfully as the political, diplomatic and military direction of the war, and this meant “simple themes, easily understood, readily assimilated and publicly aired” (Taylor 1998: 34).

In Britain, it was equally important to ensure that it spoke the same language as the United States (ibid), while France adopted an information policy stance that essentially reflected their NATO position: in, but apart from, the alliance:

One reason for this, as French Prime Minister Michel Rocard indicated, was the general official nervousness in Paris concerning the impact of coverage on France’s 4 million citizens from Muslim, Arab and African backgrounds (ibid).

As for Saudi Arabia, the principle partner in the coalition which was hosting the contributing military forces, including the non-Islamic media managers on the spot, Taylor argued that it was essential for the Saudis not only to provide the necessary facilities that would enable the world’s media to report in accordance with the needs of correspondents from a wide variety of reporting traditions and differing cultural backgrounds, but also “to balance against the necessity for allied military censorship and maintaining Saudi Arabia’s image and position within the Arab world” (ibid: 34-35).

Moreover, it was also essential, as the Americans recognised from the outset, for the coalition's Arab forces to play a high-profile role in the conflict:

The coalition's information war, therefore, would be run from four main centres: Washington, London, Dhahran and Riyadh. But television was to the information war what the United States would be for the military conflict; because the coalition would be American-led so would allied propaganda be television-led (ibid: 35).

According to Taylor, there were essentially three trends to the system established by the coalition forces for releasing information to the media actually present in Saudi Arabia:

The Joint Information Bureau in Dhahran; the arrangements made for daily press briefings in Riyadh; and the news pool system for journalists attached to the armed forces at the front (ibid: 51).

On the ground, the Pentagon proposed a series of reporting restrictions to ensure a careful and managed image of the coalition troops. Among these, forbidden areas were:

Spontaneous interviews with servicemen and women in the Gulf; off-the-record interviews with troops in the field; the filming or photography of soldiers in 'agony or severe shock'; and the transmission of 'imagery of patients suffering from severe disfigurements' (ibid: 35).

In addition to these restrictions on the ground, the Pentagon used the news pool system in order to reinforce the positive images from the battlefield. The pool system, according to Taylor, is an information policy that was designed to accommodate small group of designated journalists from the various branches of the media industry (newspapers, magazines, wire services, radio and television) so that if war broke out, those journalists "currently on call" would be flown out to the scene of the conflict. There, theoretically, following a 'security review' of their copy by military officials, "their reports would then be sent back to Washington by military channels for distribution by the Pentagon to the rest of the news media" (ibid).

2.4.2.1. Controlling the message: The news pool system

According to Knightley, the Pentagon decreed that the coverage of the 1991 Iraq war would be through "the pool system", as a limited number of correspondents would be chosen for each pool, escorted by military officers to cover various stages of the action "as chosen by the military", and then they would be expected to make their reports available to their colleagues who were not in the pool (Knightley 2000: 490). In Britain, the Ministry of Defence

announced that it, too, would operate a pool system for reporting from the war zone (ibid). Knightley also asserted that in addition to dividing the British media and putting them into the pool system, where they had to agree to submit all items, written or recorded, to censors before transmission back to London, “the MoD had another more subtle plan to get the correspondents “on side.” They had to wear uniforms” (ibid: 491).

Alex Thomson, who was there for Channel Four News, said: some loved it, others had reservations, some tried actively to slip out of them when appearing on camera. ... The powers that be wanted the journalists to meld, blend, bond even, with those around them (Thomson cited in Knightley 2000: 491).

According to Cottle, only journalists from the coalition nations - Britain, France and the US - were allowed to take up the 200 places allocated to the media reporting teams (MRTs) which, “under close supervision of public relations officers, could visit the troops encamped in the desert” (Cottle 2006: 76). Further, Cottle asserted that the American pool system did not permit independent satellite equipment, and copy and pictures had to be approved by military minders before being submitted via forward Transmission Units to the 1500 journalists (‘hotel warriors’) safely stationed in Riyadh “who received daily, carefully orchestrated, military briefings timed to coincide with press and television deadlines” (ibid). For those reporters who were allowed by the coalition to remain in Baghdad, their coverage was often criticized by politicians and other media, especially when reporting on casualties - “collateral damage” inflicted by coalition bombs (ibid). According to Moorcraft and Taylor (2008) there was a dispute over whether the media – when reporters in Baghdad reported on the effects of bombings – were serving as tools “for Iraqi propaganda” (Moorcraft and Taylor 2008: 159).

When the Iraqis escorted Peter Arnett to the bombed site of what they claimed was a baby milk plant (clearly marked as such in fresh paint in English). He was accused back home of being a traitor. The coalition countered the rising Iraqi accusations for its barbarism by claiming the baby milk plant site was really an installation for the development of chemical weapons (ibid).

Nevertheless, another challenge faced military restrictions on reporting the war, represented by the presence of reporters, who were not part of the pool system. According to Willcox, journalists who attempted to “work outside the structure and organisation of media representation associated with military”, were known as “unilaterals”. These journalists were to cause additional problems for the military (Willcox 2005: 65).

Therefore, the military “did its best to discourage them” (Knightley 2000: 491). Yet, these reporters, as Knightley stated, were able to correct information that was released by the

military to the pool reporters. Knightley illustrated the case of Robert Fisk of *The Independent*, who “refused to join any pool and went off on his own looking for stories”:

During the battle of Khafji, Fisk came across a pool of correspondents with a formation of Marines. An NBC-TV reporter in the pool spotted Fisk and shouted at him, “Get out of here you asshole. You will prevent us from working. You’re not allowed here, Get out. Go back to Dhahran.” He then called over a Marine public affairs officer and told him about Fisk’s presence. The Marine shouted, “You are not allowed to talk to U.S. Marines and they are not allowed to talk to you” (Knightley 2000: 292).

Fisk discovered that in one particular location between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Iraqi troops were fighting longer than was announced by the coalition, having pronounced it “liberated”:

It was a disturbing moment. By travelling to Khafji, The Independent discovered that the Iraqis were fighting in the town long after allied military spokesman had claimed that it had been liberated. For NBC reporter, however, the privileges of the pool and the military rules attached to it were more important than the right of journalists to do their job (Fisk cited in Knightley 2000: 492).

The trouble, as Knightley argued, was that whenever journalists or their employers complained that the pool system and the military briefings, at which high-ranking officers told the media as little as possible, amounted to censorship, the reply was along the lines of “Yes. So what?”:

The military and the American and British governments realised from their polls that the public knew that the news from the Gulf was being censored - and almost eighty per cent thought that this was a good idea. In fact, nearly sixty percent thought that the authorities should exert more control over the coverage of the war (ibid).

Additionally, Yong and Jesser stated that the pool system allowed the military to choose what reporters would be able to see and “when and where they would be able to see it” (Yong and Jesser 1997: 178). Thus, the pool system allowed for “indirect censorship never before seen on battlefield” (Yong and Jesser 1997: 178). David Benjamin (1995) also commented on this aspect, adding two particular tools that were used by the military; censorship through limited access and through delay (Benjamin 1995: np)¹⁹. The latter was not just through direct censorship, but through the insistence of the military on physical handling of any materials/formats over great distances by road or air, which caused significant delays in getting pool

¹⁹ ‘np’ means no page, as this is an online source. This abbreviation is used throughout the thesis to indicate online sources (author’s note).

reports back from the front line²⁰ (ibid). This also indicates that reporters could not use satellite themselves and had to rely on the military for sending their reports. Benjamin asserted that ‘the quickest a piece of video could make it back from the front was one day. Frequently it took three” (ibid). This would clearly reflect “the low priority the army gave to the news” (ibid). With regard to limited access, Benjamin stated:

Only a limited number of slots [assignments with the troops] were available, and this promoted dissension in the ranks of the press. Journalists from each of the specialty branches [photography, television, radio, and print] handled assignments to the pools, while the [US] Defense Department assigned the areas to be covered by the pools. The limited numbers of slots allowed only one journalist from the major media to be assigned to pools. Those not assigned were reduced to receiving the daily press briefing in Dhahran, or striking out on their own to find the news in the desert²¹ (ibid).

Furthermore, Benjamin argued that the pool also served “to limit the access by non-American reporters”:

Central command gave one pool slot to the Saudis, and one for the entire international contingent of the press. The result was international coverage that depended heavily on U.S. sources for video (ibid).

Another issue mentioned by Yong and Jesser was the regular briefings by the military, which gave “the impression” that the public was getting the news “straight from the horse’s mouth”. However, the sessions “were so stage managed that they gave the media little chance to probe or analyse” (Young and Jesser 1997: 178).

There was also manipulation and implied censorship in the selective release of the official television footage from combat aircraft, which formed a major part of the television coverage (ibid: 179).

Thus, a “sanitised” approach to coverage was encouraged by the military, in a complete contrast to the blanket ban on the bloody effects that weapons had on those at the recovering end (ibid). Yong and Jesser also noted that military spokesmen referred to “targets” which, although they contained living people, were presented to audiences like images in a video game:

²⁰ According to Benjamin, press coverage in the Gulf was divided into several different pools, each of which assigned specialists from the four media specialties: print, photography, radio, and television. Consequently, pool reports would be brought back from the front to [the Central Command Jointed Information Bureau] in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and from there distributed to the other media participants in the pool (Benjamin 1995: np).

²¹ According to Benjamin, those reporters were known as “unilaterals” and the pool approach was designed to limit access to the troops by unilaterals by giving the pool reporters “a vested interest in keeping unilaterals out” (Benjamin 1995: np).

The sanitisation was even more pronounced when it came to friendly casualties. Reporters were not allowed to photograph an allied wounded soldier without the consent of the patient, the doctor and the soldier's commanding officer (ibid).

These restrictions clearly indicate that the reporting of civilian casualties was crucially considered by the military in order to maintain an image of a clean war, to be presented to audiences in the United States and possibly worldwide. However, images of civilian casualties from the bombing of the Al-Ameriyya shelter came to undermine the whole idea of a clean war.

2.4.2.2. Al-Ameriyya: covering civilian casualties

On the early hours of Wednesday 13 February 1991, the Al-Ameriyya shelter was hit by allied bombs, causing the death of hundreds of Iraqi civilians who were seeking protection from the shelling of Baghdad (Taylor 1998: 187-188). According to Knightley, the reporting of the Al-Ameriyya bombing threatened the most important element in the military's propaganda strategy—an attempt to change public perception of the nature of war itself, to convince everyone that new technology had removed much of war's horror:

From early on the military briefers were at pains to point out the “surgical” nature of air strikes on military targets: the cancer would be removed but the living flesh around it would be left untouched. “Smart” bombs dropped with “pinpoint accuracy” would take out only military installations; there would be little or no “collateral damage” (dead civilians). Iraq's military machine would be destroyed from the air so that any ground war would be over quickly (as indeed it was) (Knightley 2000: 494-495).

As Knightley stated, such claims aimed to paint a picture of a war almost without death; therefore a new language was used to soften the reality on the ground:

Bombing military targets in the heart of cities was “denying the enemy an infrastructure. People were “soft targets”. Saturation bombing was “laying down a carpet” (ibid: 495).

The idea, according to Knightley, was to suggest that “hardly any people were involved in modern warfare”:

This explained the emphasis at press briefings on the damage “our machines” had caused to “their machines” and the reluctance of briefing officers to discuss casualties – on either side (ibid).

This approach was clearly different to Vietnam, as in this war there were “no more Vietnam-style ‘body counts’” (ibid). The rationale was that the public no longer had the stomach for a war in which substantial numbers of civilians were going to be killed, especially by Western high-tech armaments:

The Ameriyya bombing did not dent the image of “surgical strikes” and the accuracy of “smart bombs” because the military argued that although it was a mistake to bomb the bunker when civilians were in it, it was still a precision strike - the smart bombs had gone straight down the ventilator shaft. It was not until the war was over that the truth about “smart bombs” emerged, along with the myth of the “clean”, high-tech war (Knightley 2000: 495).

However, Taylor (1998) asserted that what appeared to be unique about the 1991 Gulf war was that it was “the first television war covered by the medium, sometimes live without pictures, sometimes with, from both sides of the conflict” (Taylor 1998: 7).

This was not without its controversies. The high-profile presence of television journalists from coalition countries in Baghdad, for example, led to charges that CNN was serving the interest of Iraqi propaganda and that its chief correspondent Peter Arnett was an Iraqi sympathiser. At one point the BBC was even described as the ‘Baghdad Broadcasting Corporation’ (Taylor 1998: 7-8).

As Taylor argued, in wartime, the potential for television to become a window onto the actual battle front is limited, “not just by the nature of the medium itself but also by the curtain of darkness which military censorship attempts to draw over it”. The window thus becomes a mirror for the images “generated by those controlling the information” (ibid: 9).

Thus, the arrangements made by the coalition for the release of information to the media during the 1991 Gulf war were a “highly effective form of allied propaganda”:

The debate over the arrangements tended to focus more on what the military was releasing – the ‘video game war’ rather than upon what it was not (ibid: 25).

In agreement with Taylor, Schiller (1992) stated that while the bombings and the ground war were underway, television screens “for hours on end” carried little but Pentagon briefings: Pentagon-released footage and reporters’ censored stories, most of which came from the armed forces information sources” (Schiller 1992: 25).

Nonetheless, Taylor claimed that this policy of releasing managed information had other ramifications supportive of the war, despite the negative results for the independence of the

media, and broadcasters hardly balked about the continuously positive tone in this information:

Yet it was because the released information was comparatively similar in its overall tone and thrust – ‘we are winning and we will go on winning’ – that a great opportunity for the armchair generals and strategists was created, with the result that audiences were subjected to a wealth of speculation by an army of pundits that was actually in violation of the very guide-lines issued to the media on the eve of the war (Taylor 1998: 25).

Nevertheless, Taylor argues that this attitude by broadcasters did have an added advantage, which was filling up air-time and distracting attention away from the paucity of hard information emerging from coalition news sources (ibid: 25-26).

Further, according to Carruthers, viewers during this war had received saturation television coverage, which offered “an illusion of both totality and reality, while remaining ignorant of much of what the war had entailed” (Carruthers 2000: 139).

As Knightley asserted, the 1991 Gulf War marked an important turning point in the history of war correspondents. Not only was it a war in which the military succeeded in changing people’s perceptions of what battle was really like, one in which the “surgical” precision of new high-tech weapons meant few if any civilian casualties, but one in which the way the war was communicated “was as important as the conduct of the war itself” (Knightley 2000: 500).

Thus, it could be said that lessons from this war, in terms of information control and management of news, were particularly taken into consideration when the United States went to war as part of the Nato forces in Kosovo in 1999, as well as the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq war.²²

2.5. The Media and Military Campaigns in Kosovo and Afghanistan

The media experience during the 1999 Kosovo war and the 2001 war in Afghanistan continued to develop in terms of media control, spin, information management and coverage. Further, the development of communication technologies, such as the remarkable advent of the internet, provided an additional platform for information, which – as will be reviewed in

²² Media strategies and coverage of the 2003 Iraq war will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

the following section – was used during the military operation in Kosovo for propaganda and reporting purposes. As for Afghanistan, the emergence of the Al-Jazeera satellite channel was unarguably significant, particularly in the way wars came to be communicated and reported.

2.5.1. The 1999 Kosovo War:

The media and the toppling of Milosevic

According to Knightley (2000), the bombing campaign against Serbia which Nato waged between March and June 1999 was its first war since its creation in 1949, a war that brought to it all the skills for managing the media and arousing public support that its member countries, particularly the United States and Britain, had polished during the Gulf War.

The Balkans had been in turmoil since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and Yugoslavia began to splinter into small independent states. Vicious civil wars broke out between Serb, Croat and Muslim groups, sometimes with atrocities and heavy loss of life. Western media called this fighting “ethnic cleansing”, and painted it in black-and-white terms with simple “goodies and baddies” (Knightley 2000: 501).

Knightley argued that in early 1999, Western negotiators felt they had failed to get the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, to stop the “ethnic cleansing” of Albanians in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo, to withdraw the army the Serbs stationed there, and to allow Kosovar refugees who had fled to neighbouring states to return home. Thus, an alliance of Nato members decided that they would use force and “bomb him into submission” (ibid: 502).

Once this decision had been made, a meticulously prepared system of propaganda and media control - especially in the United States and Britain - swung into action. Colonel P.J. Crowley, spokesman for the American National Security Council said, “You have to plan your media strategy with as much attention as you plan your military strategy” (ibid).

On the other hand, according to Laity (2005) Milosevic knew that his only hope of victory was not to defeat NATO in battle, but for the alliance to simply have to stop fighting because it lacked the public support to continue (Laity 2005: 276-277).

The impact of the media in such circumstances was critical, and as the campaign progressed Milosevic grew more adept at exploiting the Western media. For instance, the movement of Belgrade-based journalists were usually heavily restricted, but whenever a bomb missed its target and killed civilians, coaches were laid on to view the carnage. It was simple but effective. The reports and the images had an emotional punch, while simultaneously questioning the competence of NATO and whether it

was a achieving its aims. Doubts were also cast on the morality of a conflict, started to defend the innocent, which was instead killing some of them (ibid: 277).

In a major escalation during this conflict, Nato targeted the Serbian Radio and Television (RTS) building, and the bombing of this civilian facility was justified by Nato officials as being a propaganda tool. According to Herman and Peterson (2000), Nato's threats to bomb RTS began in early April 1999, when Nato supreme commander Wesley Clark accused them of being "an instrument of propaganda and repression of the Milosevic government", and hence "legitimate military targets" (Herman and Peterson 2000: 119). However, Herman and Peterson stated that sixteen journalists and media personnel were killed in the strikes that targeted the building, which was also used and occupied by journalists from US broadcast networks, but who left the building just one day before the attack. The *Washington Post's* media critic Howard Kurtz reported that:

CNN and the US broadcast networks, which had been feeding videotape from the building, abandoned it after receiving private warnings from senior White House and Pentagon officials that Nato would soon hit the facility (Kurtz cited in Herman and Peterson 2000: 119-120).

According to Virilio (2000), the bombing of the RTS building was a "media intervention" aimed to silence the Serbian audio-visual resources:

There is a great deal to say about this "control" of information flows, this totalitarian form of *media intervention* in which bombs replace the arguments and counter-propaganda directed at battered communities. This was, indeed, very clearly explained to the New York Times by Svetlana Radosevic, a sport commentator on RTS Belgrade when she said: "*If you think I am lying, you don't need to kill me to prove it*" (Virilio 2000: 25).

The battle for control and management of information from the battlefields and the "enemy side" would be echoed in the news. This could be clearly noticed in the use of language, the selection of news items and imagery and the treatment of news stories and events, as well as in the degree of focus on civilian casualties in the news bulletins and the live coverage. For this reason, news could also be used by warring parties to play a role in their propaganda battle. According to Knightley, wartime news could play a remarkable role within wartime propaganda, since wartime news consists of two main elements:

... [N]ews of the fighting and the justification for it. Governments want to control both but they devote most attention to justify what they are doing. "To sell a war in a democracy when you're not attacked, you have to demonise the leader or show that there are humanitarian reasons for going in", said S. Robert Lichter, president of the

Centre for Media Public Affairs in Washington. “George Bush demonised Saddam Hussein. We did something of the same with Milosevic” (Knightley 2000: 502).

In agreement with Knightley, Ackerman and Naureckas (2000) also underlined that, when the bombing began, Nato stressed the idea that Milosevic alone was responsible for the war, and that the air strikes were aimed only at him:

‘We’re not at war with anybody, and certainly not with the people of Yugoslavia’, Nato spokesperson Jamie Shea insisted at a 5 April Nato briefing. At first, most of the US media went along with this line, presenting a rather colourless opportunistic bureaucrat as a Hitlerian lunatic who had single-handedly launched war after war to satisfy his own personal hatreds (Ackerman and Naureckas 2000: 105).

According to Hume (2000), the most effective way to demonize anybody is to link them somehow to the Nazi experience:

The accusation that President Milosevic’s Serbia was carrying out “another Holocaust” in Kosovo was the culmination of a long campaign to Nazify the Serbs, which had escalated throughout the conflict in former Yugoslavia (Hume 2000: 71).

Linking the Serbs to the Nazis had been through accusations that they had committed genocide, “first in Serbia and then in Kosovo” (ibid).

According to Knightley, the images that the British government called up to demonize the Serbs came from Britain’s “finest hour”, the Second World War:

The Serbs were Nazi thugs, intent on genocide. Milosevic was likened to Hitler. The words “Gestapo”, “Auschwitz-style furnaces” and “Holocaust” were used (Knightley 2000: 507).

Goff (1999) contended that Nato set out to demonize Milosevic in order to justify the bombing in a simplistic manner and to squarely lay all the blame for the tragic effects of the war at his feet. The media “to a great extent” took their cue from Nato leaders and spokesmen and built stories around the dictatorial, demonic Milosevic (Goff 1999: 16).

Nevertheless, in the campaign to “liberate” Kosovo, both sides in the conflict understood the importance of manipulating real-time news to their own advantage (Welch 2005: xvi). Thus, the use of various forms of communication technologies was one of the major features added to the media war in this conflict. With the growth of the internet, this war became the first in which the internet featured a significant part of the information and propaganda campaign

(ibid). However, the internet was not only used for propaganda purposes, but also for humanitarian purposes:

The propaganda war in the Kosovo conflict, and particularly the use made of the Internet by all sides, including non-government actors, highlights the forces of change between the pre-Cold War era and the current globalization information environment (ibid: xvii).

Alternatively, this conflict significantly attracted the media to profoundly engage in reporting the military campaign against Milosevic. Knightley asserted that there were more war correspondents than ever before, as “2700 media people accompanied Nato forces when they entered Kosovo at the end of the bombing campaign”²³ (Knightley 2000: 504). In addition, the revolution in communication technology played a significant role in reporting this conflict:

The revolution in communication technology – the satellite phone, “the star of the war”; instant television links from the front to the studio and between correspondents in the field; electronic transmission of still photographs, and the latest arrival at the front, the internet – should have provided the public with an unprecedented overview of the war (Knightley 2000: 504).

However, despite all these developments in communication, Knightley argued that the public “drowned” in wave after wave of images that added up “to nothing” (ibid). Sky correspondent Jake Lynch stated: “We were given lots of material but no information” (Lynch cited in Knightley 2000: 504).

Furthermore, Knightley stated that the devastation of the war revealed that war casualties were primarily civilians, who were subjected to the carnage of war:

Not a single Nato soldier was killed in action and not many Serb ones either. Instead, the casualty lists were filled with civilians (between 10,000 to 15,000) in keeping with the trend that has shifted the danger of dying in war from soldiers to civilians – at the beginning of the century, ninety percent of casualties in war were soldiers; at the end of the century ninety percent of casualties in war were civilians (Knightley 2000: 505).

According to Goff, the killing of civilians was the issue that had “greatest potential to erode the unity of the military alliance”:

²³ According to Knightley, in Vietnam at its peak there were about 500 war correspondents (Knightley 2000: 504)

When questions relating to civilian casualties were put to the Nato spokespeople, the approach was to react with a blatant lie, under the assumption that the ensuing headline would have the lasting impact. Each new civilian tragedy was offset by repeated Serb atrocity stories and pictures of the plight of refugees (Goff 1999: 15).

One of the remarkable events that targeted civilians was probably the attack on two groups of Albanian refugees in the Djakovica region on 14 April 1999.²⁴ The incident had generated a number of claims, which led to “a chain of Nato lies”:

First off, the German defence minister, Rudolf Scharping, accused the Serbs of the attack. The next day, in a press release issued by the Brussels headquarters, Nato admitted that one of its planes had dropped one bomb on a civilian vehicle by mistake but continued to imply that the Serbs were in some way culpable. Accounts from survivors said the planes had circled overhead and had bombed three or four times. Western journalists found scenes of disasters with scores of bodies and burnt out houses and tractors. Nato insisted for days afterwards that only in one case had they hit a civilian target. On April 19, they changed the official story and admitted that it had hit two convoys using about 12 planes that dropped a total of nine bombs. It made public a recording of one of the pilots responsible for bombing the first convoy, who said before bombing, the vehicles in question were “of a military type”. Two days later, Nato admitted that the recording had no connection with the bombing of the convoys (ibid).

However, by the time the admission came, the war had moved on and other developments were grabbing the headlines (ibid). This could be seen as part of a systematic approach to absorb possible public outrage that might occur arising from the incident by delaying the admission for a few days. Thus the impact of the civilian devastation from this incident would become less effective on the public and news consumers of the war.

Knightley asserted that in the comparatively short history of media management in wartime there can have been no system so skilfully designed to win the propaganda war. However, the experience of the Kosovo war suggested that “Nothing was left to chance”:

The reporting of every correspondent writing about Kosovo was monitored and if necessary instantly rebutted. Nato’s line on every likely aspect of the war was developed, polished and rehearsed ... There was even a section of the MOC [Media Operations Centre] which spent its time dreaming up pithy phrases for [Jamie] Shea [the Nato spokesman] to insert into his briefings with the hope that they would appeal to the headline writers and to television producers looking for a good sound bite (Knightley 2000: 513).

²⁴ It was reported that NATO planes struck two convoys of ethnic Albanians trying to flee Kosovo, killing as many as 85 people (*CNN News Online* 14 September 1999: np).

Further, allegations of having chemical weapons were also used against the Milosevic regime (similar allegations were used against Saddam Hussein in the 1991 and 2003 Iraq wars).

The Pentagon Spokesman Kenneth Bacon was to declare on 16 April 1999: “We believe there is still a chemical weapons capability of unknown quantity in Yugoslavia today” (Bacon cited in Virilio 2000: 7).

For Virilio, that declaration was a prelude to an imminent change in the Balkans that well illustrated the limits “of the famous *duty to intervene*”:

This is not an *ethical* limit, as one might naively believe, but a *strategic* limit, such as the limit which, in the case of *nuclear deterrence* more than forty years ago, imposed the *terroristic equilibrium between East and West* – but did so at the cost of putting all life on the planet under threat of extinction (Virilio 2000: 7).

Thus, allegations of owning weapons of mass destruction capabilities seemed to serve as part of the media and political strategies against opponent regimes in order to win domestic and international public support for military interventions against regimes, which could allegedly use these weapons to threaten international stabilities, as happened against Milosevic and Saddam Hussein. Further, the coalition of the intervening forces would normally insist in their message to the media on the accuracy of their military power and their capabilities to avoid targeting civilians. This was evident in the 1999 Kosovo war, as Carruthers (2005) contended that, picking up where the 1991 Gulf War left off, the Kosovo campaign saw extensive efforts on the part of the NATO image-managers to insist that the new missile systems “can actually *realise* the aspiration of a casualty-free war on both sides”:

Civilian fatalities were repeatedly described as the result of either faulty human intelligence or of Milosevic’s dastardly – cynically placing people in harm’s way in order to expose NATO’s self-proclaimed scrupulosity over “collateral damage” as sham (Carruthers 2005: 238).

Carruthers also argued that even the images of dead civilian victims were deliberately controlled by the military during the campaign:

Human casualties were not simply “disappeared” by the virtualizing revolution in military affairs, they have been deliberately excised by militaries unshakeably wedded to the axiom that television war precludes victory – unless battlefield images are rigidly rationed (ibid: 241).

This policy may suggest that civilian publics may be engaged by the spectacle - mobilized by the rhetoric and symbolism of wars as a communal endeavour - but their participation is (and only needs to be) shallow:

Death-free war thus slides into “spectator-sport”, in which nothing very meaningful, or very “real”, seems to be at stake for all that crowds might enthusiastically cheer their own team to victory (ibid).

However, despite all these measures to control the imagery of and information about the war, Knightley asserted that, by the third week of the bombing campaign, it had created the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, as one million refugees fled Kosovo into neighbouring countries:

The combination of ethnic cleansing by the Serbs and the bombing by Nato had turned a local crisis into an international disaster (Knightley 2000: 513-514).

Yet Western media continued during the conflict to transmit stories of “atrocities” alleged to have been committed by the Serbian regime against civilians. According to Virilio, this was another aspect of the information war, concerned with the “humanitarian” dimension of the conflict, in which the civilian population are on the frontline:

On 12 April, the ABC channel informed its viewers that the Pentagon had in its possession satellite images which proved the existence of mass graves in Kosovo. The channel referred to “around a hundred places” where the earth had been dug over”, but ABC did not show a single one of these pictures, when in fact the decimetric high-definition of military photographs is of such precision that the likelihood of this kind of *proof by image* being achieved is very great. Moreover, two days earlier, the Pentagon had shown satellite photographs of groups of Kosovars camping out in the hills after fleeing their villages. ABC did not, however, specify the possible correlation between this exodus of unfortunates and the possibility of their having been massacred (Virilio 2000: 21).

Nevertheless, the media were persistent in searching for “mass” graves stories, even after the end of the war. According to Knightley, when the bombing ended and the war correspondents were able to enter Kosovo, high on their agenda was to explore the existence of mass graves:

There was no doubt that the Serbs had killed Kosovars during the war. But were there “mass” killings, “mass” executions, “mass” graves? And if so, were they part of a “systematic” campaign? (Knightley 2000: 521).

The question of “mass” graves was probably one of the major issues that had been used in a propagandistic manner to reveal the brutality of Milosevic’s regime and to contribute in

establishing public support for Nato's military campaign against him. However, Knightley cites Ben Ward, a researcher for Human Rights Watch, who had been cautious during the war, and who revealed that there was an element of exaggeration on this subject in order to appeal to news consumers and gain public support:

There does not appear to be anything to support allegations of mass killing. It is generally paramilitaries who are responsible. It does not seem organised. There appear to be individual acts of sadism rather than anything else. There seems not to be a policy or instruction, but that is not to say that people have not been given the latitude to kill. However, I do not think at this stage we have anything that adds up to the systematic killing of civilians (Ward cited in Knightley 2000: 521).

According to Knightley, the lies, manipulation, news management, propaganda, spin, distortion, omission, slant and gullibility of the coverage of this war, so soon after the media debacle in the Gulf, "has brought war correspondents to crisis point in their short history. Their role has never been more insecure" (Knightley 2000: 525).

This was probably a reflection of the effect of the extended control of the media by government and military regulations during wars. Such control led Knightley to question the role of war correspondents in contemporary conflicts:

What are war correspondents for? What is expected of them? Who still believes them? There was a U.S. Congressional fact-finding mission to Yugoslavia on April 18-21 because some congressmen felt they could not trust the media or the Administration to tell them what was really happening (Knightley 2000: 525).

Given this emerging distrust of the media in conflict situations, it becomes much easier to understand the role of most of the American media outlets during the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq war. In terms of war coverage, this role could be seen as a continuity of their performance in covering the 1999 Kosovo war, where active media strategies had an effect on how the war was reported and consequently perceived.

With regard to the public perception of the war, Knightley contended that there was little demand for television to show "the true face of battle", as "many viewers" said that images of bomb victims and battle casualties would be "too upsetting" (ibid: 525-526). This was an additional factor for media strategists to consider in their policies to manage the media during the military campaign:

Armed with information like this, the likelihood is that governments, their spin doctors, propagandists and military commanders will find further justification for managing the media in wartime and that the Gulf [1991] and Kosovo will become the pattern for all future wars. In fact, I predict that the control of war correspondents – both open and covert – will be even tighter and that in general this will be accepted by the media because in wartime it considers its commercial and political interests commercial and political interests lie in supporting the government of the day (ibid: 526).

In their evaluation of the role of CNN in covering the 1999 Kosovo war, Herman and Peterson (2000) stated that maintaining good terms with US officials was of paramount importance to CNN as it depended on the US government for commercial and diplomatic support as it extends abroad, “and because much of its news comes from government decisions, press releases and reports” (Herman and Peterson 2000: 112). This exceptional degree of source dependency, as described by Herman and Peterson, and the symbiotic relationship it produces, makes for an uncritical media institution consciously allied with, and readily managed by, the government (ibid). During the Kosovo war, Herman and Peterson contended that CNN and its reporters followed Nato’s lead and served as a *de facto* public information partner:

These journalists never questioned Nato’s motives, explored any hidden agendas, challenged Nato’s claims of facts, or followed investigatory leads that did not conform to Nato propaganda requirements (ibid: 113).

When Nato bombed the Serbian Radio and Television station, according to Herman and Peterson, CNN “never reported the fact that it had received a private, high-level US official warning to evacuate the building”. Furthermore, CNN followed the Nato claim that the building was a “military target” without questioning the attack, which, according to Herman and Peterson, was “a violation of the rules of war that preclude deliberate attacks on non-military targets”. Thus, for Herman and Peterson, the bombing of RTS and the deaths arising from it constitute a “war crime” (ibid: 120).

As Nato claimed that these were legitimate ‘military’ targets, that was enough for CNN. The issue was never addressed, and CNN’s definitions of ‘war crimes’ were confined to those proclaimed by Nato and its war crimes tribunal adjunct at The Hague (ibid).

The example of CNN would certainly indicate the complex relationship between the media and the military during conflicts, pointing to the influence of various elements on the messages broadcast. These elements, as demonstrated above, would normally include

political, economic and cultural aspects. Thus, their impact are the key factors to understand the variations in covering later conflicts, especially when other media organisations emerged into the international arena, such as Arab satellite channels like Al-Jazeera, which had a different approach in covering the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq war.²⁵

This also clearly indicates that the role of the media in covering conflicts witnessed major developments during the twentieth century, even marking transformations in the duties of war correspondents, such as by becoming more dependent on the military and the governments' institutions. This led to what Knightley described as the end of the age of the war correspondent "as hero":

Whether they wish to continue as propagandists and myth makers, subservient to those who wage the wars, is a decision they will have to take themselves (Knightley 2000: 526).

The experience of the war in Afghanistan brought to the scene not only new media players, such as Al-Jazeera, but also added new dimensions to the way wars are communicated. This diversity in reporting conflicts could be arguably seen as setting new grounds for media strategists to consider, as it poised more challenges to information policy control and information management, yet it also widened media organizations choices in getting information by providing alternative versions to the reported incidents within the conflicts.

2.5.2. The 2001 war in Afghanistan: The media and the toppling of the Taliban

The 2001 war in Afghanistan presented another example of military intervention in which media strategy continued to be part of war communication in order to win public support for that war. Yet this conflict could be seen as no exception to previous wars in terms of news management and information control. According to Lewis et al (2006), a military news management model developed between the conflicts in the Falklands and Afghanistan that favours the military in terms of its control and restrictions (Lewis et al 2006: 12). However, "the post-Vietnam military model" may have been "effective at imposing restrictions on what journalists can report from the side of the American or British military" but, as argued by Lewis et al, it does not necessarily control the material from elsewhere (ibid: 13). This

²⁵ Arab satellite channels and the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war will be discussed in chapters Four and Six (author's note).

happened during the Falklands conflict, when the BBC used reports from Buenos Aires to fill its air time coverage (ibid). With regard to this point, Lewis et al argued that the post-Vietnam model's restrictions on news content also restricted news *quantity*, forcing broadcasters to go elsewhere to fill the airtime (ibid).

In addition, the developments in communication technologies have been clearly important in achieving better access to information from the battlefields, which also helped broadcasters to use these materials to fill airtime coverage:

... with the proliferation of twenty-four-hour rolling news services during the 1990s on cable, satellite, and digital platforms, alongside the emergence of al-Jazeera and other Arabic news channels, the development of cheap and portable cameras and satellite dishes, both the amount of airtime to be filled and the range of material that could be used to fill the airtime expanded exponentially (ibid).

Beyond technological aspects, there is no doubt that the presence of Al-Jazeera satellite channel in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan extended the coverage of this war by focusing on civilian casualties and revealing the devastation of the war on civilian life. This kind of coverage provided an alternative perspective to US media coverage.

Most of the coverage framed the war in terms of the human toll and the personal suffering of Afghans (Jasperson and El-Kikhia 2003: 127).

Thus, it could be also said that the presence of Al-Jazeera was significant in terms of critically covering the American military operations by revealing the impact of the bombing on civilians, and challenging political claims over the war by focusing on the humanitarian side of the conflict. Such a performance posed a serious challenge to the American administration's media and communication strategies during the war:

Graphic video footage of death and destruction had a profound affect on Arab audiences. Unlike the US media, Al-Jazeera did not acquiesce to the Bush administration requests to sanitize its Afghan footage. There was concerted effort by Al-Jazeera not to gloss over the Afghan campaign in the same way US and global media glossed over the [1991] Persian Gulf War that claimed more lives and caused more infrastructure damage. To the end, Al-Jazeera's correspondents documented the impact of the US bombing on Afghan civilians (Jasperson and El-Kikhia 2003: 127-128).

According to Jasperson and El-Kikhia (2003), presenting these images for the world to see "did not sit well" with the Bush administration and the American Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld. However, as a result of its coverage in Afghanistan, Al-Jazeera earned the

reputation as one of the very few mediums “bearing witness” to “social and political injustice in the region”. The US reaction was stark:

According to Nic Gowing, a presenter on BBC, Al-Jazeera’s office in Kabul was deliberately bombed by the United States because “it was ‘bearing witness’ to events the US would rather it did not see” (ibid: 128).

The war in Afghanistan came as a response to the atrocities of 9/11 which, as stated by Kellner (2003), led to a wealth of commentary arguing that the post–September 11 world became a different one to that before, i.e., “less innocent, more serious, and significantly altered, with momentous modifications in the economy, polity, culture, and everyday life” (Kellner 2003: 38-39).

In the days following 9/11, support for the Bush administration was strongly fuelled by the media that provided 24/7 coverage of the heroism of the fire, police, and rescue workers at the World Trade Centre. This coverage was combined with demonizing coverage of bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda network of terrorists, and indeed a demand for strong military retaliation (ibid: 39). In addition, the coverage of the “anthrax attacks” also contributed to fuel “media hysteria and mass panic” that terrorism “could strike anyone, at anytime, and at any place” (ibid).

Technologies that were part and parcel of everyday life, such as airplanes or mail delivery, could be weapons of destruction. Furthermore, fears proliferated that terrorism threatened Americans anywhere and anytime, creating new forms of insecurity and anxiety that the media fuelled with hysterical coverage of the anthrax, endless accounts of terrorist networks, and highly dramatized reports of the Afghanistan Terror War (ibid: 41).

To help generate and sustain widespread public desire for military intervention in Afghanistan, Kellner argued that US media networks played “segments after segments detailing the harm done to victims of the bombing”:

They kept their cameras aimed at “Ground Zero” to document the damage, destruction, and drama of discovery of dead bodies. Moreover, they constructed report after report on the evil of bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda terrorists who had allegedly committed the atrocities (ibid: 57).

For Kellner, the US corporate media continued to fan the war fever. Thus, media frames shifted from “American under Attack” to “America arising,” and “America Strikes Back,”

and “America’s New War” – even before any military action was undertaken, as if the media frames “were to conjure the military response” that followed (ibid: 66).

The [US] flag became a dominant icon for television news logos and graphics, as well as a potent advertising device for a wealth of products (ibid: 67).

It was not until Sunday, 7 October 2001, that the Bush administration unleashed a full military assault on Afghanistan. The stated goal was purportedly to annihilate the bin Laden network and to destroy the Taliban regime in Afghanistan that had allowed the Al-Qaeda network to operate in their country (ibid: 71). The unilateralism of the US response, according to Kellner, was striking, and leading American newspapers provided a rationale for US rejection of a multinational UN or NATO military coalition against international terrorism:

In the lead up to a possible military strike, senior administration and allied officials said Mr. Rumsfeld’s approach this week made clear that the United States intends to make it as much as possible an all American campaign. One reason, they said, is that the United States is determined to avoid limitations on its targets that were imposed by NATO allies during the 1999 war in Kosovo, or the hesitance to topple a leader that members of the gulf²⁶ war coalition felt in 1991 (*New York Times*, 7 October 2001 cited in ibid).

Nonetheless, British troops joined the American forces in this war, although the British military support was “minimal” (ibid).

Furthermore, when US president, George W. Bush announced the attack in a speech from the Oval Office, he proclaimed that the US was carrying out military action in Afghanistan because the Taliban had refused to hand over bin Laden; thus, “the Taliban will pay the price. By destroying camps and disrupting communications we will make it more difficult for the terror network to train new recruits and coordinate their evil plans” (ibid: 72). On the same day, the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite channel aired a video feed of speech from bin Laden calling for “a Jihad to destroy America” (ibid).

Hudson and Stanier (1997) argued that, during the 1991 Gulf War, the US administration viewed four aspects of media reporting which could prove critical to their use: the need to maintain the security of their plans; the need to convince the world of the justice of their cause; the need to avoid reporting anything that might damage the coalition with their allies;

²⁶ Non capitalisation is as in original quote.

and, finally, the need to avoid reporting or showing anything that might affect the support of their people at home (Hudson and Stanier 1997: 222).

For Bessaiso (2005), the monopoly of live coverage, which CNN had secured during the Gulf war, helped the administration to maintain these aspects. However, during the war in Afghanistan, the situation was different, due to the presence of Al-Jazeera:

The need to maintain these four aspects of media reporting still existed, only the monopoly of live coverage from Afghanistan lay this time in the hands of a 24-hour Arab news channel. The Western media found themselves relying on a relatively new and obscure network for the only live coverage available from Afghanistan (Bessaiso 2005: 156).

However, the major American concern was that the exclusive coverage by Al-Jazeera of the consequences of the war and the transmission of bin Laden's statements would have the undesired effect of galvanising Arab support for his cause by indentifying his actions with the suffering of the Palestinians and the plight of the Iraqis (ibid).

This intense situation would reveal the power and influence of wartime propaganda and media strategies during conflicts. Yet, amid this media battles, Kellner argued that while British and US TV networks had been engaging in relentless war propaganda for the first several days of the bombing, there was an element of critical coverage to the military intervention, as on 9 October 2001, when both BBC TV in Britain and ABC TV in the US were remarkably critical:

The network reports cited civilian damage and the killing of UN workers in Afghanistan via US bombing, the anthrax scare and hysteria in the US, refugee problems in Afghanistan and protests in the Arab world. They also noted problems with the food deliveries that were supposed to legitimate the intervention and contrast it as a humanitarian operation that would benefit the Afghan people (Kellner 2003: 76).

Nevertheless, the necessity to control the flow of information was a persistent priority within the US administration, especially with regard to the broadcast tapes of bin Laden on Al-Jazeera. Thus, as part of the administration's measures to achieve this, Condoleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor, had a conference call with top television executives, imploring them to no longer broadcast live bin Laden tapes since they could send "secret messages" to "sleeper" agents and unleash new terror. This came after the broadcast of another tape from

Al-Qaeda on 9 October 2001²⁷ (ibid). The week before that, Colin Powell urged the Emir of Qatar to restrict broadcasting of bin Laden and Al-Qaeda tapes on Al-Jazeera (ibid).

Similar measures were taken in the UK, as Bessaiso stated, Downing Street “fired a warning shot” on 15 October 2001 across the bows of Britain’s television broadcasters over their role in the propaganda war between the US-led coalition and bin Laden and Al-Qaeda:

At a meeting on October 16 with key staff from British broadcasters, [Alastair] Campbell [Tony Blair’s Communications Chief] warned his audience to be careful in their use of material taken from Al-Jazeera. In Campbell’s words, “the media have responsibilities beyond simply saying, one side says this, and the other side says that. That way lies a sense of moral equivalence. I do not think the media should suspend its own moral judgment” (Bessaiso 2005: 159).

According to Bessaiso, this warning was unlikely to change the broadcaster’s commitment to obtaining information and pictures from Al-Jazeera. “It is assumed that No. 10 tried to avoid charges of censorship, which had surfaced as a result of similar policies in the US” (ibid). However, the warning was enough to make broadcasters think twice about sensitive editorial decisions and, possibly, to consult the government rather than face accusations of “unpatriotic conduct, such as governments of both main parties have levelled during every recent military action” (ibid). Nevertheless, despite the efforts made by the British government and the US administration, the information war during this crisis proved to be tougher than destroying airfields in Afghanistan” (ibid).

According to Kellner, on 11 November 2001, there was a protest in Atlanta against CNN’s news coverage, with demonstrators chanting, “CNN: half the story, all the time.” The protestors said that millions of Afghans faced starvation because of the bombing, but CNN was not reporting the story – nor were the other US television networks (Kellner 2003: 107). On the other hand, on 12 November 2001, Al-Jazeera’s office in Kabul was targeted by a US missile, resulting in the total destruction of the building. The same missile also damaged the AP and BBC bases in Kabul (Bessaiso 2005: 161). Although the Pentagon denied that it deliberately targeted Al-Jazeera’s office, the widespread reaction among Al-Jazeera staff was

²⁷ According to El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2002), on 9 October 2001, Al-Jazeera broadcast a taped statement by a spokesman of Al-Qaeda, Suliman Abu Gieth (El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002: 150). The tape was delivered to Al-Jazeera by one of the group’s associates in Kabul (ibid). In the statement, Abu Gieth asked Muslims to wage “Jihad” against the United States (ibid). Further, Abu Gieth demanded that the United States and Britain withdraw from Afghanistan or “the land would burn under their feet” (ibid).

that it was not a mistake, but a deliberate act to silence the channel. Ibrahim Helal, the head of news at Al-Jazeera during the war, spoke by telephone to the New World conference in Barcelona in 2001 to reveal that:

Al-Jazeera's office in Kabul had been on the Pentagon's list of targets since the beginning of the conflict, but the US did not want to bomb it while the broadcaster was the only one in based in Kabul (ibid).

Further, Mohammed Jasim Al-Ali, Al-Jazeera's former Managing Director, stated that the office was hit about two hours before the Northern Alliance²⁸ took over Kabul, adding that:

If the office was not hit we could have covered the entering of the Northern Alliance and the massacres committed in Kabul (Al-Ali cited in ibid).

However, during the major military operations against the Taliban regime, Al-Jazeera managed to provide an alternative perspective of the conflict. This performance by Al-Jazeera could be seen as opening a new era in covering military interventions, especially in the Middle East, where the media scene had continued to develop remarkably after the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq.

Thus, it could be said that, with developments in communication and telecommunication technologies, media strategies and information management during conflicts would face more challenges than were faced before in terms of information control. The 2001 Afghanistan war provided a clear example, through Al-Jazeera, of the power of media in challenging wartime media strategies. It also highlighted the emergence of Arab media into the international arena of media organisations. According to Jaspersen and El-Kikhia (2003), coverage of the war in Afghanistan, with little competition from domestic Middle Eastern media outlets, provided Al-Jazeera with the opportunity to hone many of the skills needed to successfully operate in the international arena:

²⁸ According to Fiona Symon (2001), the Northern Alliance is made up of an "ethnically and religiously disparate group of rebel movements" united in their desire to topple the Taliban regime (Symon, *BBC News Online*, 19 September 2001: np).

The alliance is primarily comprised of three non-Pashtun ethnic groups – Tajiks, Uzbeks and the Hazaras – and in the past relied on a core of some 15,000 troops to defend its territories against the predominantly Pashtun Taliban (*BBC News Online*, 13 November 2001: np).

The Alliance had controlled fewer than 5% of Afghanistan - the Panjshir valley and a small enclave in the mountainous north-east (ibid). However, it was the United States decision to back the Northern Alliance in its efforts against the Taliban – including the bombardment of Taliban front line positions – which marked a major reversal of the Alliance's fortunes (ibid).

The coverage of the war in Afghanistan might have been a small event in the development of the Arab media, yet it did remove the shackles that had until then hampered its development (Jasperson and El-Kikhia 2003: 130).

As stated by Jasperson and El-Kikhia, no Arab media outlet in the past has covered any war using its own correspondents or resources. Hitherto, they had relied on the BBC or other Western media outlets for news feeds:

Their coverage of wars was purely from a humanitarian perspective and Al-Jazeera began its coverage along those lines. Its success and growth have earned it both legitimacy and viewers along with confidence to approach conflict and war from different perspectives. Also, what makes its coverage so potent is the fact that the only limit its owners placed upon it is over reporting from Qatar. The rest of the world is open territory for it to experiment in and as evident by the success of its experimentation, it is forcing a change on not only other media outlets in the region but also on non-Arab media covering Arab issues²⁹ (ibid: 131).

Thus, it could be argued that this development in the field of news coverage, along with advancements in communication technologies, have also contributed effectively to the mediatization and coverage of modern conflicts.

2.6. News and the Mediatization of Conflicts

The impact of news media on the communications about wars and conflicts has been profound, especially with the developments within communication technology, which enabled news consumers and audiences to more easily follow war updates and search for various and alternative sources of news than in previous conflicts. This would consequently influence the conduct of media strategies and wartime propaganda, to control information and win public support for war decisions. The development of media strategies during armed conflicts has been also influenced by the changing conditions in which wars are conducted. According to Denis McQuail (2006), warfare has been conducted under a new set of conditions since the end of the Second World War and of the colonial wars that followed:

Compared to a previous era of national total war, it has been framed in terms of global ideological antagonisms, first relating to a Communist 'threat' and now to an Islamic extremist threat. There are numerous 'small wars' rather than total wars between great powers; much warfare is carried out by proxy by client states with indirect control or support from great powers; the line between war and 'terrorism' has become unclear;

²⁹ Discussing the development of Arab media, Al-Jazeera and non-Arab media organisations broadcasting in Arabic, is in chapter Four (author's note).

and large-scale total wars are inhabited by the availability of atomic weapons (McQuail 2006: 108).

With regard to the media, McQuail argued that the predominant conditions of this “new order” involve five main aspects:

More powerful media institutions with a notional independence from war-making states; a presumption of access by media to the reporting of war; an internationalization of media organisation and distribution, coupled with strong trends to concentration in relatively few corporate hands; an assumption that the conduct of warfare requires an effective public communication strategy and some means to control formally free media in conflict zones that cannot be fully closed. It is arguable that warfare of the kind described also requires more support in public opinion than past warfare and that the media are the key to obtaining this support (ibid).

Yet Cottle (2009) argued that the news media have long occupied an important part in the battle for hearts and minds, and how the propaganda war is fought. However, the media’s relationship to the ‘war’ continues to develop and change, and the role of news media is becoming more than merely communicating or mediating the events of war but also increasingly entering its course and conduct. In this sense most wars are becoming “*mediatized*” (Cottle 2009: 109).

In “*mediatized war*”, Cottle asserted that the involvement of the media *within* war becomes heightened and, in different ways, constitutive of war itself, influencing its conduct on different fronts:

Indeed it has been observed that in war the news media can form a “front” in their own right, but in mediatized war this becomes even more profound. Here the news media constitute a battleground of images and information, spectacle and spin constructed and communicated for home and global consumption. It is here, too, that relations of communicative power traditionally enacted between governments, military, publics and media begin to shift (Cottle 2009: 110).

Further, Cottle stated that the evolution of mediated and mediatized war should be presumed to be a simple outcome of the growing centrality of media in society, politics or culture, much less simply a consequence of the advent of new communication and information technologies - though both are clearly necessary preconditions for mediatized war (ibid). Therefore, to recognise the “spectacle of war” communicated in contemporary news media requires further questions about the social relations of war, and in particular the relations of communicative power that are enacted within and through it. Further, the media in relation to the theatre of war demands to be contextualized, historicized, explained and better understood. This is

because media representations of the war as spectacle may provide a more visceral, if ideologically opaque, means of communicating war than in the past (ibid). However, Cottle believes that it is too soon to disregard the continuity and efficacy of traditional forms of information management and propaganda war in the manufacture of consent and dissemination of fear (ibid: 111).

Yet the integral involvement of media and communication systems in any propaganda war has been an essential part of the war efforts:

When liberal democracies go to war the ‘public right to know’ is destined to become pushed and pulled and, on occasion, pulverized by different strategic interests, information management techniques and a battery of military and government controls (ibid: 111).

According to Cottle, the news media historically have come under a battery of direct and indirect forms of government censorship and military control, which “is often justified on grounds of safeguarding military lives and strategic objectives by withholding information of possible value to the enemy” (ibid: 112). In addition to this, McQuail argued that for those who make and execute “war policy” and have to manage the dimensions of public information, nationally and internationally, additional tasks become essential with regard to the presentation of arguments for war that can reconcile competing values and can be expressed and defended in the prevailing journalistic discourse:

New forms of propaganda and access to media on favourable terms have to be found and are mainly sought by offering the benefits of war coverage to chosen media on their own terms and denying it to others (McQuail 2006: 115).

The aim of all these policies, as Cottle has argued, appeared to be directed at “massaging public opinion and generating public support for government war aims, especially when there is less than unanimous support for war” (Cottle 2009: 112).

Military controls on journalists have also taken diverse forms in the past and these too are often justified on similar grounds, including concealing the whereabouts of troops and protecting the lives of the journalists concerned. Such military controls include curtailing access to the field of operations; restricting official releases to authorized press briefings and providing at most vague, imprecise and/or out-of-date information; the imposition of a system of military minders; the military’s control of communication systems; the operation of a ‘pool system’ where news material is shared among selected journalists from different news organizations; and processes of journalist embedding with journalists assigned to specific military units (ibid).

Other aspects of information control and news management could be also viewed in relation to developments in military technology. In other words, the huge devastation that could be caused by modern military power underlined the need to present wars in a form of clean-conflicts or with the minimal civilian casualties. McQuail referred to this aspect by arguing that modern wars are fought by specialist professionals using high technology, often insulated from the horror of war, “just as (western) publics tend to be insulated from the realities and any personal consequences” (McQuail 2006: 114). For this reason, this situation requires a much higher degree of control of the information environment and, indirectly via this, “the consent of relatively passive publics” (ibid).

These developments are accompanied by the expansion of corporate media, which could be also viewed as an influential factor in the news production and consequently contributes to the way wars are communicated. Thus, Cottle asserted that the political economy of corporate media underpins the operations and orientation of the news media in times of war, as it does in times of peace:

In times of war the corporate pursuit of readers, ratings and revenue are no less muted and the logic of the market place can find ample opportunities to appeal to audiences and construct imagined national communities, building market share and profits as they do so (Cottle 2009: 113).

This marks an important element in the development of media conditions, according to McQuail, which relate mainly to the following factors:

The continuing expansion and globalisation of the media and their main forms as news and entertainment, creating a voracious demand for content as well as audiences; commercialization and conglomeration of media, although without much loss of national attachments in terms of production and audience; and competing new web-based and other media forms, often on the way to incorporation as mass media (McQuail 2006: 114).

Further, the introduction of new technology, for instance reporting from battlefields, has also influenced news management, news production and the flow of information by opening new possibilities for coverage, and also bringing “new vulnerabilities and dependencies and new demands for results” (ibid). Thus, it could be said, that the communication and coverage of conflicts becomes a product of a complex environment, where various factors play a role in shaping and influencing the content of news. For this reason McQuail stated:

... media are hindered by the chaotic nature of war itself, by the mortal danger involved, by a near total dependence for access and information on sources that have no commitment to the truth and by supposed demands of audiences and certainly of editors for material that fits the need of whatever medium is involved, the imperative to match and exceed whatever competing media are doing (ibid: 116).

Having said this, Cottle also contended that the increasingly complex, overlapping and interpenetrating flows and counterflows of today's global news ecology, produced and circulated by western 24/7 global news providers (CNNI, BBC World, Fox, Sky), new regional corporate players, including the Arab satellite channel Al-Jazeera and multiple national public service and commercial news services within most nation states "now generates a constant cross-traffic of news flows, images and information" (Cottle 2009: 114).

Much of this global corporate news output can also now be accessed via the world wide web, where it variously takes on some of the characteristics and possibilities of the medium including multimediality, interactivity and hypertextuality. Surrounding online mainstream news services are now myriad interacting, constantly updating and emergent weblogs and web pages from wider civil society, posting different individual and institutional perspectives, commentaries and personal experiences both supplementing and periodically directly intervening into the world of corporate news (ibid).

As these developments in communication technology and infrastructure become evident in the communication of modern wars and conflicts. Then in order to understand modern conflicts with an international dimension, such as the 2001 war in Afghanistan or the 2003 Iraq war, in terms of media strategies and reporting, it becomes essential to recognize the impact of other media players on the flow of information represented in their reporting policies and treatments of news. For this reason, it could be said that the emergence of Arab satellite media in the early 1990s contributed significantly to the developing media scene, not only in the Arab world but globally, particularly since Al-Jazeera appeared as a major player in covering the 2001 war in Afghanistan. The study of Arab media in relation to wars and foreign military interventions in the Middle East essentially requires an examination of their political economy and performance, as well as an understanding of the political environment in the Arab world. This would also contribute to understand the developments of media strategies and mediatization of international conflicts, since the development of Arab media like Al-Jazeera, would capitalize on increases in audiences turning to the media and news shows in times of war. This increasing potential of Arab media to engage actively in covering international conflicts such Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 made them a key element in the war communication environment.

2.7. Conclusion

The literature on the media coverage of military interventions and armed conflicts is significant to any understanding of the complex relationship between the media and the military. Further, it is also important in examining the development of media strategies during wars and the developments in war coverage, as well as the performance of media organisations during military campaigns and hostilities.

Within these developments, various techniques, media strategies and wartime propaganda became increasingly considered by governments in the military interventions of the late twentieth century, building on older tools, such as the demonization of the enemy and opposing regimes, and the use of exaggeration and fabricated stories. These techniques were used in addition to information control policies, such as the pool system of news, which was based on selecting certain reporters to accompany the troops to cover battles, as well as imposing restrictions on independent reporters in the field in order to control information, and fabrications of stories and atrocities committed by the enemy for media and public consumption. These elements were all part of Western governments' media strategies, designed to sell and communicate the war. Therefore, such policies and techniques would normally be echoed in news coverage, providing a kind of narrative that omitted many incidents and lacked the challenging aspect of the media to the military. Thus, hard questions would normally fade in such circumstances, although the presentation of civilian casualties and the human aspects of the conflict were carefully presented. From a historical perspective of the media coverage of military interventions, this chapter emphasized the dependency of the media on the military in terms of transportation, protection, and communications, which softened the media coverage of the troops and created a psychological bonding between reporters and soldiers. Therefore, this element can hardly be ignored in examining the powerful influence of media strategies during wars, and such an element was further developed in the 2003 Iraq war into the embedding policy where journalists were literally entrenched with the invading military units.

It was important to review the Vietnam and the Falkland wars, in terms of information control and management of the media during conflicts. These two conflicts – as discussed in the chapter – provided profound lessons with regard to media strategies and reporting from

the field. Thus, issues of censorship, restrictions on the movement of reporters, and spin, provided more insights into the discussion on military interventions and the media. In the Falklands, for instance, British media strategists maintained tight control on the media, benefiting from the experience of the 1956 Suez Canal crisis, while the Americans, reviewing their experience in Vietnam, saw the power of television in reporting various stages of the war. Both experiences had an impact on the news coverage of subsequent conflicts in which Britain or the US were involved, and also influenced the way conflicts became mediatized.

In addition, a common feature of the western military interventions discussed in this chapter was the goal of the military alliance to topple the target regimes. With regard to the Arab world, attempts to topple Arab regimes by multinational military interventions were seen in the 1956 Suez Canal War to topple President Nasser of Egypt. While the latter failed, the 1991 Gulf War against Saddam Hussein was widely reported to have the limited aim of “liberating Kuwait”. It was only in 2003 that the US-led coalition succeeded in toppling Saddam Hussein’s regime. By looking at other military interventions like the 1999 Kosovo war, which aimed to topple Slobodan Milosevic’s regime, it was found that media strategies followed similar patterns, like the demonization of the leader, the emphasis on the threat posed by the leader and his regime on national, regional and even international stability, whether through owning weapons of mass destruction or committing atrocities and massacres, or all of these.

These techniques were echoed in the media coverage of conflicts, and thus it could be said that with the power to control information and the ability to saturate the media with various stories regarding the military capabilities of the intervening military forces and their accuracy of targeting the military installations of the enemy, the images of wars are managed to become less horrific. This would also explain the tendency in media strategies to avoid tackling the issue of civilian casualties, often referred to as collateral damage or caused by the enemy’s fire, as part of the enemy’s atrocities and crimes. Yet the media coverage of armed conflicts is subjected to other factors, in addition to military restrictions and information control techniques; these factors include political, economic and social powers, which normally overlap and influence media performance. As the media become more connected to the military and governments’ institutions, especially through economic channels, it consequently becomes less critical, abandoning the assumed role of the watchdog over those in power, and thus not addressing hard questions, particularly in times of war. Further, this complex relationship also turns media organisations to become more dependent on the

military and their governments for news feeds to fill their coverage time. This performance created what could be described as a vacuum in the whole scene of reporting international conflicts, because it becomes more aligned to the official war narratives, which tend not to focus on certain elements, such as civilian casualties.

This situation could be viewed as one of the major reasons for new regional media players to play a role in covering modern conflicts, as was seen in the 2001 war in Afghanistan with the emergence of Al-Jazeera satellite channel. The presence of Al-Jazeera was significant in two ways, first as an Arab broadcaster emerging comprehensibly for the first time in the international arena, and secondly for its reportage, which tended to fill in the missing aspects in the Western media's coverage by providing an alternative perspective to the war and focusing on the civilian casualties and human fatalities. Al-Jazeera's performance in Afghanistan could be viewed as establishing a new ground in the communication of wars, in which the channel provided an alternative perspective of the conflict, allowing news consumers in the Arab world to see a different version of war than audiences in western countries, with apparent focus on civilian casualties and the horrors of the war machine. In addition, Al-Jazeera's coverage was hard to ignore for its news importance, and the channel turned out to be a source of news from the battlefields for various media outlets. However, this new reliance on Al-Jazeera for particular footage and information escalated the media war; for the American and British governments, the channel was exercising war propaganda especially by broadcasting Bin Laden tapes and focusing on civilian casualties. Both the American and British governments tried to control the imagery of Al-Jazeera by convincing the heads of news in key media organisations to be careful in using materials from the Qatar-based channel, but also by the use of diplomatic channels to convince the Emir of Qatar to rein in the channel. However, Al-Jazeera continued to report the war - until the collapse of the Taliban regime and the bombing of its bureau in Kabul by an American missile.

The 2001 Afghanistan war has proved an important element in any examination of the development of media strategies during conflicts, especially with the rise of alternative news providers such as Al-Jazeera. The coverage of this war by Al-Jazeera and other Arab broadcasters becomes a major reason to examine the development of Arab media, in terms of ownership, political orientation and performance, especially when Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite channels continued to expand and develop in terms of finance and performance. This performance of Arab media has also encouraged other non-Arab powers to improve their

existing Arabic language broadcasts, or to launch their own satellite TV channels, in order to compete in communicating with Arab audiences.

The issues raised in this chapter are essential for the thesis and will be expanded upon in the following chapters, particularly in examining governmental media strategies adopted, the media's responses and the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, with a main focus on Al-Jazeera's coverage of the war. Further, the question of the development of Arab satellite channels will also be critically examined in Chapter Four, in addition to the emergence of other Arabic language broadcasting services established by regional and Western powers.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The central hypothesis of this thesis is that the emergence of the Arabic satellite channel, Al-Jazeera, during the 2003 Iraq war, radically changed the way such wars are reported, and this offered real challenges to mainstream media strategies during such international conflicts. In order to explore this hypothesis, a combination of research methods was used in this thesis. Documentary research (on written strategies and policies), as well as interviews and participant observation were chosen to investigate the major questions. Translation was also a key research tool, since important aspects of the data were in Arabic and therefore needed to be translated. In this thesis, reviewing the literature on wartime propaganda and news coverage was crucial to the research process, the literature also functioning as documentary evidence of similar patterns of strategy and coverage that were used in previous conflicts and are still used with further modification, such as the demonization of the enemy, fabrication of stories and the control of the media.

3.2. Qualitative Research Approach

This thesis followed a qualitative research approach in examining media strategies and policies of coverage at the Al-Jazeera satellite channel. According to Barrie Gunter (2000), qualitative research embraces methodologies that are theoretically framed by critical or interpretivist social science paradigms that emphasize interpretation over measurement (Gunter 2000: 23).

Further, David Silverman (1993) stated that there are four major methods used by qualitative researchers: observation, analysing texts and documents, interviews, and recording and transcribing (Silverman 1993: 9). These methods, as Silverman stated, are often combined:

For instance, many case-studies combine observation with interviewing. Moreover, each method can be used in either qualitative or quantitative research studies (ibid).

Indeed, the combination of, and integration between, the research approaches that were used in this thesis, including documentary research, interviews and participant observation, has been an interesting element in producing the qualitative data required for the analysis. Such integration expanded the perspective on the 2003 Iraq war to allow for not only the

examination of the media strategies that were implemented by the US administration during the war, but on the other hand, to scrutinise Al-Jazeera's experience of that coverage, as well as critically examining the development of Arab media and the expansion and growth of Arab and Arabic-language satellite channels which became part of the media spectrum in the Arab region since the 2003 Iraq war.

3.2.1. Documentary Research

3.2.1.1. Sources of documents

Accessing different types of documents was important in the search for qualitative data. John Scott (2006) referred to documentary research as a distinguishing feature for historians:

The handling of documentary sources - government papers, diaries, newspapers and so on – is widely seen as the hallmark of the professional historian, whereas the sociologist has generally been identified with the use of questionnaires and interview techniques (Scott 2006: 3).

Nevertheless, Scott also asserted that the bulk of historical and comparative work that is undertaken in contemporary sociology involves the use of documentary materials, as does much work on contemporary societies (ibid). Ina Bertrand and Peter Hughes (2005) agreed that sociologists have traditionally been wary of documents, though they argued that “by the 1980s ethnographers were routinely acknowledging the value of documentation” and that it became obvious that “more recent writers note that this trend has strengthened among sociologists generally” (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 132). This research method, then, is advancing in the social sciences, and examining various types of documents played a significant role in this research. According to Scott, written documents of all types share certain features which distinguish them from other kinds of source materials (Scott 2006: 4). For this reason, Scott asserted that it is necessary to understand written documents “in the wide context of the whole gamut of sources which are utilised in social research” (ibid).

3.2.1.1.1. Documents: A process of data collection

Document research was essential for the thesis. This included books, journals, newspapers and online sources, which all helped in discussing the issues raised in the thesis. In other words, using document research as a major research method helped in examining and analysing the different policies and the media strategies used during the 2003 Iraq war, by providing a wide range of journalistic and academic contributions in newspapers, academic

journals and books, in addition to internal memos from Al-Jazeera satellite channel regarding its coverage policy of the war. These documents are used in Chapter Five, which discusses the media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war, and Chapter Six, which explores Al-Jazeera's coverage of the war.

The same research method was also used to examine the development of Arab satellite channels and the emergence of non-Arab broadcasters, broadcasting in Arabic. These documents include, in addition to newspapers, journals and books, reports and online sources. These documents are processed in Chapter Four which discusses the role and development of Arab satellite channels, including Al-Jazeera.

Patrick McNeill and Steve Chapman (2006) stated that data used by sociologists falls into two classifications; primary and secondary data (McNeill and Chapman 2006: 131). Primary data is collected through the use of research methods such as surveys, interviews, or participant observation, while secondary data usually takes the form of official statistics and various types of "documents" (ibid).

In this thesis a combination of primary and secondary data were used to investigate the media strategies used during the 2003 Iraq war and Al-Jazeera's coverage of the conflict. With regard to the types of secondary documents, McNeill and Chapman stated that there is a wide range of documentary secondary data, that could be used by researchers, that can be grouped into six broad and sometimes overlapping categories:

- public or official records
- personal documents
- biography and autobiography
- literature
- historical documents
- print and visual media (ibid: 148).

McNeill and Chapman asserted that documents can tell sociologists a great deal about the way in which institutions and events are constructed and the interactions and the interpretations that shape these. Furthermore, the results of documentary research can provide the basis for primary research (McNeill and Chapman 2006: 156). Having said this, Lindsay Prior (2009) has also stated that, as far as the social sciences are concerned, most of the

research that uses or calls upon documents focuses on the collection and analysis of document contents:

A focus on documents as containers for content is well established in the social sciences. Documents in this frame can be approached as sources of information, and the writing and images that they contain sourced for appropriate data (Prior 2009: 479-480).

For this reason, newspaper stories can be scrutinised for their rhetoric, their syntax or even just for 'themes' (ibid). Sourcing newspapers and other documents for supportive stories or evidence is one way, according to Prior, of approaching document content, but he argues that a more systematic approach would also require both an appreciation of the 'population' of documents that may be available for sampling, and the entire content of the documents selected – "looking at the segments that fail to fit hypotheses and theories as well as those that support hypotheses and theories" (ibid: 481).

In examining institutions, documents and records illustrate an important aspect of data gathering on any particular institution. According to Ina Bertrand and Peter Hughes (2005), these documents and records are the written and/or printed and/or web-based evidence left by and about institutions and the people who work in them (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 132). This includes archives involving various types of documents, especially newspapers, journals and books. Bertrand and Hughes also referred to newspapers, journals and books as forms of documentation which are relevant to institutional research (ibid: 133-134). Other forms of documents would normally include documents that are generated within private or non-government institutions, documents that are generated by government bodies and private documents such as diaries (ibid: 133-135). Thus, documentation is a form of material culture, since it has two aspects:

- a material aspect: it exists as books, pieces of paper, electronic recordings;
- a discursive aspect: the messages/texts it contains can be interpreted (Bertrand and Hughes 2005: 132).

Further, using documents written from outside the examined institution - by journalists, competitors, commentators or critics of the institution - is relatively permanent so can be revisited, and in addition it opens up for debate the context within which the institution operates (ibid: 133). Furthermore, as McNeill and Chapman have shown, there has been a steady growth of interest in mass media reports, both textual and visual as a source of

secondary data (McNeill and Chapman 2006: 159). This thesis uses such data in a range of contexts.

With regard to visual data, a record of Al-Jazeera's coverage of the 2003 Iraq war was obtained during a research visit to the channel's headquarters in Qatar in September 2003. The visit lasted for twenty-two days and was part of a major research conducted by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies on the role of embedded reporters in covering the 2003 Iraq war. The visual record I obtained during this visit, consists of tapes of the channel's news coverage of the twenty-one days of war. This record was of great importance to the analysis in this thesis regarding the way Al-Jazeera covered the war. However, as Tim May (1997) argued, documents are interesting for what they leave out, as well as what they contain (May 1997: 164) and, as May states, documents "do not simply reflect, but also construct social reality and versions of the events" (ibid).

Such documentary evidence cannot therefore be taken at face value and while it was possible to investigate Al-Jazeera's communication policy and its coverage of the 2003 Iraq war through documents of various kinds, it was also important to use other research methods such as interviews to interrogate the data further. Thus, according to Hansen et al (1998), conducting policy research requires the use of a combination of research methods, including archival research and the interviewing of policy actors (Hansen et al 1998: 88).

With regard to interviewing, Ibrahim Helal - Al-Jazeera's editor-in-chief during the 2003 Iraq war - and other producers and reporters, were interviewed in order to examine the overarching policy framework which Al-Jazeera adopted in order to report the war. The interviewees were Arar El-Shareh, a senior producer in the Al-Jazeera newsroom; Mohammed Khair Al-Bourini, Al-Jazeera's reporter in Northern Iraq during the war; Amr El-Kahki, Al-Jazeera's only embedded reporter during the war; and Aktham Suliman, Al-Jazeera's Bureau Chief in Germany. The work of these journalists represents different elements in Al-Jazeera's process of coverage, expanding from the unilateral experience of Al-Bourini in Northern Iraq to the embedding exercise of El-Kahki with the coalition troops, to Europe and how Al-Jazeera was covering the consequences of the war from there, to the newsroom and how decisions were made and what challenges occurred and how they responded to challenges posed by contradictory information from the battle zones. Questions with similar patterns were asked to these journalists regarding their experiences in covering

the war, the challenges they faced and their views about unilateral and embedding reporting. The outcomes of these interviews are used in Chapter Six, which discusses Al-Jazeera's policies regarding coverage of the 2003 Iraq war.

3.2.1.1.2. Secondary analysis of qualitative data

According to Janet Heaton (2009), secondary analysis of qualitative data is an emerging methodology in social research that involves the re-use of data originally collected in primary studies. Such data include field notes, transcripts of interviews and group discussions and observational records (Heaton 2009: 506). As Heaton stated, the analysis of other 'found' or more 'naturalistic' types of qualitative data, such as personal diaries, autobiographies, letters, documents and photographs, is classified as "documentary analysis".

That said, some types of qualitative data, notably life stories, may be more or less naturalistic, depending on how they were produced, and hence the distinction between 'secondary' and 'documentary' analysis is not always clear-cut (ibid).

Nevertheless, Heaton asserted that researchers have the option of re-using datasets that they have personally collected and retained over the course of their career. This may be data which were not originally analysed, or data which are rich enough to support further analysis - either as a secondary study in its own right, or in conjunction with additional primary research designed to collect more data required to address the new study aims (ibid: 509).

Further, supplementary analysis is identified in order to analyse the secondary qualitative data collected. According to Heaton, this approach involves the in-depth investigation of an issue, or aspect of the data, that was not addressed, or was only partly covered, in the original research. Therefore, the focus would be on a particular issue or theme that emerged from the primary work, or on a sub-set of the data (ibid: 510).

As a result, in some cases it may be difficult to distinguish where primary research stops and secondary analysis starts, particularly when the supplementary analysis is carried out by the same researchers who carried out the primary research (ibid).

In the case of this thesis, the report produced by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, on the role of embedded reporters in covering the 2003 Iraq war, was a source of documentary data for this research. As a member of the research team of this Cardiff School of Journalism project, I went to Al-Jazeera's headquarters and interviewed the journalists. However, very little of that material was actually used in the final research report

and I was able to use the interview materials again for this thesis's own research purposes. The data produced in the Cardiff School of Journalism's report were used in conjunction with additional data personally collected at Al-Jazeera. This included documentary materials and the results of this researcher's own participant observation research in the Al-Jazeera newsroom in Qatar.

Further, additional qualitative data on Al-Jazeera and its coverage of the 2001 war in Afghanistan represented a remarkable source for this thesis. These data were collected for my MA dissertation, *Al-Jazeera After September 11: Noise of a Matchbox*, which discussed the establishment of the channel, its structure and the role it played in covering the war in Afghanistan.³⁰ A field visit to Al-Jazeera's headquarters in March 2002 was clearly important for obtaining such data. During that visit, a visual record of Al-Jazeera's reports from the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan by its reporter, Tayseer Allouni, was viewed and copied – by permission of Al-Jazeera's editor-in-chief at that time, Ibrahim Helal. Additionally, a number of interviews were conducted with Al-Jazeera's staff (presenters, reporters and producers) and further documents from Arab and Western newspapers on Al-Jazeera and its role in Afghanistan were collected.

The qualitative data collected for the MA and the experience of the field visit to Al-Jazeera played an important role in the analysis for this thesis. Reading and reviewing fieldnotes, interviews and tapes of the channel's coverage of the war in Afghanistan, once again, provided more insights into the newsroom dynamics at Al-Jazeera satellite channel. This also helped in shaping the research question for this thesis and contributed significantly to the conduct of the field research during the second visit to Al-Jazeera's headquarters in September 2003, which took place as part of the research conducted by the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Culture Studies.

3.2.1.2. Online research

According to Gary McCulloch (2005), the World Wide Web, the Internet and electronic mail provide unprecedented access to documents which hitherto had been available only to a few.

They allow rapid (if not always instant) communication of large amounts of information on a global scale. They also promise to revolutionise the process involved

³⁰ A critical analysis of Al-Jazeera's coverage of 2001 the war in Afghanistan was published in 2005 with the title *Al-Jazeera and the war in Afghanistan: A Delivery System or a Mouthpiece?* in Zayani, M. (2005), *Al-Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*, Pluto Press, London, pp. 153-170.

in doing documentary research. Rather than being obliged often to travel long distances to gain access to archives and private collections, in many cases it will be possible for researchers to study documents on their own computer screens. The emergence of virtual documents, stored electronically rather than on paper, heralds a new age for documentary-based studies. It brings with it exhibiting new opportunities for documentary research (McCulloch 2005: 34).

In addition, Eynon et al (2008) state that the internet has emerged as a data resource for social science research:

Not only is it a lens through which to observe our subjects of research and how they construct their identities and communities online, but it can be a tool for gathering and analysing social science data on a large scale (Eynon et al 2008: 26).

Further, according to Claire Hewson and Dianna Laurent (2008), Internet-based research consists of primary and secondary procedures. The former is referred to as *Internet-mediated research (IMR)*, which involves the gathering of novel, original data to be subjected to analysis in order to provide new evidence in relation to a particular research question (Hewson and Laurent 2008: 58). As for secondary internet research, this involves techniques and procedures for locating and accessing bibliographic materials available online, “such as journals, newspapers, official documents, library databases, and so on” (ibid).

The online research done as part of this PhD research could be viewed as part of the documentary research, since the aim was to explore the war events in relation to media coverage and spin. A great deal of use was made of reliable online sources such as the *BBC News Online*, *The Guardian*, *Al-Jazeera Online* and others, for more information, and different interpretations and accounts on events and institutions. These data contributed significantly to the overall analysis conducted for the thesis, especially in Chapters Four, Five and Six, which respectively discuss the development of Arab satellite channels, media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war, and Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the conflict.

3.2.2. Interviews

Though more than half a century on, Robert L. Kahn and Charles F. Cannel (1957) usefully defined interviews:

We use the term interview to refer to a specialized pattern of verbal interaction – initiated for a specific purpose, and focused on some specific content area, with the consequent elimination of extraneous material. Moreover, the interview is a pattern of interaction in which the role relationship of interviewer and respondent is highly

specialized, its specific characteristics depending somewhat on the purpose and character of the interview (Cahn and Cannel 1957: 16).

Further, with regard to personal interviews, Barrie Gunter (2000) asserted that there are two basic types of interview: “*structured* and *unstructured*”.

In a structured interview, the interviewer generally works from a questionnaire or interview schedule in which questions are asked in a predetermined order and most questions supply respondents with a range of possible answers. In an unstructured interview, broader, open-ended questions are asked to which respondents provide answers in their own words. These are either written down verbatim or audio-recorded for later transcription and interpretation. There is also a degree of freedom accorded to the interviewer to introduce new, previously unscheduled, questions to follow up on specific remarks made by the respondent (Gunter 2000: 26).

Having said this, the use of interviews, as a research method, was essential for this thesis in order to generate qualitative data not otherwise available and which triangulated approaches to other data used in the analysis. Structured interviews were not conducted, since these constrain the types of answers allowed and there was the need to discover a wide perspective of the war coverage. Such a perspective required a narrative element, in which respondents would be able to reveal their own experiences and stories. In order to achieve this, in-depth interviews were conducted using a range of different approaches, including narrative interviews, semi-structured interviews and e-mail interviews. This combination helped to provide more detailed information on the subject of research. It also allowed for further understanding of the work of Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war, through the narrative of the respondents. The outcome of these interviews is used in Chapter Six, which discusses Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the war.

3.2.2.1. In-depth interviews

According to John M. Johnson (2001), a researcher who uses in-depth interviewing commonly seeks “deep” information and knowledge - usually deeper information and knowledge than is sought in surveys, informal interviewing, or focus groups, for example (Johnson 2001: 104).

This information usually concerns very personal matters, such as an individual’s self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge or perspective (ibid).

Further, Roger D. Wimmer and Joseph R. Dominick (2006) stated that the most important advantage of the in-depth interview is the wealth of detail that it provides. The distinctive features of these interviews could be seen as the following:

- They generally use smaller samples.
- They provide detailed background about reasons why respondents give specific answers. Elaborate data concerning respondents' opinions, values, motivation, recollections, experiences, and feelings are obtained.
- They allow for lengthy observation of respondents' nonverbal responses (Wimmer and Dominick 2006: 135).

In addition, Johnson asserted that, in many cases, researchers use in-depth interviewing as a way to check out theories they have formulated through naturalistic observation, to verify independently (or triangulate) knowledge they have gained through participation as members of particular cultural settings, or to explore multiple meanings of or perspectives on some actions, events, or settings (Johnson 2001: 104).

According to Pertti Alasuutari (1998), the qualitative in-depth interview is different from the survey interview in the following ways:

The main difference is of course that in qualitative interviews the questions are open-ended, and they have not been formulated prior to the interview session. The interviewer does normally have a check-list of themes to be covered in the interviews, but a great deal of the conversation consists of follow-up questions to what the interviewees say in the first place (Alasuutari 1998: 144).

Thus, different forms of in-depth interviews were chosen to generate the qualitative data, such as the narrative and semi-structured interviews. The combination and flexibility of interviewing styles and approaches arguably provided a wider perspective on the subject of the research. The narrative element in these interviews helped the researcher to better understand the personal experiences involved for journalists in covering the 2003 Iraq war and the decisions that were taken at Al-Jazeera about how the events should be reported.

3.2.2.1.1. Narrative interviews

According to Sandra Jovchelovitch and Martin W. Bauer (2000), the narrative interview (henceforth, NI) envisages a setting that encourages and stimulates an interviewee (who in NI is called an 'informant') to tell a story about some significant event in their life and social

context (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000: 59). This technique of interviewing “derives its label from the Latin word *narrare*, to report, to tell a story” (ibid: 59).

Jovchelovitch and Bauer asserted that the narrative interview is classified as a qualitative research method, “a form of unstructured, in-depth interview with specific features” (ibid: 61). Conceptually, the idea of narrative interviewing is motivated by a critique of the question-response schema of most interviews (ibid). Yet Jovchelovitch and Bauer argued that the narration itself has a structure:

A narrative is formally structured ... narration follows a self-generating schema. Whoever tells a good story complies with the basic rules of story-telling. Here the paradox of narration arises: it is the constraints of the tacit rules that liberate the story-telling (ibid: 61).

Nevertheless, Jovchelovitch and Bauer stated that three main characteristics could be viewed as distinguishing this kind of interview; the “DETAILED TEXTURE” which refers to the need to give detailed information in order to account plausibly for the transition from one event to another:

The narrator tends to give as much detail of events as it is necessary to make the transition between them plausible. This is done taking the listener into account: the story has to be plausible for an audience, otherwise it is no story. The less the listener knows, the more detail will be given. Story telling is close to events. It will account for time, place, motives, points of orientation, plans, strategies and abilities (ibid: 60).

The “RELEVANCE FIXATION”: in which the story-teller reports those features of the event that are relevant to his or her perspective on the world:

The account of events is necessarily selective. It unfolds around thematic centres that reflect what the narrator considers relevant. These themes represent his or her relevance structure (ibid).

The “CLOSING OF THE GESTALT”: when a core event mentioned in the narration has to be reported completely, with a beginning, a middle and an end:

The end can be the present, if the actual events are not yet finished. This threefold structure of a closure makes the story flow, once it has started: the beginning tends towards the middle, and the middle tends towards the end (ibid: 60-61).

Nevertheless, Jovchelovitch and Bauer argued that NI often requires a compromise between narrative and questioning:

The narratives reveal the diverse perspectives of the informants on events and on themselves, while standardized questions enable us to make direct comparisons across various interviews on the same issue. Furthermore, an interview may go through several sequences of narration and subsequent questioning (ibid: 67).

Thus, Jovchelovitch and Bauer added that the iteration of narration and questioning may occasionally blur the boundaries between NI and the semi-structured interview (ibid).

3.2.2.1.2. Semi-Structured interviews

According to Bill Gillham (2005), the semi-structured interview could arguably be the most important way of conducting a research interview, caused by its flexibility balanced by structure, and the quality of the data so obtained (Gillham 2005: 70). In this context, semi-structured interviews imply:

- the same questions are asked of all those involved;
- the kind and form of questions go through a process of development to ensure their topic focus;
- to ensure equivalent coverage (with an eye to the subsequent comparative analysis) interviewees are prompted by supplementary questions if they haven't dealt spontaneously with one of sub-areas of interests;
- approximately equivalent interview time is allowed in each case (ibid).

One of the strengths of the semi-structured interview is that it facilitates a strong element of discovery, while its structured focus allows an analysis in terms of commonalities (ibid: 72).

Semi-structured interviews contributed to the whole process of generating qualitative data in this research by allowing the researcher to ensure that key areas of research interest were covered in questions and followed up with each respondent. This allowed respondents to reveal different elements regarding their role in covering the 2003 Iraq war. Their individual experiences do reveal a number of common elements in terms of their journalistic treatment of the war events and their views of Al-Jazeera's role in reporting the conflict (see Chapter Six). In addition, the same approach was used to conduct two further interviews with Arab journalists to explore particular dimensions within the Arab mediascape. These interviews contributed to the discussion on Arab satellite channels in Chapter Four.

3.2.2.1.3. E-mail interviews

E-mail is considered to be an additional interviewing medium in conducting in-depth interviews for qualitative research (Murray and Sixsmith 2003: 128). This kind of interview was conducted only with Al-Jazeera's reporter in Germany, Aktham Suliman. Questions were intended to focus on Al-Jazeera's coverage from Europe in the pre-phase of the conflict and during the combat in Iraq. Suliman, who also covered for Al-Jazeera from Iraq, for a period after the war, provided further descriptions on the work of Al-Jazeera in Europe during the war. According to Lowndes (2005), an e-mail interview can yield good quality data, often 'colourful' material which is quite specific. It can also provide greater depth and complexity of material:

Moreover, while the conventional face-to-face interview is very time-consuming, both in setting up and conducting the interview and transcribing the recording, the email interview requires considerably less investment of time. It does not have to be conducted in real time; the interviewer needs only to send the questions; and one of the major plus points is that it is 'ready transcribed'- a significant time saving when compared with the traditional interview (Lowdes 2005: 108).

Further, Hewson et al (2003) suggest that the e-mail interview allows respondents to answer in their own time, as when it is convenient to them. This may encourage more detailed and carefully considered answers. In addition, respondents, according to Hewson et al, may be more accurate in answering factual questions since they are able to go back and check information, and this may enhance the validity and quality of data obtained (Hewson et al 2003: 45).

3.2.3. Transcription

3.2.3.1. A choice of style

According to Blake D. Poland (2001), the transcription of audio taped interviews as a method of making data available in textual form for subsequent coding and analysis is widespread in qualitative research (Poland 2001: 629). It could be said that the method generates an interesting form of document, which during analysis provides an additional input to the data collected. However, according to Crabtree and Miller (1999), transcription involves the complicated process of translating from oral or visual discourse to written language (Crabtree and Miller 1999: 106). Choosing the style of transcription is important in such a process, which could change during the course of the research, depending on the original research question and the evolving interpretations (ibid). With the transcription of the interviews I

carried out at Al-Jazeera the choice was to transcribe as far as possible verbatim, without any focus on the kinds of technicalities of transcription referred to in this literature. It was assumed that this choice would provide all the insight necessary into the experience of coverage and the policies used. Moreover, since the interviews were conducted in Arabic, verbatim transcription was seen to be the best support and basis for the translation of the interviews into English. Poland argues that the translation of audio-taped information or interview transcripts must be considered as part of the research process, as it introduces another layer of interpretation in the interview-tape-transcript interface (Poland 2001: 633). This additional layer is undoubtedly there in this research (see Chapter Six).

3.2.3.2. Translation

As stressed, some of the materials gathered for this thesis were in Arabic, including books and articles, as well as most of the interviews – except for the interview with Amr El-Kahki, Al-Jazeera's embedded reporter during the war, which was in English and the interview with Ibrahim Helal, Al-Jazeera's head of news during the war, who was interviewed twice, once in English and once in Arabic. Thus, the need to translate materials into English following their collection through either documentary and/or ethnographic research was an important part of the methodology at a number of levels. It could be argued that translation of transcribed interviews and selected parts of books and newspaper articles should be viewed as a facilitating method - in this research - rather than a research method on its own. This is partly true. However, the texts generated as a result of the translation process were (1) part of the data gathering process and (2) a central part of the data analysis, in that the process of translation affected interpretation. However, the counter argument is that the ability to communicate in both English and Arabic added to the value of the materials gathered since it allowed the discovery of different perspectives on the same issue of media strategy and coverage. This was also the case in relation to my viewing and analysis of Al-Jazeera's tapes of their coverage during the 2003 Iraq war. The two languages, the translation process, and the data collection and analysis cannot be disentangled and produced far richer data than would otherwise have been the case. Bilingualism was a key aspect in this research of the complex ethnographic positioning involved in the participant observation and the interviews.

3.2.4. Ethnographic Approach: Participant Observation as a Research Method

Examining the policies of coverage, which the Al-Jazeera satellite channel developed during the 2003 Iraq war, required, in addition to researching different kinds of documents, other methods that are argued to have enhanced the data collection and allowed for further interrogation of the documents. The choice of participant observation was therefore an essential part of this exercise. According to Bogdewic (1999), the fundamental reason to select participant observation over other research techniques relates to the significance of the cultural context and the observation of behaviours in answering the research question (Bogdewic 1999: 48).

Further, David Machin (2002) has stated that ethnography is a research method which reveals “why people do the things that they do”:

At the heart of the idea of ethnography is the act of observing and listening to people as they go about their everyday lives in order that we can understand the way they behave or think on their own terms (Machin 2002: 1).

Thus, when this definition is applied to the study of media institutions, participant observation becomes a distinctive research method which, according to Hansen et al (1998), promises to provide a rare insight into the inner sanctum of media production, in which media professionals ply their trade, make their decisions and fashion their collective outpourings for consumption by the rest of us (Hansen et al 1998: 35).

This research approach was implemented by visiting Al-Jazeera’s headquarter in Doha in September 2003 and talking to journalists, anchors and producers. Field notes were taken during these trips, in addition to informal discussions and casual conversations with Al-Jazeera personnel. All of this helped to create an overview of the working environment and to understand the dynamics of the daily work at the channel.

With regard to field notes, other types of notes were considered also, such as headnotes. According to Roger Sanjek (1990), the term “Headnotes” was coined by Simon Ottenberg to name a note which “identifies something immediately understandable to the ethnographer” (Sanjek 1990: 93). For Ottenberg, ethnographers come from the field with fieldnotes and Headnotes. However, the fieldnotes stay the same, written down on paper, “but the headnotes

continue to evolve and change, as they did during the time in the field” (ibid). Ottenberg’s explanation of ethnography, as Sanjek stated, is a product of the two sets of notes. “The headnotes are most important. Only after the ethnographer is dead are the field notes primary” (ibid).

Thus, it could be said, that Headnotes are the marks of memories and reflections which are carried from the field. They contribute further explanations to, and interpretations of, the fieldnotes in relation to attitudes, conversations and incidents. Sanjek illustrated three examples of Headnotes described in the writings of ethnographers. Margret Mead was struck by the importance of her Headnotes, on her third visit to Manus in 1965:

Because of my long acquaintance with this village I can perceive and record aspects of this people’s life that no one else can ... It is my individual consciousness which provides the ground on which the lives of these peoples are figures (Mead cited in Sanjek 1990: 93).

The second example is Niara Sudarkasa (Gloria Marshall), who wrote, according to Sanjek, a rich account of her 1961-62 fieldwork in the Yoruba community of Awe, showing how she depended on her Headnotes, since her fieldnotes, diaries and letters remained at home, and she had only a dissertation and a few photographs with her:

What follows, therefore, might best be described as remembrance of, and reflections upon, my efforts as an anthropologist in the making. These are the encounters, the evaluations, the episodes that are chiseled in memory (Marshall cited in Sanjek, ibid).

The third example is Martin M. C. Yang’s 1945 classic, *A Chinese Village*, which according to Sanjek was written from Headnotes alone (Sanjek 1990: 93).

Based on the above, it could be said, reflecting upon the two visits³¹ I, as researcher, made to Al-Jazeera’s headquarters, that I was primarily using Headnotes for remembering and evaluating fieldnotes. Headnotes also contributed to the way I scrutinised materials collected on the second visit, such as memos and copies of the recorded tapes of Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the 2003 Iraq war. They provided and highlighted context and background. Headnotes were also important on the research visit to Al-Jazeera in 2003, as they helped with the

³¹ An earlier field visit to Al-Jazeera headquarters in Doha took place in March 2002 for my MA dissertation. That visit was for thirty-nine days. By being within Al-Jazeera’s newsroom, interviewing journalists, talking to staff and observing the process in which news were reported and treated, the visit offered a comprehensive view of the dynamics at Al-Jazeera. Headnotes from this visit contributed significantly during the writing process of this PhD thesis.

conduct of more focused observation on site and in conducting interviews, as well as being a major contextual factor in shaping the arguments in this thesis while writing.

These visits to Al-Jazeera's headquarters and the participant observation that was possible there were also important in giving me as a researcher greater access to the work of Al-Jazeera as an institution and helped me to access original data, such as internal memos that were circulated during the 2003 Iraq war. These memos constituted a significant part of the data that were collected for the thesis – as ethnographic records collected in the field. They [memos] offered firsthand accounts of the dynamics of the work inside the newsroom and contributed significantly to my understanding of these as ethnographer.

According to Alan Bryman (2008), documents (such as minutes of meetings; newsletters; mission statements; job definitions, etc.) which are generated by an organisation, are viewed as representations of the reality of that organisation:

In other words, we might take the view that such documents tell us something about what goes on in that organisation and will help us to uncover such things as its culture or ethos. According to such a view, documents are windows onto social and organisational realities (Bryman 2008: 526).

Further, Bryman stated that the minutes of a meeting in an organization might be the kind of document that would interest a social scientist, as they are a record of such things as issues raised at the meeting; the discussion of those issues; views of the participants; and actions to be taken (Bryman 2008: 527). Thus, they might be deemed interesting for their ability to reveal such things as “the culture of the organisation or section responsible for the minutes, its preoccupations, and possible disputes among the meeting participants” (ibid).

Being able to access and dedicate time to view all of Al-Jazeera's 21 days of coverage of the 2003 Iraq war (20 March 2003- 9 April 2003) at Al-Jazeera's library and Archive Department was also clearly important. This complemented the ethnographic work and fed into the questions I would ask in interviews and as part of the participant observation process. Interestingly, and as a result of this viewing process, I was given permission by Ibrahim Helal - Al-Jazeera's editor-in-chief during the war - to copy the tapes of the coverage from the first day of the war on 20 March to 9 April 2003 until the day the coalition troops entered Baghdad and thus when the Iraqi regime was effectively toppled.

These tapes therefore constituted another type of record that was generated during the participant observation research trip. Further, since these recordings were accessed at Al-Jazeera's library and copied for research purposes, the content of the coverage, and my reading of it (it was not formally analysed), was able to be used as additional evidence within the argument of this thesis, which aims to explore the media strategies during the war and Al-Jazeera's coverage of the conflict. These tapes were of great importance to re-watch while writing up as they also revealed how the channel was reacting to media strategy techniques that were implemented by the coalition troops during the war (see Chapter Six).

Hansen et al (1998) argue that participant observation as a methodological approach involves at least three different forms of data collection and associated skills:

First, the researcher must learn to become a good observer; second, he or she must become skilled in talking with and interviewing his or her professional subjects; and, third, he or she must discover, retrieve and, on occasion, generate various forms of organisational documentation (Hansen et al 1998: 36).

Thus, Hansen et al asserted that participant observation can develop our thinking in ways not anticipated and even challenge a priori theoretical commitments:

Participant observation can indeed, therefore, prove to be an exciting and challenging experience which, if conducted with commitment and reflexivity, will reward the researcher with improved understanding of his or her chosen group of professionals and their production domain (Hansen et al 1998: 37).

The sequence and stages of this research method, as described by Hansen et al, are: design, access, field relationship, collecting and recording data, analysing data and write up (Hansen et al 1998: 49).

The visit to Al-Jazeera was an important part of the research design aimed at investigating the role of the channel in covering the 2003 Iraq war, and therefore included participant observation, interviews and documentary and archival research. In terms of access, the visit was made easier because of the established field relationship from the earlier research visit in 2002. This helped in arranging the research trip to Al-Jazeera's headquarters again, in order to collect data for the thesis, and to interview journalists, producers and reporters. The field relationship developed across the two visits as a result of time spent within the newsroom and being able to talk to Al-Jazeera staff and attend some of the editorial meetings, especially the

morning ones. Communicating in Arabic was of great importance, as it broke any language barrier when talking to the staff and enabled the raising of questions.

As for collecting and recording data, various techniques were implemented, such as observation, scrutiny of documents and tapes of coverage, note-taking (as above) interviewing and informal conversations with the staff. This provided significant information on the daily work at Al-Jazeera, which helped during the analysis and the writing up of the thesis. As Hansen et al (1998) argue the three techniques of data collection involved in participant observation – observation, talk and interviews, and scrutiny of documents – all generate a mass of details, information and general impressions that need to be collected and recorded (Hansen et al 1998: 55).

Moreover, May has argued that fieldwork is a continual process of reflection and alteration of the focus of observation in accordance with analytic development:

It permits researchers to witness people's actions in different settings and routinely ask themselves a myriad of questions concerning motivations, beliefs and actions (May 1997: 143).

Further, such reflection allowed me to refine and hone the questions I asked and the way I asked them, indicating how the triangulation of the various methods adopted work together.

Observation guides us to some of the important questions we want to ask the respondent, and interviewing helps us to interpret the significance of what we are observing. Whether through interviewing or other means of data gathering, we need to place the observed scene in context, searching for the potential positive or negative sanctions, which are not immediately observed but may be important in shaping behaviour (Whyte cited in May 1997: 143).

Arthur Asa Berger (2000) has also argued that observation gives us a sense of the context, which often helps explain what people do. However, it doesn't help us to get inside people's minds "to understand why they do things, what motivates them, and what anxieties they have" (Berger 2000: 113).

You can observe a person ... but you can't know what the people you are observing think about what they are doing or what they know from just observing them (ibid).

Interviews were therefore used to fill such a vacuum by generating additional primary qualitative data to that collected from participant observation. As Berger stated, one



advantage of interviews is that one can generally record interviews and thus have a written record that can be analysed in detail (ibid).

Being at Al-Jazeera's premises for research purposes allowed for a much greater 'insider' understanding of the nature of the working environment at the channel, and it also provided access to much wider perspectives on the cultural and organisational norms which were central to the way Al-Jazeera covered the 2003 Iraq war.

3.3. Conclusion

A number of research methods were discussed in this chapter, which have been utilised in the conduct of this thesis. Documentary research, participant observation and interviews were key methods to generate primary and secondary qualitative data that were used to investigate and analyse media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war, and in the coverage of Al-Jazeera specifically. A critical examination of the literature on wartime propaganda and news coverage and an exploration of the contemporary policies and techniques that were used during the 2003 Iraq war by the coalition and the coverage of mainstream media is essential documentary evidence to identify the differences produced by Al-Jazeera's entry into this context. There was also a particular emphasis on data searched online which contributed significantly to the overall research as part of the documentary research method.

It is argued that the combination of research methods employed here have together provided a structured framework for the examination of the part played by Al-Jazeera in the 2003 Iraq war, and to enable the comparison with the mainstream media. The Methodology has sought to explain and justify the various research tools adopted to generate primary data and examine secondary data, such that a triangulation of methods has enabled the production of a coherent basis for the research. The major concern of the analysis was to explore the different patterns, strategies and policies of coverage that were used in the course of the 2003 Iraq war, in order to critically examine the development of wartime propaganda and news coverage of international conflicts. The original contribution of this thesis to these arguments is the work on Al-Jazeera which contributes to the literature on the mediatization of conflicts and on media strategies, expanding the discussion to include the role of Arab broadcasters, such as Al-Jazeera, in covering international conflicts.

Chapter Four: Arab Satellites and Al-Jazeera: Their Roles and Developments

4.1. Introduction

The advent of Arab satellite channels in the early 1990s is believed to have had a remarkable impact on Arab political, economic and social life, since these channels brought with them new experiences in state and private ownership, and which consequently introduced new styles of news coverage and current affairs programmes that broaden the discussed political, economic and cultural subjects in Arab life (Alterman 1998; Sakr 2001; Rugh 2004; Sakr 2007; Hafez 2008).

The emergence of Arab satellites could also be seen in the light of Operation Desert Storm in 1991 in which an international coalition, led by the US, launched a war against Iraq to liberate Kuwait, which had been invaded by Saddam Hussein's forces in August 1990. It could be said that the war in 1991 marked a significant transformation in the region's politics, especially when troops from countries such as Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and other Arab states of the Gulf, joined the US-led coalition against Iraq. Thus, one of the major consequences of this war was the emergence of new political and military alliances and cooperation in the region, which allowed the US to establish military presence in the Gulf (Sakr 2001).

However, in addition to the political implications of this war, it was significant that this conflict also marked the presence of CNN covering the course of the action exclusively from inside Iraq. The role of CNN is believed to have motivated various Arab groupings to launch their own satellite channels over the following years. Thus, since 1991, it could be said that Arab satellite media began to evolve in order to meet the rising challenges in the media market of the region. This witnessed the appearance of significant developments that had a remarkable influence on the Arab media scene.

This chapter explores the development of Arab satellite television since the early 1990s, with a particular focus on certain channels such as the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC), Arab News Network (ANN), Abu Dhabi, Al-Manar and Al-Jazeera. The reason for the emphasis on these particular channels is due to the possibilities they heralded or made

possible for Arab media, and yet the characteristics of these channels – as will be discussed – also offered an inspiring and influential model to other Arab broadcasters. In addition, the chapter continues to explore the growth of Arab satellites channels that has taken place since 2003, with a focus on the changing scene in the Iraqi media since the 2003 Iraq war and on the emergence of regional and international satellite broadcasting in Arabic.

This chapter argues that, just as the 1991 war marked the advent of Arab satellites, the 2003 Iraq war marked the start of regional and international broadcasters investing in the launch of satellite channels in Arabic. Thus, it examines the emergence of various 24-hour Arabic language news channels, funded variously by the US, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Iran. Exploring the process through which they emerged should help us to understand the dynamics of Arab satellite television now and help to update the current literature on Arab satellite media.

In addition, regarding both regional and international broadcasters in Arabic, Seib (2008: 29) argues that “politics is pervasive” and that media organisations that say they will deliver ideologically neutral news are unlikely to be truly apolitical. For Seib, this is an issue not only for Arab channels but also for Arabic language channels broadcasting from outside the region (*ibid*). Thus, it could be said that, without the realisation of the necessity to promote political perceptions in order to achieve better communication with Arab audiences, these projects would never have materialised. In other words, it can readily be asserted that the 2003 Iraq war accelerated competition among 24-hour news channels in the Arab world, and introduced a new dimension to the media scene in the region. This is seen in the inauguration of channels such as Al-Hurra, BBC Arabic Television, the Arabic broadcasts of France 24, Deutsche Welle Arabic, Russia Today Arabic, in addition to the Iranian-funded satellite channel Al-Alam and China Central Television CCTV-Arabic.

This chapter therefore examines political influence on the Arab satellites, and places particular emphasis on the role of Al-Jazeera, which gained its reputation from its comprehensive reporting of the Palestinian Intifada in 2000 and its controversial coverage of the war in Afghanistan in 2001, as well as its coverage of the Iraq war in 2003, and its continuous coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, in addition to its debatable current affairs programmes (Iskandar and El-Nawawy 2002, 2004; Miles 2005; Bessaiso 2005; Zayani 2005; Sakr 2007).

It is also argued that, without Al-Jazeera, the media scene in the Middle East would probably have looked very different. In other words, Al-Jazeera made a remarkable contribution in influencing the Arab media scene to develop a much more vibrant and dynamic milieu. The role of Al-Jazeera is equally presumed to have been a leading factor in influencing Arab coverage of the US-led war on Iraq in 2003. That is to say that the channel, as a prominent competitor, had pushed other Arab broadcasters such as Al-Arabiya and Abu Dhabi to report the conflict from a more critical perspective in order to gain wider viewership. Moreover, since the major battle ended in Iraq, the channel has continued to play a role in reporting post-war Iraq, along with other channels. The most poignant development is that, since the toppling of the Saddam Hussein regime, many other Iraq satellite channels have been established. They now constitute a highly condensed media landscape in the region, where regional and international powers are competing in order to win the hearts and minds of Arab audiences, yet all claiming to be credible and objective.

This chapter therefore explores the major developments which have occurred in the field of Arab satellite media, in particular the news channels. It is important to observe these developments, and to point out the influential factors which have led to this expansion, if we are to understand the Arab media scene now. In addition, it is assumed that the impact of the 2003 Iraq war on Arab and international media needs to be examined in a more analytical manner, since this war led to the removal of one of the prominent regimes in the region and was also accompanied by consistent international media strategies and campaigns to justify the brutality of this war and the political implications that followed. The mushrooming of Arab and other satellite broadcasters is presumed to be one of the direct consequences of the war on the Arab media scene in the region (if not globally).

In order to achieve a structured examination of the development of Arab satellite channels, this chapter consists of three main sections: the first discusses the chronological development of Arab satellite channels, as well as the development of news formats. The second examines the satellite channels that emerged since 2003, such as al-Arabiya, as well as the mediascape in Iraq after the 2003 Iraq war. It also discusses the rise of Arabic language satellite channels, funded by regional and international powers, such as Al-Alam, Al-Hurra, BBC Arabic, France 24 Arabic, Deutsche Welle Arabic service and Russia Today Arabic, and explores their popularity among Arab news consumers. The third section, examines the impact of

political agendas and ownership on the performance of Arab satellite channels. It also discusses the rise of Al-Jazeera, its sponsorship, news coverage and the expansion of the channel since the 2003 Iraq war.

4.2. The Development of Arab Satellite Channels

4.2.1. A chronological review of the main players

According to Sakr (2001), the 1991 Gulf war which followed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had split the Arab world into two camps, with the governments of Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait on one side, opposed by Iraq on the other, flanked by Palestine, Jordan Yemen and Tunisia, who either supported Saddam Hussein's defiance or declined to condemn it (Sakr 2001: 33).

Thus, this was the war where troops from Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Emirates and Sheikhdoms joined the US-led coalition, created to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait. However, one of the notable features of this conflict was the Iraqi use of media to influence the morale and the motivation of the Arab troops. According to Sakr, these troops were subjected to Iraqi propaganda designed to justify the occupation of Kuwait and fuel doubt among Arab ranks about US double standards:

... in coming to aid the rich and unpopular Kuwaitis, while leaving the stateless Palestinians to their fate. The Iraqi authorities had stepped up their external radio services for this purpose, partly by exploiting facilities seized in Kuwait, while also jamming incoming radio signals (Sakr 2001: 10).

Measures were therefore taken in Egypt in order to counter the Iraqi propaganda, by connecting with the Egyptian troops dispatched to the Gulf. The Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) arranged on 15 December 1990 - in the final build-up to the war that began on 15 January 1991 - to lease the Arabsat transponder to broadcast television programmes across the Arab world all day, every day, "for the next three years":

Within days the ERTU was using the facility to send news and entertainment programmes to the Gulf, for the benefit of Egyptian soldiers and local viewers with the necessary receiving equipment. The service became known as the Egyptian Space Channel (ESC) (ibid: 11).

In addition, Alterman (1998) argued that the multinational response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait was one of the major developments in the Arab world that consequently led to the rise of Arab satellite channels:

To a great extent, Operation Desert Storm and its preceding events in 1990-1991 made for wonderful television programming. Pentagon public relations experts understood the importance of public opinion on the conduct of the war, and although the war was not a "made-for-TV movie", it supplied highly impressive images for news broadcasts. In addition, the Pentagon's "spin operation" ensured that there was a constant outputting of carefully controlled information from the allied side. The result was a feeling of immediacy and a steady stream of information for television viewers (Alterman 1998: 16).

Alterman also imputed particular emphasis on technological advances, represented by the launch of a new generation of satellites by the satellite operator, Arabsat,³² that contributed remarkably to the spread of Arab satellites after the war:

There is now far more capacity to broadcast to the region than ever before and the requisite antennas are shrinking and becoming more affordable, owing in part to technological advances (ibid).

In this way, the war provided a major catalyst for the spread of satellite broadcasting to the Arab region. Thus, following the 1991 Gulf War, the transformation of the Middle East media landscape gathered pace, involving physical expansion of the satellite capacity serving the area, a rapid increase in the number of channels and a matching growth in the size of the satellite audience (Sakr 2001: 11-12).

Thus, according to Rugh (2004), the advent of satellites in the 1990s marked a revolution in the Arab television industry. Prior to 1990, Arab television was watched almost exclusively by domestic audiences (Rugh 2004: 201). Some television broadcasts were able to be seen outside their country of origin, but only in nearby parts of neighbouring countries - because these were terrestrial television signals that only reached comparatively short distances, mostly by line-of-sight, normally not more than fifty miles (ibid).

³² Their first satellite communications were launched in 1985 by Arab countries that comprised the League of Arab States. According to Schleifer (1998) the first major impact of new satellite technologies upon Arab media was in the eighties, such as the "satellited" daily newspapers. First, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* (The Middle East) and later *Al-Hayat* (The Life) newspapers began satellite transmission from London to major population centres throughout the Arab world. Although, both newspapers are owned by Saudi private interest, they did and still do address themselves to pan-Arab audience (Schleifer 1998: np).

Now, according to the Arabsat official website, the satellite operator "carries 350+ TV channels and 160+ Radio stations", reaching countries across the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, delivering telecommunication links to companies and governments throughout the Middle East and the African continent (Arabsat 2009: np).

Therefore, it could be said that, before the widespread emergence of satellites, governments in the Arab region were able to maintain a high level of media control on the broadcast output of media channels. This is, for example, what happened in Saudi Arabia during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. According to Kraidy (2002), the media in Saudi Arabia did not announce the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait [in August 1990] until two days later. Similarly, the coming of American troops onto Saudi soil remained secret for a week (Kraidy 2002: np).

In today's satellite media environment, such information control would be difficult to apply in order to hide such information. Therefore, the advent of Arab satellite television must be viewed as a remarkable development in the Arab broadcasting media that allowed the connection of audiences with news events around the clock. It also gradually challenged the news reporting mechanisms in the Arab world, which Kraidy says had relied on "a daily diet of protocol news, state directed programming, and in many cases direct propaganda" (ibid). Thus, as described by Rugh, the advent of satellite television brought a new style in news coverage and in political discussion programmes:

News reporting was more aggressive and thorough. Talk shows explored topics new to Arab television that had only been dealt with previously in private conversations or to some extent in Western broadcasts like CNN. Now, with Arab satellite television, there were being discussed in media in Arabic, including call-ins, or a pan-Arab level so the content was by Arabs and for Arabs. That was new (Rugh 2004: 201).

This journey of media development started with the arrival of the MBC satellite channel in September 1991, following the launch of the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) in London. The channel was founded by two rich and well-connected Saudi entrepreneurs, Sheikh Saleh Kamel and Sheikh Walid bin Ibrahim Al-Ibrahim. MBC started up just in time to cover the ground-breaking multilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks in Madrid in October 1991 (Sakr 2001: 12).

According to Rugh, although Egypt was the first Arab country to start a satellite TV channel, MBC was "the first truly pan-Arab station" in terms of content and purpose and, unlike the Egyptian channel, it was privately owned. However, the Saudi royal family is assumed to have supported the channel for political reasons:

It is assumed that the royal family quietly supported this MBC venture financially for political reasons, in order to support a pan-Arab media channel which would be

friendly to Saudi Arabia. Many in the region in fact consider it to be the King's [Fahd] channel (Rugh 2004: 212).

Further, Schleifer (2000) asserted that MBC managed to gain greater Arab audiences by offering a different style of news coverage than other Arab television channels:

What is now frequently overlooked is that MBC had a resounding success in terms of quickly acquiring a significant share of the market, not because it was a general channel but because it offered something different, something extra, something specialized within the overall appearance of a general channel. That something was news coverage, field reporting, real television journalism of the sort never seen or heard before in Arabic (Schleifer 2000: np).

According to Alterman (1998), MBC demonstrated a notable ability to be the leader in revolutionising Arab news coverage:

The first Arab television company to open a Jerusalem bureau, MBC's coverage of the Palestinian affairs has been based on interviews and on-the-ground observations rather than polemic and third-hand reports. Perhaps more important, MBC has led the charge to cover news that previously had been ignored in Arab media. From the coverage of an attempted coups in Algeria in January 1992 to its intensive coverage of the Israeli assassination attempt on Hamas operative Khalid Mesh'al in Amman in 1997, MBC's news coverage has shined light on events that may make governments in the region squirm, but about which regional audiences are hungry to know (Alterman 1998: 19-20).

One of the events that contributed to the increase of MBC's audience share was the reporting of the 1994 Yemini civil war (Rugh 2004: 212). According to Rugh, this share "was bigger than any other TV channels, including CNN" (ibid). Nevertheless, the fall of oil prices in 1998 and "problems in management" persuaded MBC to reduce staff and move its headquarters to Dubai in 2001 to cut costs (ibid: 213).

Once in Dubai, as Robinson (2005) documents, MBC began an aggressive expansion programme that saw the launch of four new channels in 24 months. These channels provided a variety of output, ranging from news to entertainment, and from Arabic to English:

MBC2, originally a new home for MBC's Western fare ("Friends," "Frasier," "Oprah" and several western movies per day); MBC3 an all-kids channel; Al-Arabiya, an all-news station launched only weeks before the Iraq war as a direct challenge to Qatar-based Al-Jazeera; and, just last January [2005], MBC4. The last channel is now home to Oprah and all of the other Western shows as well as all news programs broadcast everyday by both ABC and CBS. This allowed MBC2 to become an all-

movie station (it claims to be the world's first 24/7 movie channel)³³ (Robinson 2005: 6).

On the other hand, measures to launch a satellite channel from Dubai in the United Arab Emirates were taking place, and resulted in Emirates Dubai Television (EDTV), which began its life as a satellite channel a year later than MBC. In October 1992 Dubai Satellite Television started out with the satellite operator Arabsat, but soon arranged for the signal to be carried by the satellite providers Eutelsat, Galaxy and Intelsat. By doing this, in 1995, the channel extended its coverage and thus was able to reach areas like South America. At that point, EDTV was able to boast to potential advertisers that it was "the world's second biggest satellite broadcaster" in terms of area covered (Sakr 2001: 12). The main programming of EDTV consisted of news services, cultural documentaries, variety programmes and drama (Arabic and English films) (Leo and Amin 1999: 71).

In 1993, Egypt was again part of the race for development, launching another network called Nile TV, to cover Europe and North Africa. Nile TV's broadcasting schedule incorporates English and French, and the main objective is "to promote the image of Egypt in Europe and attract tourism" (ibid: 65-66). In 1994, Sheikh Saleh Kamel "sold his 37.5 percent share of MBC" and joined with the Saudi Prince Al-Walid bin Talal³⁴ in founding another TV station called "Arab Radio and Television Network" (ART) (Rugh 2004: 213). The channel, which developed into a pay-TV venture (Sakr 2001: 12), was originally based in Rome but later moved to Cairo (Rugh 2004: 231). Alterman (1998) considered that moving to Cairo aimed at bringing the channel closer to its audiences and production facilities, as well as cutting the costs of operating from Rome (Alterman 1998:29-30).

In addition, in 1994, the Saudi business group of Al-Mawrid founded "Orbit", a pan-Arab satellite channel based in Italy, though it moved its headquarters to Bahrain in 2000. Orbit, as documented by Rugh, was "the Arab world's first free-based coded-signal television channel" (Rugh 2004: 213). It is controlled by Prince Khalid bin Abdullah, son of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. During the initial period of its broadcasts, Orbit was operated as a joint venture with the BBC Arabic Service, producing all news and documentary programs.

³³ Robinson stated that, on both MBC2 and MBC4, the programming is entirely in English (with Arabic subtitles). The commercials, however, are entirely in Arabic. This formula, Robinson said, was proven entirely successful, and MBC claims its own survey data now show MBC2 outdrawing the flagship station, MBC1, in prime time (Robinson 2005: 6).

³⁴ Al-Walid bin Talal is related to the King, and is also one of the world's wealthiest men, owning shares in many major international companies, including Citicorp and Eurovision (ibid).

However, the partnership came across major difficulties when the BBC's approach to journalism clashed with the approach of its Saudi sponsors:

This agreement lasts only for twenty months. When Orbit carried a BBC-produced "Panorama" program which the Saudi leadership did not like, Orbit management was persuaded to cancel the BBC contract. Orbit made new arrangements with Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV and others, and from then on avoided program content offensive to the Saudi benefactors (ibid).

Meanwhile, Sakr stated that an increasing number of television channels directly owned by Middle East governments were starting to follow the Egyptian example, packaging general terrestrial programmes for satellite delivery to their nationals abroad:

Thus the Jordanian state broadcaster launched the Jordan Satellite channel in 1993, Morocco's RTM went onto satellite in 1994, and Syria and Yemen followed in 1995. Even Libya, despite the effects of UN sanctions, inaugurated a space channel in 1996 (Sakr 2001: 12).

The Middle East then entered a new phase in 1996, marked by the arrival of two new players from Lebanon and one from Qatar (Sakr 2001: 13). These channels are the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) which was founded as a terrestrial Christian militia TV station on 23 August 1985, before it was launched as a satellite channel in 1996,³⁵ the other channel is Future TV which is owned by the late Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al-Hariri:

The Lebanese entrance instantly challenged the dominance enjoyed until then by Egyptian and Saudi satellite channels. Flamboyant game shows, general informality and attractive female presenters were noted as hallmarks of the two Lebanese channels. Their presence on Arabsat C-Band [satellite operator] made it easy for viewers to switch between MBC, ESC, EDTV and the two new arrivals (ibid: 13).

The other newcomer of 1996, the Al-Jazeera satellite channel based in Doha, Qatar, was a channel devoted to news and current affairs that "soon made up for lost time by astonishing viewers with uncensored political coverage quite different from any Arabic-language television programming previously seen"³⁶ (Sakr 2001: 13).

In May 1997, Al-Jazeera was challenged by another all-news upstart, the London-based Arab News Network (ANN), which was founded through private ownership "by a semi-exiled

³⁵ According to Sakr (2001), LBC satellite channel benefited from a 1996 Lebanese government decree that allowed privately owned channels to broadcast via satellite (Sakr 2001: 13). These channels included Future TV and NBN (NBN will be introduced later in the chapter). By January 2000, LBC was transmitting special television packages to Europe, the United States, Africa and Asia (Ayish 2001: np).

³⁶ Al-Jazeera will be discussed more in detail later in this chapter.

branch of the Al-Asad family of Syria” (ibid: 14-15). According to El-Hennawy (2002), the channel represents itself as a “24-hour independent Arab news service”, licensed by the Independent Television Commission (ITC), “an independent body that grants licenses to commercial television companies in the UK, sets standards and monitor broadcasters’ outputs” (El-Hennawy 2002: np). ANN was launched to cover international news, with a focus on the Arab Gulf States, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe, and started by broadcasting news bulletins on the hour. Programming included political and social features, debates, talk shows, business analysis, sports and scientific and cultural documentaries. However, after expanding in the years following its inauguration, the channel has started to face financial challenges, which led to the cutting of its staff and transmission options to reduce expenses³⁷ (ibid). El-Hennawy has challenged the claims of independence in the channel’s publicity materials. ANN is not without a political edge, since it is owned by Syrian businessman Somar Rifaat El-Asad, son of Rifaat Al-Asad, the brother of Syria’s late president Hafez Al-Asad and former vice-president of Syria:

Ownership of the channel by such a political figure raises legitimate questions about the political motives behind its establishment (El-Hennawy 2002: np).

Thus, El-Hennawy asserted that many believed that the real political goal behind the launching of the channel was to challenge the Syrian regime (ibid). This role is assumed to be supported by regional powers, as part of political interests and agendas in the region. For this reason, Alterman pointed out that there has been a persistent rumour that there was a Saudi angel in the first year of ANN’s operation:

ANN’s financing is less clearly understood than that of any Arab television stations, as there is no “visible” investor (Alterman 1998: 26).

Interestingly, there are mixed views on the channel’s finances, suggesting that the money for the station came from Rifaat Al-Asad (who has the millions to lavish on such an operation). However, persistent rumours in London and elsewhere suggest that ANN’s money comes from Saudis close to King Abdullah [then Crown Prince]:

³⁷ It is assumed that the deterioration of its financial position became more visible during the 2003 Iraq war, when the channel had no reporters on the ground to report from Iraq, and was dependent on Associated Press (AP) and Reuters for its coverage. This is unlike Afghanistan in 2001, after the fall of the Taliban regime, where it had a reporter on the ground (author’s note).

Some close observers of the region suggest privately that, in fact, the former is true, but the station encourages rumours of Saudi support so as to gain a sort of imprimatur and to encourage outside investment from Saudis and others (ibid).

Alterman (1998) believed that ANN has evolved into something of an enigma on the regional broadcasting scene. Suspected of having the clearest political agenda and the muddiest backing of all regional broadcasters, the station's evolution remains one of the interesting developments in the field of Arab satellite media (ibid). At the same time, El-Hennawy has argued that, despite its financial problems and the concomitant political dilemma, the channel remains as one of the major Arab news channels, even if it has not, according to many observers, achieved the same level of professionalism as Al-Jazeera, Abu Dhabi Satellite TV, and MBC (El-Hennawy 2002: np).

However, in a major development, one that would explain the potential threat facing Arab satellite channels to transmit freely via satellite, jamming signals became a political tool that could be used to silence Arab satellite channels. This was the case with ANN, which had its signals jammed on satellite providers Arabsat, Nilesat, and lately the European satellite provider Hotbird in May 2009, causing the channel to go off air completely (anncampaign.com 2009). An insider source at ANN revealed that the disappearance of the channel was temporary, especially after investigations were carried out and detected that the location of jamming signals was inside Syria. However, the source (who preferred to be anonymous) also revealed that the channel was prepared to go back on air, with a new status, i.e., it would represent the United National Alliance (UNA), a political movement led by Rifaat Al-Asad (anonymous ANN interview with the author 2009). According to the United National Alliance (UNA) statement on the incident, on 6th July 2009, it was the European Satellite provider EUTELSAT that carried out the investigations to reveal that the source of the jamming was “within the Syrian geographical territory” (anncampaign.com 2009). In the statement, UNA accused the Syrian authorities of “airspace piracy” aiming “to silence the opposition and to interfere with the free air-waves”,³⁸ calling this act “unjustified behaviour” that “does not respect the Rule of Law and the broadcasting ethics and conventions which ANN always upholds³⁹” (ibid). In addition, the insider source at ANN insisted that the move

³⁸ In the statement, UNA claims that the Syrian authorities used equipment and devices that are meant for use in war situations when the country's security is at risk (anncampaign.com 2009: np).

³⁹ In the same statement, UNA stated that “ANN has never been condemned or criticised for providing false news or misinformation” or “transmitting offensive material or broadcasting expressions that can be construed as detrimental to the Arab social and moral codes” (anncampaign.com 2009: np).

against the channel was politically motivated, especially since ANN is taking the side of Saudi Arabia in its political positions in the region (anonymous from ANN 2009 interview with the author). Nevertheless, ANN managed after this period of being cut off air to resume broadcasting on the European satellite provider, Hotbird, and the Egyptian satellite provider, Nilesat, on 25 August 2009 (anncampaign.com 2009: np).

While ANN was in its first year of operation, Egypt decided to expand its satellite service by launching its “Nile thematic channels”. Schleifer (2000) stated that, in 1998, the Egyptian Radio and Television Union (ERTU) launched, at great expense, its own specialized or thematic channels: Nile News, Nile Sport, Nile Children, Nile Culture and Nile Variety. However, Schleifer argued that except for Nile News, none of these channels are particularly differentiated from ART or from the increasingly Arabized offerings of the even more upmarket specialized pay-TV channels of Orbit:

Even Nile News, while representing something of an advance over Egypt TV’s conventional general news channel coverage, still cannot compare to the news product of Al-Jazeera, ANN, or the occasional news bulletins of MBC (Schleifer 2000, np).

On the other hand, Arab political opposition continued to seek a platform for their political views in the UK. Thence, 1999 witnessed the arrival of the privately owned London based satellite channel, Al-Mustakillah (The Independent), which had been established by Mohammed Al-Hachimi, a publisher of the newspaper Al-Mustakillah:

Hachimi was originally a strong critic of the Tunisian government and then he softened his criticism somewhat. As of 2003 it was suffering from limited financial resources and was broadcasting only eight hours a day (Rugh 2004: 214).

Increasingly, since Arab media outlets in the UK became visibly located in London, they began to have some distinguishing features. Salamndra (2003) stated that these media institutions helped to reconstruct local identities. Yet they did not appear to engender wider or more participatory forms of social and political organisation:

Much of pan-Arab satellite television remains under the control of Gulf patrons and expatriate Arab mediators, and reflects the interests of sponsoring states and state-controlled markets rather than those of an expanding public sphere in the Arab world. London, long the refuge of opposition and dissent, has also been home to organisations that support existing power structures in the Arab World. Transitional media technologies may eventually give rise to democratisation and liberalization. Yet, this ethnography of London’s Arab press and television points to the conservative potential of new Arab media (Salamndra 2003: np).

Alternatively, 1999 witnessed a major development in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). As discussed by Zayani and Ayish (2006), January 1999 was the month when the Abu Dhabi satellite channel was re-launched as part of Emirates Media Inc. (EMI). The satellite channel originally began its transmission in 1992, followed by the Emirate of Dubai TV in the same year and by the Emirate of Sharja TV in 1999. However, its re-launch (as part of EMI) allowed the channel to benefit more from the development of United Arab Emirates (UAE) media. EMI had been established in 1999 by Federal Law No.5 to serve as an umbrella organisation for a host of broadcasting and publishing operations in the Abu Dhabi Emirate (Zayani and Ayish 2006: 484):

According to this law, EMI is entrusted with the development of UAE media and culture, the promotion of the country, the training of national staff in media sectors, the commercial utilization of facilities and services and the contribution to UAE comprehensive development (ibid).

With the re-start of the Abu Dhabi satellite channel, it had a new format, better resources, state of the art technology and most importantly, “an independent status”. It has invested quite heavily in its news operations with the establishment of huge networks of correspondents and the introduction of state-of-the-art news production facilities:

The channel maintains a highly developed news centre, in addition to scores of correspondents in several Arab and international capitals. Being both a local and pan-Arab channel that is subsidised by the government of Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi channel had a general audience appeal. Positioning itself as a generalist channel providing a mix of news and entertainment, Abu Dhabi channel has been constantly trying to find a niche for itself and to widen its appeal to a demanding Arab audience (ibid).

In Afghanistan, in 2001, the channel had the chance to expand its coverage by dispatching two teams of reporters to cover the war. According to Ahl Bara (2004), who worked as an anchorman and reporter at Abu Dhabi television, the first team went to Qandahar, after Jamal Ismail – the Abu Dhabi reporter who was in Islamabad in Pakistan - received a phone call from Mullah Omar’s Office, the leader of the Taliban, on 28th October 2001 confirming that the Taliban Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued special permission to Abu Dhabi journalists to enter Afghanistan any time they wished. This permission, according to Ahl Bara, came after weeks of waiting for responses from the Afghan embassy in Islamabad. Thus, the first team went to Qandahar and the other team went on 30 October from Pakistan to Kabul with a humanitarian aid convoy that belonged to the Emirate Red Crescent (Ahl Bara 2004: 85- 99):

By all measures, it was an important event, because having two satellite transmission outposts belonging to the channel in Qandahar and Kabul changes a lot of things, which could lead Abu Dhabi to new horizons (ibid: 86).

However, according to Ahl Bara, the most important achievement for Abu Dhabi during the war in Afghanistan in 2001 was its reporting of the fall of Kabul on 13 November 2001:

On the morning of 13 November, the channel ran exclusive images of the fall of Kabul, and news agencies and other television stations were relying on Abu Dhabi in its coverage of the event. The channel had a camera fixed on the roof [of the Intercontinental Hotel] capturing images of the Northern Alliance militia spreading in the hills and the outskirts of the city, following Taliban and Al-Qaeda fighters in their dens (ibid: 123).

Following Afghanistan, it was the 2003 Iraq war, which offered another opportunity for Abu Dhabi satellite television to compete with other Arab broadcasters to cover the war. However, during this conflict the channel provided more distinctive coverage than in the 2001 Afghanistan war. The channel dispatched three teams of correspondents to cover the military operations in Iraq, it also hosted numerous political analysts and military experts to provide perspectives on unfolding events in Iraq and the political ramifications of the military operations (Zayani and Ayish 2006: 484).

In an interview with *Transnational Broadcasting Studies* (2003) Ali Al-Ahmed, director of Abu Dhabi, stated that the decision was taken at the channel to report the war by being “a source for it and give it to the public”, thus making their coverage distinct:

After this decision, we put a lot of sources in Baghdad. At one point we had 80 people. After the fall of Baghdad we put in 60. We used to do our main daily talk shows from Baghdad itself. At that point [we] were shifting back gradually. So the channel went back to having a multiplicity of general channels (Al-Ahmad interview with Schleifer 2003: np).

However, according to Zayani and Ayish, the Abu Dhabi satellite channel had scaled down its news operations by the end of 2005, limiting them to three daily newscasts and two political talk shows. This development coincided with the abolition in early 2006 of the UAE’s Ministry of Information, the channel’s overseer (Zayani and Ayish 2006: 285).

Developments elsewhere in the Arab satellite media milieu continued to take place. In 2000, Hezbollah, the Shia political group in Lebanon, received a license to start a satellite station

called “Al-Manar”. The channel had been created in 1991 and initiated its satellite broadcasting in 2000. It focuses its news coverage on the Palestine/ Israel conflict (Guaaybess 2008: 202).

According to Sakr, although Al-Manar is linked to the Shia sect, and specifically intended to mobilize support for resistance to the Israeli occupation, “the channel was seen in some quarters as transcending Lebanon’s sectarian television system, displaying ‘civic commitment’ through its interest in concerns of ordinary people rather than a political elite” (Sakr 2007: 9) Further, Sakr pointed out that the channel also managed to achieve a big increase in viewers during the war in Lebanon in 2006⁴⁰ (ibid).

Nevertheless, besides the Arab-Israeli conflict, it is worth mentioning that the channel had other contributions in terms of covering the Middle East. For instance, Al-Manar was among other Arab satellite channels covering the war in Afghanistan in 2001. According to Ali Hashem - one of Al-Manar’s former journalists - the channel sent three reporters to cover the war in Afghanistan (Hashem 2009 interview with author). The channel also covered the 2003 Iraq war. Hashem stated that Al-Manar originally had a reporter based in Baghdad, in addition to other reporters who were sent to cover other areas in Iraq during the war (ibid). Abdullah Shams El-Din (2005), who was one of Al-Manar’s reporters dispatched to cover the war, clarified that the channel sent two teams to Iraq through Iran to cover the conflict, the first team was covering the North and Kurdistan, while the other was covering from the South (Shams El-Din 2005: 14). Nevertheless, after the major military operations ended, Al-Manar established its bureau in Baghdad in 2004 and followed the policy of sending reporters to Iraq for various periods to help cover the post-Saddam period (Hashem 2009 interview with author). Shams El-Din, who was based in Northern Iraq during the war, was among other journalists who were sent back to Baghdad to cover the post-Saddam period (Shams El-Din 2005: 157).

⁴⁰ Based on personal observation, during this war with Israel, Al-Manar was very careful to appear as a credible source of news to Arab audiences, which is assumed to have been behind the channel’s popularity. This was noticed in revealing the number of victims, especially on the Israeli side, without exaggerating in terms of mobilising the audience. The channel frequently showed clips from Israeli television and its press in an attempt to reveal the impact of the war on Israel. However, although the overall performance of the channel could be seen as part of the war propaganda with Israel, Al-Manar was keen to present itself as a credible channel in terms of news coverage (author’s note).

On the other hand, in keeping with the development of the media scene in the Arab world, the year 2000 also witnessed the arrival of the National Broadcasting Network (NBN) which started its satellite transmissions in Lebanon. Like many others, though it was privately owned, it represents another example of the politically motivated media, serving as a mouthpiece for political parties and movements:

NBN had been founded by a Lebanese Shia group led by Lebanese politician Nabih Berri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. It offers news and entertainment, but news gives special priority to Nabih Berri and his allies. It is sometimes nicknamed the “Nabih Berri Network” (Rugh 2004: 214).

Therefore, it could be said that if MBC, Orbit and ART were business oriented, then Future TV and LBC combined political orientation with business motivation, while Al-Manar and NBN provided examples of primarily politically motivated channels. On the other hand, Abu Dhabi and Dubai introduce a new experience of state-funded channels that go beyond the direct control of the state by employing Arab professionals and use of the channels as platforms to attract investors and tourism.

Other examples of privately owned media included commercial broadcasters in Egypt. These examples could be seen: (1) in the launch of “Dream Television”, which started in 2001 and offered two channels of entertainment and drama, but also included political programming that dealt with sensitive subjects, “although usually in restrained ways”, and, (2) another new Egyptian TV station, Al-Mihwar, was established in January 2002 by businessmen Hassan Ratib and Hani Surur (Rugh 2004: 206). According to Sakr, Dream TV and Al-Mihwar illustrated the way the crossover between commercialism and elements of public service are apt to occur in an environment marked by tight government controls and a general absence of state provision of pluralist public-service content (Sakr 2007: 7):

Whereas, Al-Mihwar presented itself as the ‘voice of civil society’, Dream was quintessentially a ‘business project’ – a vehicle for advertising goods produced by the business empire of Ahmad Bahjat [the owner of the channel]. Nevertheless, both found themselves juggling between government imposed constraints on their output and the imperative of corporate survival in ways that produced market led programming on Al-Mihwar and public-service-style talk shows on Dream 2 (ibid).

As illustrated above, it is assumed that the development of the private sector had an impact on the content of the various satellite channels. It improved the quality of the contents by adding more vibrant programmes and talk shows and avoiding the traditional format of state

run television news coverage or programmes that favourably feature governments policies and without criticism (Ayish 2001, Amin 2004).

4.2.2. The development of news formats

The rapid growth of Arab satellites is believed to have generated parallel discussions on the news format and styles which appeared on these channels, in addition to intertwined factors that influence their output, most notably ownership and governmental interference. What is noteworthy is that since the privately-owned Arab satellites emerged, the traditional news formats which primarily relied on official news and presidential and governmental activities have been challenged by more vibrant styles that could offer variety in news and current affairs programmes (Sakr 2001; Ayish 2001; Amin 2004; Hafez 2008).

It is assumed that this change was an essential step to reach wider audiences beyond the countries' national borders and to compete in a rapidly growing market. In this regard, Guaaybess (2002) stated that the satellite was therefore the instrument that made possible the opening and the enlargement of territories of reception:

The enlargement of the audience market, or rather the de-compartmentalization of the territories of reception, entailed a tough competition among a plurality of actors in the audiovisual sectors (Guaaybess 2002: np).

Sakr also argues that the mushrooming of stations and the spread of reception dishes went hand-in-hand. Therefore, in the years following the arrival of LBC, Future, and Al-Jazeera on the satellite scene, satellite access boomed:

To quote the words of an advertising executive who surveyed Saudi viewing habits in 1997, the arrival of LBC, Future TV and Al-Jazeera encouraged audiences to 'vote with their remotes'. The combination of increased access and more discriminating use of the remote control was a potentially powerful one (Sakr 2001: 16).

In the same vein, Rugh also contended that, by the early part of the twenty-first century, there were clearly three distinct types of Arab television system side-by-side: the original government-controlled terrestrial systems, plus the new private and governmental satellite systems (Rugh 2004: 202).

However, Ayish (2001) stated that the rise of commercial satellite television, alongside government-controlled broadcasting, has brought about a new public sphere marked by various news agendas:

More than ever before, previously suppressed political perspectives and orientations have become more visible on Arab television (Ayish 2001: np).

Thus, Ayish considered that one of the remarkable developments in Arab television since the 1990s has been the breakup of the government monopoly model of broadcasting in the Arab world. This model had derived from the notion of broadcasting as a tool of national development that should be placed under government control:

Although this model drew partly on broadcast systems dominant in former colonial nations like Britain and France, a greater government control of television organisations had deprived broadcasters of editorial discretion and autonomy. Operating within ministries of information, television organisations for the most part were funded exclusively from national budgetary allocations and their employees were viewed as part of public-sector bureaucracy (Ayish 2001: np).

Thus, the significance of the entry of commercial broadcasters such as MBC, ART, Orbit, LBC, Future, Al-Jazeera and others, with huge technical and financial resources, into the Arab television scene, brought to Arab homes not only a wider range of program choices, but new programming genres that continue to be distinctive features of Arab television screens. The main implication of this development has been “a dwindling government television audience” (ibid). These developments have also created fiercer competition with print media for a “limited advertising pie” (ibid).

Mellor (2005) challenged the idea that news formats on Arab satellites would bring genuine change in the Arab countries, despite that fact that the imported genres, particularly live political debate and news formats, would increase the audiences’ trust in the new media, and familiarize them with new traditions of political participation, as well as contributing to increasing professionalism among Arab journalists (Mellor 2005: 10). Mellor argued that without genuine change from within each nation, the change would remain at the symbolic level. The heated debates on the new channels would only be seen as “a safety valve to release public pressure and suppressions and a way to absorb the inherent conflicts” (Taweela cited in Mellor 2005: 10):

For foreign viewers, these debates might be interpreted as a step in the right direction towards democratization, but this could be far from true. It is like watching an Arab drama or music video featuring an extravagant life that can by no means be a reflection of the average Arab (Mellor 2005: 10).

In agreement with Mellor, Kraidy stated that while Arab regimes maintain various levels of control over their satellite television stations, they are notably permissive when these stations are critical of other Arab regimes:

In fact, Arab regimes opposed to each other have used satellite television for propaganda purposes, or to offer their satellite channels as a platform to dissidents, critics and opponents of other governments, a theme which was increasingly associated with the Qatari Al-Jazeera news network. As a result, transnational broadcasting via satellite has caused, intensified or publicized rifts between Arab governments (Kraidy 2002: np).

Additional views illustrated other dimensions of the effects of Arab satellite channels by assuming that these Arab broadcasters have also managed through their comprehensive coverage of events in the region and internationally, and their treatments of current affairs issues in such programmes as panel discussions and talk-shows, to spread awareness among Arab audiences on Arab-related issues, whether in Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon or the Palestinian territories. According to Al-Hroub (2006), this role of the Arab satellite channels could be seen as reviving a trans-border Arab consciousness:

Individuals in the states of Al Maghreb Al Arabi (The Occidental Arab World)⁴¹ can watch live what is happening in Palestine and Iraq. Individuals in Lebanon and Egypt have become informed about Algerian and Moroccan issues in an unprecedented manner. Wherever a crises occurs and intensifies, such as the Darfur crises in Sudan, individuals in the kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates [UAE] can easily learn about it and follow its ramifications (Al-Hroub 2006: 101).

Furthermore, it has been observed that Arab satellites frequently managed to tackle subjects that were considered to be taboo in the Arab media before, including religion and political changes in the Arab world, especially after the arrival of Al-Jazeera in 1996.

According to Sharabi (2003) the selection of programmes featuring panel discussions, political commentaries, women's programmes, special investigative reports, in addition to news reports, all challenged the traditional forms of governmental media control in the Arab

⁴¹ These countries are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania (author's note).

countries by focusing on issues, ideas and problems that were hardly ever aired in public by the Arab media:

Old taboos have been broken. For example, Arab journalists now criticize state policies, attack corruption in government and call for political and social change. Freedom of speech, at least in this indirect form, is now a real experience for many (Sharabi 2003: np).

Sharabi added that one of the most striking developments has been the growing interest in discussion programmes dealing with women's issues.

Panel discussions by and about women have proliferated, with both Islamist and secularist women participating. Equally noteworthy is the role of women in the new TV organisations, where many serve as anchors, announcers, interviewers, panel moderators as well as special correspondents (ibid).

Still, it could be true that discussions of such subjects would not necessarily bring fundamental social and political changes in Arab societies. The problem, as stated by Al-Hroub, lies in the lack of social institutions that can promote collective action or demonstrations of support about issues raised by the media:

There is a vacuum in terms of politics and mechanisms in the Arab society, which is not conducive to bridging gaps in awareness and theorization and developing them into tangible reality (Al-Hroub 2006: 103).

On the other hand, Ayish continued to argue that the new evolving television journalism model dominant in Arab television news seems to share two major features with American style journalism: "sensationalism and technical formats". On the other hand, it reveals some differences from the American model in two other aspects: "commitment to issues of concern to viewers and emphasis on political news to the exclusion of human interest news" (Ayish 2001: np).

On sensationalism, Ayish illustrated that the use of television as a sensational medium of communication in the Arab world is evident in the use of video and images about conflicts and demonstrations to attract viewers' attention to these political incidents, such as "atrocities committed by Israeli forces against Palestinian civilians, especially children" and the "fighting in Afghanistan and the Ivory Coast", which all reflect the playing up of violence as a means of catching viewers' attention (ibid). This theme of coverage included other places, in addition to Afghanistan and the Palestinian territories, such as Iraq (during the 2003 war

and after), as well as Lebanon. The highly tense political atmosphere and violence in these places have marked the news agenda for many Arab satellite channels and stirred the media scene to further competition in news reporting in the region.

In addition, on the issue of technical features, Ayish noted that the format on channels such as Al-Jazeera, Abu Dhabi, MBC and LBC has been similar to American television newscasts which have traditionally followed a structured format, drawing on field reports as the basic unit of the news program:

A studio-based anchorperson serves to introduce reports dispatched by correspondents and reporters and to conduct in-studio and remote interviews. Professionally produced newscasts are those with rich visual and graphic materials, short fast-paced items, and timely or live delivery of news (ibid).

According to Ayish, this format has dominated a growing number of the Arab world's television channels for numerous reasons:

First, the conventional on-camera or voice-over format has proved a failure as viewers began turn to sleek and visually attractive news programmes carried by international television services like CNN, whose Western-style news layout seems to have had a notable impact on Arab world television news programmes. Second, a new generation of television executives and practitioners with solid professional training in Western media settings has pushed for the opening up of traditionally closed media systems, including news formats and delivery modes (ibid).

Thus, as stated by Ayish, the introduction of these technical features has been viewed as an integral component of a professional broadcast outlook. The use of digital and computer-based technologies in television news production is therefore taken as a craft governed by professional standards that bear heavily not only on the message format, but on content as well (ibid).

According to Amin (2004) the Gulf crisis in 1991 marked a turning point, not only in establishing the genre of 24-hour satellite television news, but also in bringing to light Middle Eastern viewers' dissatisfaction with terrestrial television news coverage:

New Arabic transnational television services such as MBC, Al-Jazeera, Nile News and Arab News Network [ANN] have been trying to imitate program formats from CNN. These new networks, particularly Orbit Networks, MBC and Al-Jazeera, have brought these values home to the Middle East (Amin 2004: np).

On the differences from American-style journalism, Ayish stated that because Arab television had evolved as government institutions in the Arab world, political news was bound to the top of the news agenda. Thus, newsworthiness is selected on the basis of criteria deemed appropriate by gatekeepers according to well-established practices and norms. According to this definition, politics may not by itself be newsworthy unless it deals with issues that are important, relevant, timely, and with significant consequences for the audience. One implication of this trend has been the production of elitist news programmes that seem to be little concerned with the developments relating to grassroots groups and organisations falling outside existing political arrangements within the Arab world at local and regional levels (Ayish 2001: np). In addition, the prioritising of political news has also come at the expense of human interest news describing ordinary individuals:

One implication of this emphasis on political news on Arab world television seems to be the politicization of Arab viewers who, unlike their counterparts in western countries, consider it an essential part of their lives to be politically educated (ibid).

The other point illustrated by Ayish on the difference from American-style journalism is “commitment to issues” which could be contingent on the nature of the situation at hand. For example, in the case of the Palestinian Intifada in 2000, Arab satellites played a significant role in revealing the suffering of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation, to an extent that “balanced reporting on the conflicting views seems to be virtually non-existent”:

The supportive role of satellite television broadcasters for the Palestinian uprising has been viewed by observers as an important factor accounting for sustaining acts of resistance in the Palestinian territories, despite the heavy losses incurred. It has been noted that the 2000 uprising differs from the 1988 uprising in some important features, the most outstanding of which has been the satellite television reporting of the events (Ayish 2001: np).

Yet it is very important at this stage to emphasise that it is one of the major roles of Arab satellites, in addition to covering events, to provide a sense of immediacy while reporting events from areas such as the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq. According to Harrison (2006), during crises, many news consumers nowadays do not want to wait for specific broadcast times, preferring to look at the immediate news suppliers, such as twenty-four hour news channels and the internet (Harrison 2006: 201). This feeling of immediacy would probably explain the engagement of Arab audiences with the outcome of Arab satellite channels in their comprehensive coverage of political incidents and violence, primarily in the Arab region.

In addition, the employment of local reporters as resident correspondents in their countries helped to provide greater knowledge of the political situations in these places. This recruitment policy is more visible in the case of reporting the Palestinian territories, and provides an exceptional example of the role of local reporters in reporting their own countries. Thus, as stated by El Obeidi (2003), these crews, which are formed of locals, are familiar with the history of the conflict being covered and the people's feelings and culture. Similarly, they had viewers "who knew the history of the struggle, spoke the same language, and shared their feelings and beliefs" (El Obeidi 2003: np).

For the first time, Palestinians felt they were no longer subjects of an outside narrator, they felt that their story was being told and narrated by themselves (ibid).

In addition, El Obeidi also asserted that Arab reactions to images being aired from Palestine were obvious in the demonstrations that took place in the Arab capitals (ibid), which clearly pointed out the role of Arab satellite channels in reporting the Palestinian Intifada as a form of political struggle. Therefore, Amin believed that Arab transnational broadcast services were responsible for the creation of a strong pan-Arab public opinion in support of the Palestinians' Intifada (Amin 2004: np).

Moreover, the coverage specifically highlights the role of Arab satellite stations in the minds of Palestinians, a role that empathises with their predicament:

Hence in times of despair, sound bites occur such as that in which an old woman shouts on camera while trying to grab the microphone from the reporter's hand, "Where are the Arabs? Why don't they do anything to rescue us?" (ibid).

Thus, Sharabi stated that, for the first time, Arab viewers could experience the Palestinian people's ordeal not as a distant abstract, but as a live, daily reality in which they feel directly involved:

Palestinian spokesmen now appear regularly on satellite channels and freely express their views and tell their own story to their Arab brethren and the world (Sharabi 2003: np).

On the other hand, it is also worth indicating that Arab satellites tend to employ local reporters, who also enjoy access to their governments and other significant bodies in their states. The importance of this policy for satellite channels is to grant exclusives and scoops in

these countries through the networks of relations that are built up by the reporter. However, the downside of this policy can be bias in coverage, in cases where reporters treat certain parties in a favourable manner, or if they are subjected to pressures from their government or threatened by other powerful bodies or people in the state. Thus, by understanding the political environment in most Arab countries, and the sensitivity in each state towards certain political or social issues, it could be said that news reporting in Arab countries sometimes encounters major difficulties: namely, the political, religious and social sensitivities, which could all lead to the closure of offices of the channels and to the banning of reporters from working on the ground. A ready example of such circumstances could be seen in the work of Al-Jazeera, which, as pointed out by Da Lage (2005), was subjected to the closing down of its offices by the authorities in many Arab countries, such as Jordan, Kuwait, Algeria and Egypt on various occasions (Da Lage 2005: 56). These forms of pressure on Arab satellite channels could explain the constant challenges that face these satellite channels in order to maintain credibility and accuracy in their news coverage in the Arab world.

4.3. Arab and Arabic Satellite Channels Since 2003

Since the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent US-led campaigns against the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003, there has been considerable structural transformation in the communication of crises by globally networked mass media, particularly in the field of satellite television. Two features could be observed as emerging since 2003. First, the rapid growth of Arab satellite channels like Al-Arabiya, which appeared just before the 2003 Iraq war, but most notably the Arab satellite channels that were established after this war, especially in Iraq. Second, was the emergence of regional and Western-funded satellite channels broadcasting in Arabic, such as Al-Alam of Iran, Al-Hurra (US), BBC Arabic (UK), France 24-Arabic (France), Deutsche Welle Arabic (Germany) and Russia Today Arabic (Russia).

These two main features are presumed to have allowed for a certain amount of cooperation between Arab and Western satellite channels in news reporting and the exchange of footage. According to Hahn (2007), Western market leaders such as BBC World and CNN International have been joined in Arab markets by locally-based competitors, notably Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera satellite channels. Since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, when Al-Arabiya joined Al-Jazeera in the marketplace, Western news organisations have come to

consider “some of the young generation of the Arab broadcasters as reliable and credible external sources” (Hahn 2007: 13). This was apparent from the extent to which they quote such broadcasters and reuse footage obtained from them. It is also an implicit element in the cooperation agreements, both formal and informal, that exist between Western and Arab broadcasters (ibid).

These developments, as asserted by Hahn, suggest that inroads are being made into the global monopoly that American and European broadcasters previously enjoyed in reporting on conflicts in the Middle East. “Such a change could have a considerable impact on the public in matters of international relations” (ibid). Thus, Hahn suggested that in order to maintain a dominant presence among the world media, certain television news stations have opted for a policy of “glocalisation”,⁴² whereby they disseminate content in other languages besides that of their own home base:

BBC World, CNN International and Al-Jazeera have all followed this strategy. BBC World has operated an Arabic language website since 1999, which it revamped in 2003, and CNN has done likewise. Al-Jazeera added an English-language website to its existing Arabic language website in 2003 (ibid: 15).

Furthermore, many of the western international media outlets advanced their ambitions to broadcast in Arabic. As a result, the Arab satellite environment witnessed the birth of various broadcasters launching their services in Arabic and funded by their own governments to advance their messages and images in the Arab region. These remarkable media projects included Al-Hurra from the United States, BBC Arabic TV, France 24 Arabic, Deutsche Welle, Russia Today Arabic, and Al-Alam from Iran.⁴³ Hahn argued that projects such as these assume that a certain level of transcultural communication and cooperation is possible (Hahn 2007: 16).

⁴² According to Hahn, television news companies that operate globally in both the West and the Arab world seek to conquer new markets and acquire new audiences beyond the boundaries of their own cultural and linguistic spaces. To this end, they embark on a management strategy of programme adaptation captured in the term ‘glocalisation.’ This neologism, although combining two seeming opposites, ‘globalisation’ and ‘localisation’, is only superficially contradictory. It is translated from the Japanese word *dochaduka*, meaning ‘global localisation.’ (Hahn 2007: 14)

Furthermore, Roland Robertson defines glocalisation as:

a term which was developed in particular reference to marketing issues, as Japan became more concerned with and successful in the global economy, against the background [...] of my experience with the general problem of the relationship between the universal and the particular (Robertson cited in Hahn 2007: 14).

⁴³ All these channels are discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In addition, these projects should be able to have a direct impact on the highly tense political environment in the region. This was remarkably fuelled by the 2001 war on Afghanistan, the 2003 Iraq war, and the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories by Israel. All of these conflicts offer a great challenge to these newly emerged Western channels, broadcasting in Arabic, in terms of how to report and treat the news, especially when their output is directed to Arab audiences who would normally have a different political perception than Western audiences. Nevertheless, broadcasting in Arabic could be also seen as a contributing factor in persuading regional and Western powers to launch their own media tools in order to achieve a better perception in the Arab world by Arab audiences.

4.3.1. Arab satellite channels since 2003: A question of funding and performance

Since 2003, the Arab region has witnessed a considerable increase in the number of established Arab satellite channels (Sakr 2007). The reasons for this growth have included the expansion of news and current affairs programming, which has long been one of “the most remarked-upon features of the growth of Arab Satellite television” (Sakr 2007: 139). Additionally, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 motivated “non-financial reasons” for entering the Arab market (ibid). These non- financial reasons contribute to explain the emergence of satellite channels that were established to serve as platforms for political, religious, and sectarian parties and movements.⁴⁴ In addition, the reduced costs of television transmission and the increase in satellite capacity made “financial barriers” to enter the market less complicated than before (ibid: 140). This may have further encouraged privately owned satellites to advance into the media scene in the Arab world, since both businessmen and political groups and parties become more attracted to invest in the satellite media industry than before, in order to reach a wider audience. However, as this growth developed into a market for ideas and perceptions, the question of funding and the ability to generate profits becomes essential in examining the capability of these channels to remain in the market, particularly in terms of broadcasting in a professional and credible manner.

According to Sakr (2007), Arab owned news channels have increased rapidly in number during 2003-04, reaching nearly a dozen by the end of the latter year. However, very few of

⁴⁴ Examples on these channels will be introduced later in the chapter when talking about the mediascape in Iraq after 2003 Iraq war.

these channels demonstrated any inclination to boost internal funding from profits as an alternative to dependence on funding supplied from outside (Sakr 2007: 141). Interestingly, the issue of funding and profits has been the case with satellite channels that started in the 1990s, such as Al-Jazeera, ANN, Al-Mustakillah and Nile News, and continued to mark the discussion on satellite channels that have emerged since 2003 (ibid). Therefore, Sakr sees the funding criteria of those channels that were established in the 1990s as being essential to understand their performance, and it was found that these broadcasters have been largely incompetent in terms of generating the profits that would enable these channels to sustain themselves financially. However, these channels continue to operate by relying primarily on continued funding from their founders. For example, regarding ANN (Arab News Network), Sakr stated that although the channel was started by an estranged branch of Syria's ruling Assad family in 1997, the year after Al-Jazeera's launch, it made no attempt to sell advertising airtime in its initial phase or to disguise its *raison d'être* as a publicity vehicle for Rifaat Al-Assad, a former Syrian vice-president and opponent of the Bashar Al-Assad regime (Sakr 2007: 141).

Similarly, in Egypt, attracting advertising was also not the primary rationale for Nile News, which started as part of the bouquet of thematic channels created within the state-owned ERTU in 1998 to fill space on the first satellite of Egypt's Nilesat fleet, which went into orbit in the same year (ibid).

In other words, the approach to advertising on Egypt's numerous satellite channels in the late 1990s provided yet more evidence that income from the channels themselves was not the chief motive behind them. They were linked instead to the ruling elite's determination to present an image of Egypt as a 'cohesive community' to viewers at home and abroad. The many components of the satellite project conceived and implemented in Cairo – from Nilesat itself to various television programmes – were geared to a particular official view of Egypt's role in the region and internationally, its ability to provide a counterweight to Saudi Arabia and its future economic development (Sakr 2001: 39).

Other cases revealed the tendency towards relying on sponsors' funds rather than becoming a source of profit, such as Al-Mustakillah, which was run by a London-based Tunisian newspaper owner and began broadcasting with very modest funds and technical capabilities in February 1999, though it survived more as a socio-political talk-show channel than a news service (ibid). Somewhat in the same vein Al-Manar, which began transmission by satellite in 2000 and dramatically increased its transmission times after the second Palestinian uprising

erupted in September that year, was considered by Sakr as a platform for news and commentary rather than as a source to generate profit (ibid).

Based on these illustrations, Seib (2008) added that in the Arab world in 2005, advertising revenue totalled US\$1.5 billion for television, radio, print, and other media, while annual operating costs for these media were about US\$16 billion (Seib 2008: 22):

This lopsided balance sheet, coupled with lack of direct foreign investment in the region, has meant that funding for the media infrastructure must come largely from elites such as the region's royal families and other investors who may be more interested in having a political platform than in providing honest information to the public (ibid).

As demonstrated above, Arab satellite channels continued to multiply, despite the financial and business challenges in the region. This could be seen in the number of channels that started in 2004, which included a wave of start-ups that followed the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, such as Al-Arabiya news channel, an offshoot of the Saudi media group behind the MBC. Al-Arabiya began broadcasting 24-hour news from Dubai in March 2003 [a few days before the Iraq war], while in July 2003 CNBC Arabiya, a Dubai-based affiliate of the US business news channel CNBC, went on air. Additionally, in January 2004 Saudi Arabia's state-owned broadcaster launched the 24-hour news channel Al-Ekhbariya. On the other hand, in Iraq itself, the changed political situation triggered a spate of media initiatives both inside and outside the country⁴⁵ (Sakr 2007: 141-142).

However, as stated by Sakr, although many broadcasters in Iraq claimed to be motivated solely by commercial objectives and expected to survive on advertising revenue, the mounting carnage in Iraq proved hopes of economic recovery and a booming advertising market "to have been false." Sakr argued that the prospect of making money through news broadcasting was fairly dismal throughout the Arab region:

Abu Dhabi TV which switched to 24-hour news during the invasion of Iraq reverted to general programming afterwards. It managers cited a concern of restrain costs, but others attributed the decision to pressure from powerful interest groups in the US, who wanted Gulf governments to reduce television news coverage of violence in Iraq (ibid: 143).

Yet investment in news in the Arab region proved to be an inspiring objective for many regional and international powers to primarily promote a political message by securing a

⁴⁵ These media broadcasters will be discussed later in this chapter.

place in the vibrant media environment in the region. Thus, since the establishments of the Saudi-funded satellite channel, Al-Arabiya - few days prior to the 2003 Iraq war - many other Arab and international broadcasters went on air following this conflict, in an attempt to be part of this eventful region.

4.3.1.1. Al-Arabiya satellite channel

In an attempt to compete with Al-Jazeera over popularity and viewership, Al-Arabiya satellite channel was established on 3rd March 2003 to present another experience in the environment of 24-hour news satellite channels. Based in “Dubai Media City” in the UAE, and funded by Saudi Arabia as part of the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) group, which according to Al-Arabiya official website is “the largest news and entertainment broadcaster in the Middle East, reaching an estimated 130 million Arabic-speaking people around the world”, Al-Arabiya was seeking to provide “credible” and reliable news about the Arab world (*Al-Arabiya Online* 2009: np).

Since MBC was founded by Sheikh Walid Al-Ibrahim, brother-in-law of Saudi Arabia’s late King Fahd, - and consists of MBC1, MBC2, MBC3, the establishment of Al-Arabiya marked a further interest to expand the Saudi owned satellite media and consequently to confront the Qatari sponsored Al-Jazeera.

According to Fandy (2007), Saudi Arabia launched Al-Arabiya after eight years of “relentless attacks” by Al-Jazeera on the Saudi political order and the Saudi royal family:

Al-Arabiya’s programming shows that the station is more than an alternative to Al-Jazeera; it is a counter-missile directed at the Qatari news channel itself. Al-Arabiya is known for picking up the slack in areas such as the relations between Qatar and Israel (Fandy 2007: 53).

Furthermore, Fandy asserted that Al-Jazeera was viewed by the Al-Saud as a danger, as it gave airtime to Osama bin Laden and the enemies of the Saudi royal family. Thus, the decision of Walid Al-Ibrahim to pour “\$300 million” into launching Al-Arabiya could be viewed as an attempt by the Saudi elite to reassert its influence over the Arab satellite television industry after losing much of that power following the rise of Al-Jazeera’s global profile and popularity. However, Al-Arabiya – like other Arab broadcasters - is assumed to

be facing constant challenges in balancing its cost and revenues. "Its yearly costs are estimated at \$70 million, and advertisement revenues are as little as \$10 million" (ibid: 54). Besides this financial status, Seib clarified that the owner of MBC, Sheikh Walid Al-Ibrahim, aims in establishing Al-Arabiya to position the channel as a moderate CNN compared to Al-Jazeera, which Al-Ibrahim described carries more of an extreme "Fox News approach". Thus, Al-Arabiya's billboards claim that "With us, you are closer to the truth" (Seib 2008: 23). In view of this, Shapiro (2005) stated that from the day it started, Al-Arabiya was keen to have a different style to Al-Jazeera:

There was nothing on Al-Arabiya quite like Al-Jazeera's signature programmes, "Islamic Law and Life," which offers advice to viewers on how to apply Sharia to their lives, and "The Opposite Direction," which features fierce head-to-head debates. But what was reported and broadcast on Al-Arabiya in its first months was, at times, similar to what you could see and hear on Al-Jazeera. The two stations competed to show the most provocative, gory footage of casualties from [the 2003] Iraq [war] (Shapiro, *The New York Times*, 2 January 2005: np).

There is no doubt that reporting the 2003 Iraq war helped the newly inaugurated news channel to reach more audiences among Arabs. In other words, the war clearly represented a significant opportunity for Al-Arabiya to achieve a better access to Arab households in the Arab region and elsewhere, who were eager to follow the consequences of the conflict and were keen - in addition to Arab satellite channels such as Al-Jazeera - to explore further dimensions, updates, reports and discussions on the war and its implications.

However, like Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya received its share of criticism because of its coverage of post-war Iraq. Tatham (2006) stated that pro-Saddam supporters threatened Al-Arabiya staff in Baghdad with death after the channel criticised the excesses of Saddam's sons and showed footage of beatings supervised by his half-brother Watban during its 'Inside Iraq' programme (Tatham 2006: 151).

In an interview with Pintak (2006), Nabil Khatib - Al-Arabiya's executive editor - stated that the channel had lost 11 of its employees, who died "because they were covering what's going on there from all sides and trying to be balanced and fair."

Unfortunately, the situation puts you in a dilemma that if you are trying to be balanced, you are getting fire from all parties. We lost these 11 and also we have another two colleagues who came under fire in an attempt to assassinate them, so one of them got paralyzed and is now in a wheelchair, and the other is too emotionally scared to be at work, so he's not working anymore. Another one fled to Beirut because they threatened to shoot him. So in general it is a very worrying situation

where you get confused and worried anytime you think to assign anybody to do anything in Iraq⁴⁶ (Khatib interviewed by Pintak 2006: 20).

On the other hand, the Americans also criticized the channel for being “highly irresponsible” after it broadcast images of masked men threatening their fellow citizens (Tatham 2006: 151). For this reason, Shapiro argued that American military authorities in Iraq and the American appointed Iraqi Governing Council “did not seem to distinguish” between Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. They therefore considered both channels to be allied with “the enemy”:

In September 2003, the Governing Council suspended Al-Arabiya from reporting official government activities for two weeks because, the council maintained, the channel was supporting resistance attacks. And that November, the council ordered Al-Arabiya to stop all of its Iraqi operations after the channel broadcast a taped message from Saddam Hussein in hiding. At a news conference that month, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld called Al-Arabiya “violently anticoalition” and in a separate interview said “There are so many things that are untrue that are being reported by irresponsible journalists and irresponsible television stations, that are leaving the Iraqi people with a totally imbalanced picture of what is happening in their country” (Shapiro, *The New York Times*, 2 January 2005: np).

However, Tatham conceded that Al-Arabiya scored notable scoops over its main rival, Al-Jazeera, including interviews with Saddam’s family and, after the war, with the former Iraqi Information Minister. In this manner, Sheikh Walid referred to the first few months of the channel’s coverage of Iraq:

We paid too much attention to what Iraq was saying and people were not getting enough of the other side ... we called the Coalition side ‘invaders’ although we soon changed this (Al-Ibrahim cited in Tatham 2006: 152).⁴⁷

Thus, Shapiro argued that the situation at Al-Arabiya began to change by 2004 when the former editor of Asharq Al-Awsat - the London based pan-Arab, Saudi owned newspaper - Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed, arrived as a General Manager for the channel. According to Shapiro, there was a tendency at the new leadership of Al-Arabiya towards reshaping the editorial policy in reporting news events, particularly in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, in

⁴⁶ In this interview Khatib also mentioned the danger of insurgents in Iraq, where Al-Arabiya was a target of their attacks:

When it comes to insurgents... they just treat the journalists as enemies. And sometimes they will be targeting journalists by name because they are not happy with his or her coverage, or sometimes they will be targeting them to scare journalists in general. You will never be able to please these fighting parties, because if you please one it will not be fair, and you will be biased to a party, and then the other party will target you (Khatib interviewed by Pintak 2006: 21).

⁴⁷ On explaining Al-Arabiya’s coverage in Iraq, Tatham also asserted that Sheikh Walid Al-Ibrahim believed that giving more coverage to Iraq on Al-Arabiya was largely due to the US failure to respond to requests for interviews (Tatham 2006: 152).

order to “push Al-Arabiya towards a less emotional, more measured view of the Middle East.”

On directions from Al-Rashed, Al-Arabiya anchors and correspondents now refer to American troops in Iraq as “multinational forces”, not “occupying forces.” He [Al-Rashed] told the producer of “The Fourth Estate”, a programme that serves as a roundup of Western media, to stop quoting from The Guardian and The Independent, two left-leaning British papers whose content used to provide much of the show’s materials. One Al-Arabiya host told me [Shapiro] that she had been instructed to cut off guests who digress into anti-American rants, and other hosts I spoke to said they were being encouraged to ask tougher questions in their interviews (Shapiro, *The New York Times*, 2 January 2005: np).

This encouraged some employees at Al-Arabiya⁴⁸ to believe that the channel had become “pro-American” since Al-Rashed stepped in. For instance, Abd-el-Kader Kharoubi, “then the assignments editor”, expressed his concern that the channel’s portrayals of the American military and the “Iraqi interim government were too positive”. This direction in al-Arabiya’s coverage, according to him, would risk losing viewers:

If we keep talking to Arab viewers as if this government – the Allawi government in Iraq - is going to introduce democracy, as if the U.S. Army are very nice occupiers who kill only terrorists, then they won’t switch us on (Kharoubi cited in Shapiro, *The New York Times*, 2 January 2005: np).

On the other hand, Seib contended that Al-Arabiya may have positioned itself in the spot its owner wants. However, this position brought the channel less popularity than Al-Jazeera:

A survey conducted in Spring 2004 found that Al-Arabiya trailed Al-Jazeera by a considerable margin in percentage of the audience throughout the Middle East, although a respectable 39 percent of satellite news viewers said they tuned into Al-Arabiya at some point every day (Seib 2008: 23).

For Seib, Al-Arabiya, like Al-Jazeera, mixes its newscasts with an array of talk shows such as *From Iraq*, *Across the Ocean*, from Washington, *Last Edition* and *Fourth Estate*, which respectively examined the Arab and western media, and *Poll-on-air*, which asks the audience to vote on a question and takes live phone and e-mail responses about a topic (ibid).

⁴⁸ Many employees in Al-Arabiya’s newsroom have intimate connections with the conflicts they cover, and not all of them agree with all of Al-Rashed’s ideas. There are Sudanese Arabs, Palestinians who grew up in Syrian refugee camps and others who represent a wide spectrum of cultural and political backgrounds. There are also several former Al-Jazeera employees. Some were approached for their expertise; other defected because they said that Al-Jazeera’s management “these days” is too Islamist. (Shapiro, *The New York Times*, 2 January 2005: np).

Moreover, Seib asserted that the journalists leading Al-Arabiya recognise the power that the satellite news channels possess:

General Manager Abdul Rahman Al-Rashed said that Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya “are more dangerous than nuclear bombs, and they radiate on a large scale.” Their news, he added, could push viewers “to go into a war, or it could make people believe in peace and change their lives.” He also said, “The region is being filled with inaccuracies and partial truths. I think people will always make good judgments if they have the right information and the whole information. What we lack now is the truth and information. After that, we’ll have a sane society. Right now it is an insane society because of the way information is being delivered to individuals.” (Seib 2008: 23).

Like Al-Rashed, Nabil Khatib, Al-Arabiya’s executive editor, who had covered the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for years for the MBC satellite channel, expressed little tolerance for those who encourage violence, particularly if they are in the news business.

Sensationalism incites people to hatred. I have smelled the blood of hatred, and I cannot understand now how someone in an air-conditioned newsroom feels that he has the right to manipulate peoples’ emotions, to rile people up or generalise about a group, when he sees the repercussions (Khatib cited in Seib 2008: 24).

These comments by Al-Rashed and Khatib reveal how Al-Arabiya is trying to define a new mainstream for Arab news that neither blandly mirrors a government line nor is as provocative as Al-Jazeera:

All Arabs have heard about is Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, Arab summits, and so on, and nothing about real answers to the real questions of why he is poor, frustrated and unhappy with the level of health care and education for his kids. These are the concerns of any human being and any Arab. But if you ask someone what he is concerned about most, he will tell you Jerusalem or Iraq, because you keep telling him this (Khatib cited in Seib 2008: 24).

It could be said that these were the major trends that would distinguish Al-Arabiya from its rival, Al-Jazeera, though the channel continued to operate as another “prominent” news provider in the Arab region, competing with Al-Jazeera over the share of viewers in the market and for popularity. Benefiting from its editorial policy which, as illustrated above, gained the channel a notable presence and positioned Al-Arabiya as the leading Arab satellite news channels in the Middle East, this perhaps was noted in light of the new American administration’s decision to choose Al-Arabiya to conduct the first interview with Barak Obama, addressing the Arab world directly on 26 January 2009, a few days after he was inaugurated as president. This interview perhaps indicates the rise of Al-Arabiya on the

global stage since its coverage of the 2003 Iraq war. On the other hand, it represents significant progress in the American communication strategies with the Arab world, as the new American administration preferred to communicate to the Arab audience directly through a specifically chosen Arab broadcaster. Avoiding choosing Al-Jazeera would be the other remarkable aspect of this interview, which indicated that despite the prominence of Al-Jazeera, the channel is still viewed with less preference by American officials for its critical coverage of American policies.

According to Macleod (2009), several advisors at the White House recommended that this interview be granted to Al-Arabiya. The channel was seen as a “prominent voice of moderation in the Middle East”, preferring calm analysis to what many see as Al-Jazeera’s more sensational coverage. The Obama scoop came at a good moment for Al-Arabiya, which had seen ratings falter as Al-Jazeera provided blanket coverage of Palestinian suffering during the recent Israeli war in Gaza which was ended by a unilateral ceasefire between Israel and Hamas on 18 January 2009 (Macleod, *Time*, 28 January 2009: np).

4.3.1.2. The mediascape in Iraq after the 2003 Iraq war

It is important here to outline the mediascape in Iraq after the 2003 war. First, it is a direct result of the war that toppled Saddam Hussein’s regime and ended his period of monopoly over the Iraqi media. Second, it offers a unique case study in the Arab media that is yet developing towards further pluralism. It could be said that one of the profound outcomes of the 2003 Iraq war was the establishment of various media outlets there, marking a new phase in the Iraqi media. According to Cochrane (2006), the media landscape in Iraq has undergone a radical transformation since the state-run Iraqi television abruptly went off air following the US-led invasion in March 2003 (Cochrane 2006: np). However, Cochrane asserted that the Iraqi media established after the invasion were significantly partisan:

A cursory glance at the backing and orientation of many channels reveals the extent to which sectarian issues are driving broadcasting, which can only exacerbate sectarian proclivities that are increasingly apparent in Iraq (ibid).

This observation would also explain the number of Iraqi satellite channels that went on air after the war funded by religious and political parties who were serving political, sectarian and ethnic agendas. This was true even in the selection of news and programmes, hence advertising as an alternative source of funds was not primarily the major concern.

Al Salam TV relies on funding from Shiite cleric Muqtada Al Sadr, Ghadeer TV on the Higher Council of the Islamic Revolution, Al Masar TV on the Islamic Da'awa Party, and Ahlul Bayt (The House of the Prophet Mohammed) on the patronage of the Shiite cleric Ayatollah Al Moderassi. Bghdadia TV is considered a moderate Sunni channel and Bghdad TV, run by the Iraqi Islamist Party, is known as "Baathist TV" among Shiites who criticize its pro-Sunni agenda. Afaq TV (Horizons) shows video footage in support of the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party and Muqtada Al Sdr.

Babil TV reportedly offers programming in support of the Sunni Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, and Biladi TV runs programmes in support of the United Iraqi Alliance. Al Furat (The Euphrates) is reportedly backed by the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIR) and supported the Unified Iraqi Coalition during the elections, which has the backing of Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani. The channel's director Arshad Tawfiq, was a former Iraqi ambassador to Spain and a former Baath Party official, and is now a member of the Supreme Council for National Salvation. The station opposes the presence of the coalition forces in Iraq, and refers to Iraqis killed by coalition troops as "martyrs" (ibid).

Further, according to Sakr, Iraq's first private channel after the war to offer news coverage was Al-Sharqiyah, owned by newspaper publisher Saad Al-Bazzaz (Sakr 2007: 142). However, according to Cochrane (2006), the channel is considered a more "toned" television station, although evident support was shown for the former Prime Minister Eyed Allawi in the 2005 elections,⁴⁹ while "others" view the channel as pro-Sunni (Cochrane 2006: np):

The channel was mockingly dubbed "Al Baathiya" upon launch because of Al Bazzaz's personal history as the head of the Baath regime's national news agency until 1992. Al Bazzaz is also rumoured to have political ambitions and was alleged to have received millions of dollars from the Saudi government to launch the Iraqi Azzaman newspaper in a British high court hearing last year [2005]⁵⁰ (ibid).

⁴⁹ According to Sanders (2005), Eyad Allawi had been appointed by the United States as Prime Minister of Iraq in June 2004 after the American administration dissolved the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). (Sanders 2005, *Los Angeles Times*, 25 January 2005: np). Allawi's government ruled Iraq for 14 months before the 2005 elections. During this period Allawi's image as a secular Shiite was emerging as an alternative for those who feared that "rigorous Islamic views would creep into government" (ibid).

As for the elections, Allawi formed the Iraqi National List, which was a secular nationalist alliance, made up of Sunnis, Shias, the Communist Party and the Iraqi Independent Democrats Grouping. The list claimed to represent "all of Iraq and not just one party" (*BBC News Online*, 20 January 2006: np). However, the List won just 25 out of 275 seats in Iraq's new parliament (ibid).

⁵⁰ According to Pallister (2005), the allegations made in the high court in London accused Al Bazzaz of running a sophisticated covert propaganda operation funded by Saudi Arabian intelligence to launch his newspaper Azzaman from London in 1997, before it moved to Iraq after the war to become a "widely read daily" in the country" (Pallister, *The Guardian*, 26 January 2005: np). In the high court Al Bazzaz lawyers accepted that Azzaman had seriously libelled a wife of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikha Mouza, in a number of untrue articles published in 2001. The paper and Mr Bazzaz agreed to pay £10,000 Sterling in damages and £500,000 sterling in costs to her solicitors, Carter-Ruck (ibid). Nevertheless, lawyers for Mr Bazzaz argued that Azzaman was raising issues of importance and it was not possible to check everything "in an undemocratic and secretive country such as Qatar" (ibid).

This could be seen as part of the constant tensions between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, especially after the launch of Al-Jazeera in 1996, which caused various disputes between Qatar and the Arab regimes (author's note).

Further, according to Cochrane, ethnic minorities also have a political media presence in post-war Iraq:

Ashur TV, which represents the Assyrian Democratic Movement, receives 50 percent of its funding from the party and the rest from supporters around the world. The Iraqi Turkoman Front funds Tukomaneli TV. Baghdad Shafak TV is backed by the Kurdish authorities, Kurdistan TV by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and the ATB TV is linked to the Kurdistan Communist Party. The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the party of Iraqi president Jalal Talabani, operates Al Hurriyah TV and PUK TV. KurdSat TV reportedly supports PUK (ibid).

Having said that, Cochrane argues that the case of the Iraqi satellite channels emerging after the war in 2003 did not differ radically from Lebanon's broadcasting environment. As in Lebanon, the TV landscape also reflects the sectarian political system.

[Al]-Mustaqbal (Future), owned by the Hariri family, is a Sunni channel. LBC is Christian. Al Manar is backed by Shiite political party Hezbollah, and NBN is partially backed by Shiite parliamentary speaker and head of the Amal movement Nabih Berri (Cochrane 2006: np).

However, in Iraq the media "is caught up" in the political turmoil and the violence and renewed sectarianism that had been kept at bay by Saddam Hussein's regime. Therefore, Cochrane believed that the media landscape in Iraq could change alongside political developments. This means that "Channels may fare as their political backers do, sink or swim" (ibid).

4.3.2. The rise of Arabic language satellite channels

It could be said that one of the remarkable developments within the 24-hour satellite channels has been the advent of Arabic language channels founded by American and European parties, most notably Al-Hurra (US), BBC Arabic (UK), France24 Arabic (France), Deutsche Welle Arabic (Germany), Russia Today Arabic (Russia), in addition to Al-Alam (Iran).

Apart of Al-Alam, all the other mentioned channels went on air in the period following the 2003 Iraq war, to mark a new era of media competition and communication strategies. It is therefore not hard to believe that these channels were primarily part of the serious strategies to promote their respective countries' images and to improve communications across borders, most notably with the Arab world.

Globally ... there has been a proliferation of news networks, from Russia Today, inaugurated in late 2005, to France 24, launched a year later, with its aim in the words of then French President, Jacques Chirac, to put France 'on the front line in the global battle of TV pictures'. In the geopolitically significant Arab/Islamic world this battle for TV images had acquired added importance (Editorial, *Global Media and Communication* 2008: 115).

Moreover, it is believed that the advent of these channels would accelerate the competition factor in the region in terms of winning the trust of the Arab audience and contributed to create a more diverse media landscape in the Arab world by expanding the Arab views to accommodate other perspectives and opinions. This assumption would also suggest that the rapidly developing media landscape in the region prompted regional and international parties like Iran, the United States, Britain, France, Russia and Iran to establish their own media outlets to promote their policies and also to compete with existent broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and others.

Yet the outcome of these channels would need to be carefully examined in order to figure out their effect and impact on the Arab public. This is because Middle Eastern audiences, as stated by Hasbani (2009), regard American and European Arabic language television with deep suspicion, as they suspect them of hiding "Western agendas" behind their programming, particularly when it comes to political content.

This perception reflects distrust of Western foreign policies in the Middle East and often seems justified if you follow what these channels are broadcasting (Hasbani, *The Huffington Post*, 5 May 2009: np).

4.3.2.1. Al-Alam (The World) satellite channel

As it appeared on their official website, Al-Alam started broadcasting in February 2003 (just prior to the 2003 Iraq war) with newsrooms in Tehran, Beirut, and Baghdad. The channel's motto became "Winning the Trust of Audience" and its main objectives were to provide "speedy, accurate and on-time dissemination of news" (*Al-Alam Online*, 2009: np). The channel claims to revive mutual understanding, cooperation and solidarity among Muslims on the basis of "common cultural identity" and to create an appropriate climate for dialogue, "for the sake of greater global cultural understanding". In addition, the channel aimed to provide information about the latest situation of Muslims around the world, particularly in the Middle East (ibid).

According to Cochrane (2006), Al-Alam was one of the first channels to start broadcasting with an Iraqi audience in mind by hiring anchors and reporters with an Iraqi accent.

For several months Al-Alam was the only foreign TV channel Iraqis without satellite could watch (Cochrane 2006: np).

Freedland (2003) pointed out that the broadcast of Al-Alam was significant for Iraqi households since the fall of the Iraqi regime.

The Iranian television station, Al-Alam, has become must-see TV in those Iraqi homes lucky enough to have power, while the coalition's own TV channel – beamed via military plane – is said to be poor, with fuzzy reception, showing nothing worth seeing⁵¹ (Freedland, *The Guardian*, 30 April 2003: np).

Furthermore, De Gouveia (2006) asserted that, despite the efforts of the Coalition Provisional Authority to dominate the “information environment” in 2003 post-war Iraq, Iran worked hard to establish an influential media presence there.

The Tehran government made good use of its geographical advantage over rival broadcasters, and links with the Iraqi Shi'ite groups, to get in on the act very early. Iran's chief success was the launch of its terrestrial Arabic-language television station Al-Alam (meaning “The World”). Available 24 hours a day via satellite in much of Europe, the Middle East and Asia, Al-Alam was broadcast from a powerful transmitter 150 km from Baghdad, just inside the Iranian border, which, at the time, made it the only foreign television channel receivable inside Iraq without a satellite dish (De Gouveia, *The Guardian*, 21 February 2006: np).

On the other hand, *BBC News Online* (2003) states that Al-Alam began its regular broadcasts in March 2003, and it was obvious from its outset that the channel was opposing the US-led invasion of Iraq and the “ruling Ba'ath Party” (*BBC News Online*, 3 April 2003: np). In its coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, Al-Alam showed extensive footage of Iraqi civilians lying dead in residential areas or being treated in hospitals. Nevertheless, the channel's roundup of the “latest” US-British attacks on Iraqi used to be aired under the slogan of the “War of dominance”, and describing the coalition troops as “occupiers”. In addition, as part of its coverage of the war, Al-Alam had regular round table discussions with researchers and experts, including Iraqi dissidents and exiles opposed to Saddam Hussein (ibid). Furthermore,

⁵¹ Freedland is referring to the Al-Iraqiya channel which, as stated by Feuilherade (2003), was established by the US-led coalition authorities as part of the coalition-run Iraqi Media Network (IMN), which also includes two radio stations and a daily newspaper (Feuilherade, *BBC News Online*, 19 November 2003: np). Al-Iraqiya will be discussed later in this chapter (author's note).

the channel, which is based in Tehran and run by IRIB (the Iranian state radio and TV service), broadcasts on terrestrial airwaves to Iraq, as well as via satellite (ibid). This choice of broadcast is believed to have reinforced the presence of Al-Alam inside Iraq, by reaching equally to audiences who have or do not have satellite dishes. Thus, it could be said that since its establishment, Al-Alam was seeking to become another important news provider in the Arab region in reporting events and broadcasting for Arab audiences, aiming to win its place as an alternative and trusted news channel.

However, the channel's existence has reflected rising political tensions in the region, especially with Egypt. The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ahmed Abul Gheit, accused the Iranian regime of trying to dominate the Middle East. According to *Al-Arabiya News Online* (2009), Abu Gheit's statement signalled an escalation of a simmering diplomatic dispute between the two countries, which have both vied for a dominant role in the region⁵² (*Al-Arabiya News Online*, 15 December 2008: np). In addition, in a precipitous event, on 24 July 2008, Egyptian officials shut down the Cairo office of Al-Alam, accusing it of not owning a proper broadcast licence. However, Al-Alam's Cairo bureau chief told local reporters that the closure was connected to the controversial documentary "Assassination of a Pharaoh", which was produced by the hard-line "Iranian group Headquarters for Commemoration of the Martyrs of the International Islamic Movement" (Jaafar, *Variety*, 28 July 2008: np). According to Michael (2008), the documentary caused offense in Egypt because it portrays the killer of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in a positive light⁵³ and the former Egyptian president as a traitor for making peace with Israel. Consequently, the film triggered a formal diplomatic protest by Egypt against Iran.

The Egyptian government has condemned the film and Foreign Minister Ahmed Abul Gheit summoned the Iranian charge d'affairs in Egypt. Sadat's family has filed lawsuits against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the Egyptian Football Association cancel a friendly match with Iran because of the film (Michael, *USA Today*, 24 July 2008: np).

On the other hand, Al-Alam's news treatments of other incidents, such as the broadcast of TV footage showing captured British sailors confessing that they had entered Iranian waters on

⁵² Egypt and Iran broke off diplomatic relations a year after Islamist revolutionaries overthrow the pro-Western Shah of Iran in 1979. Iran opposed Egypt's 1979 peace treaty with Israel and named a street after the assassin of the Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, who was killed by an Egyptian Islamist militant in 1981 (*Al-Arabiya News Online*, 15 December 2008: np).

⁵³ The assassin, Khaled El-Islambouli was one of the army officers who fired on Sadat during a military parade in 1981. Egypt executed him by firing squad soon thereafter (Michael, *USA Today*, 24 July 2008: np).

23 March 2007, reinforced the assumption that the channel functions as part of the Iranian media strategy to win hearts and minds in the Arab world.

According to *MSNBC News Online* (2007), eight British soldiers and seven marines were detained by the Iranian naval units on 23 March 2007 “while patrolling for smugglers” as part of a U.N. mandated force monitoring the Persian Gulf. “They were seized by Iranian naval units near the mouth of Shat Al-Arab, a waterway that has long been a disputed dividing line between Iraq and Iran”. Al-Alam gave more details about the incident, saying “the 15 left their ship in a small boat on the morning of March 23 and entered the Iranian waters at 10 a.m. local time” (*MSNBC News Online*, 2 April 2007: np).

The fury over this was obviously mounting once Al-Alam released a tape on Friday 30 March 2007 of captured marine Nathan Thomas Summers apologizing for entering Iranian waters “without permission” and admitting to trespassing in Iranian waters. “He was shown sitting with another serviceman and the female British sailor Faye Turney against a floral curtain. The British servicemen wore camouflaged fatigues with a Royal Navy label on their chests and a little British flag stitched to their left sleeves” (ibid). This tape was broadcast after Al-Alam aired video on Wednesday 28 March 2007 showing Turney wearing a headscarf and saying “obviously we trespassed” (ibid).

According to Borger and Wintour (2007) the video of Turney wearing a headscarf and makeup, and smoking while giving an account of the incident, was translated and voiced over in the Arabic broadcast. The video, which included footage of other marines and sailors sitting and eating in a nondescript room and showing no obvious signs of injury, “was not shown in Farsi” to the domestic Iranian audience. A handwritten letter by Turney to her parents, saying she had “written a letter to the Iranian people to apologise for entering into their waters” was also shown on Al-Alam (Borger and Wintour: *The Guardian*, 29 March 2007: np). Interestingly, Borger and Wintour stated that the broadcast of the video came soon after a British announcement that it was cutting off official contacts with Tehran on any business apart from the naval detainees (ibid).

The last footage was aired on Sunday 1st April 2007, showing another two of the 15 captured British sailors pointing to a spot on a map of the “Persian Gulf” where they were seized and

acknowledging it was in Iranian territorial waters.⁵⁴ They were talking to camera but Al-Alam did not air their voices⁵⁵ (*MSNBC News Online*, 2 April 2007: np). The release of this video, according to Harding and Holt (2007), had stepped up “the propaganda war” over the 15 captured British Royal Navy personnel:

The new footage of the sailors, which will be seen as another attempt by Iran to use the captured personnel in a propaganda war against the UK, has provoked widespread outrage (Harding and Holt, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 2007: np).

Nevertheless, Borger and Wintour assumed that there are ties between Al-Alam and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, who are believed to have captured the British sailors.

There is evidence that the 15 sailors and marines were captured and are being held by the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, (IRGC) which represents a state within a state, with its own forces, its own political representatives and its own hard-line ideology. Al-Alam is thought to have ties to ultra-conservative factions in Tehran (Borger and Wintour, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2007: np).

On the other hand, according to MSNBC Online, Iran’s decision to air three videos on its Arabic language TV channel, rather than its main Farsi channels, appeared to be an attempt to seek support from Arabs “in Iraq and the Gulf States, where many resent Britain’s military deployment in Iraq and its historical role as a colonial power” (*MSNBC News Online*, 2 April 2007: np).

Iran, however, released the British soldiers after 12 days of capture. The hostages were shown on Iranian television shaking hands with the Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who was reported saying that “the move was an Easter present to the British people” (Knight, *Times Online*, 4 April 2007: np). According to *BBC News Online* (2007), the Britons were wearing suits, rather than the military uniform and tracksuits they wore in previous pictures. “The female crew member, Faye Turney, wore a blue headscarf and jacket” (*BBC News Online*, 4 April 2007: np).

⁵⁴ The captives appeared in separate video clips wearing military fatigues and pointing to the same map (*MSNBC News Online*, 2 April 2007: np).

⁵⁵ Two state-run Farsi language TV stations later carried their voices with the video (*MSNBC News Online*, 2 April 2007: np).

Based on the above, it could be said that Al-Alam contributed effectively to the Iranian media strategy,⁵⁶ which serves Iran's strategic interests in Iraq - after the toppling of Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 - and the Arab world. According to Nasr (2006) Iran strategy in the Iraq conflict since 2003 is the same as it was during the Iraq- Iraq war in the 1980s:

To focus attention on anti-Americanisation and anti-Israeli issues, appropriate popular Islamic and Arab slogans, and avoid discussion of Sectarian differences (Nasr 2006: 241).

These strategic elements could be seen in the broadcast of Al-Alam satellite channel, thus Ghazal (2008) asserted that the local news broadcasts extensive reports from the Palestinian territories and Israel, with exceptionally graphic images from Gaza of mutilated bodies and weeping families after raids by Israel contribute to the Iranian "obvious propaganda" to win support of the Arab audience (Ghazal, *The National*, 14 September 2008: np).

Furthermore, Afshin Molavi, a political analyst on Iran at the New America Foundation in Washington DC, stated that the anti-Israeli and anti-US propaganda has been aimed at winning over the Arab and Muslim world:

... Iran spends a lot of money and attention on its propaganda machine ... Iran broadcasts news about Arabs, uses Arabic-speaking channels and invites Arab media over and does a lot to gain support of its neighbours (Molavi cited in Ghazal, *The National*, 14 September 2008: np).

Interestingly, according to research conducted by the Survey Studies Unit at the Ramallah Centre for Human Rights Studies in the Palestinian territories, investigating Palestinian public opinion towards local Palestinian and Arab media during the period 19-21 February 2009,⁵⁷ it was found that television is still the main source of information on local politics in the Palestinian territories according to 63% of the survey respondents (71% in the West Bank, and 51% in Gaza Strip). When the sample was asked about the Arab satellite stations

⁵⁶ It is worth mentioning at this stage that, in addition to Al-Alam, on 2 July 2007 Iran launched another satellite channel in English, called Press TV, staffed by Iranians and overseas journalists including Britons and Americans. The broadcaster said it would seek to compete against CNN and BBC World but from a different perspective (Gibson, *The Guardian*, 27 June 2007: np).

Moreover, it was stated on the website of the USC Centre on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School at South California University, that although Press TV is an international network, its coverage focuses primarily on the Middle East, which strengthens the idea that Press TV's main goal is to explain Iran's involvement and positions in the region (www.publicdiplomacy.wikia.com/wiki/Press_TV: 2009).

⁵⁷ According to the survey, the sample included 1,500 persons and the margin of error was ± 2.5 . It was distributed to 948 persons from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and 552 persons from Gaza Strip. The percentage of males to females in the sample was 52.4: 47.6; the mean age group of the sample was 33 years (RCHRS 2009: 1).

that they most watch to obtain political news, Al-Jazeera ranked first among the Arab satellite stations (7.78 out of 10). However, Al-Alam was ranked seventh (5.34 out of 10). This result could indicate that the Iranian-funded Arabic satellite channel has managed - in a relatively short period - to be among the 10 most watched news channels in Arabic⁵⁸ among Palestinians in their coverage of Palestinian local issues. Furthermore, when the sample was asked to what extent they would trust the Arab satellite channels in broadcasting local political news, Al-Jazeera was first with 59% responding very high and 22.2% responding high. On the other hand, 12.8% expressed low trust and 1.4% very low, while 5.4% revealed no opinion.

Among other results, 23.4% of the respondents expressed very high trust of Al-Alam and 41.2% revealed high trust, while 9.6% showed low trust and 4% conveyed very low trust, with 21.8 % offering no opinion (RCHRS 2009: 11). Therefore, it could be said that the results of this particular survey would certainly indicate that Al-Alam is becoming among the most watched news channels in the Palestinian Territories, along with Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, Abu Dhabi, and Al-Manar. This would indicate that the channel is succeeding in being identified as a credible and trustworthy news channel in order to get the support of its Palestinian audience. Though not definitive, such an indication would probably suggest that Al-Alam has been quite successful in gradually building its reputation in the media scene of the Arab world.

In contrast, it is worth mentioning that the American funded satellite channel Al-Hurra was not among the channels listed in the survey as watched by the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, Al-Hurra remains another example of foreign funded media outlets which have become an essential part of the evolving media landscape in the Arab world since the 2003 Iraq war.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ According to the selected satellite channels in the survey, Palestine Satellite channel was second with 6.57 out of 10, and Al-Manar was the third (6.53 out of 10). Al-Arabiya was fourth (6.4 out of 10), MBC fifth with (5.6 out of 10) Abu Dhabi (5.9 out of 10), Al-Alam was seventh (5.34 out of 10), Al-Quds was eighth (5.3 out of 10), Al-Aqsa [Hamas channel] was ninth (5.2 out of 10) and BBC Arabic was tenth (5.13 out of 10) (RCHRC 2009: 11).

⁵⁹ In keeping with the chronological line of the satellite channels emerging since 2003, it is also believed to be essential to mention the launch of CNBC Arabiya which went on air officially on 27 July 2003, as the first 24-hour business channel in Arabic, operating from Dubai Media City in the UAE (Davies 2003: np). The channel is owned and run by Middle East Business News (MEBN) under licensing and affiliation with CNBC (*ABC News Online*, 18 May 2003: np). Nevertheless, although it is a specialized satellite business channel, CNBC Arabiya could be seen as a new venture in the region's media market, providing comprehensive business and economic news to Arab audiences. According to CNBC Arabiya's official website (2009), the channel provides Arab audiences with a range of business news and programme, featuring the Arab region's business news,

4.3.2.2. Al-Hurra TV (The Free One)

This is perhaps one of the major controversial American media projects, targeting the Arab audience after the 2003 Iraq war. On 14th February 2004, Al-Hurra began its broadcasts in Arabic across the Middle East and northern Africa. According to Shelby (2004) the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), a US government financed company, received a \$62 million congressional appropriation to fund the establishment and the first year operating costs for the Al-Hurra project (Shelby, *The Information Warfare Site*, 13 February 2004: np). The chairman of the BBG's Middle East Committee, Norman Pattiz stated in a press release prior to the launch on 12th February that "Al-Hurra will present fresh perspectives for viewers in the Middle East" that "will create more cultural understanding and respect" (ibid). McCarthy (2004) argued that Al-Hurra is considered to be the U.S government's largest and most expensive effort to sway foreign opinion over the airwaves since the creation of Voice of America in 1942:

Congress last year [2003] approved \$62 million to pay for Al-Hurra's first year. In November 2003, Congress committed \$40 million more to launch a sister station in April [2004] aimed solely at Iraq (McCarthy, *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2004: np).

In April 2004, a second channel was launched, Al-Hurra Iraq, that specifically aimed to address Iraqi audiences, becoming available by satellite and terrestrially in Baghdad and Basra. Al-Hurra Iraq provides news bulletins and talk shows specially dealing with issues in "contemporary Iraq" (*PR Newswire*, 14 February 2005: np). Al-Hurra launched a third channel, Al-Hurra Europe, in August 2006, to be the first western-backed Arabic language TV channel broadcasting to Europe, providing Arabic speaking viewers in Europe with news and information programming, as well as a full range of entertainment shows available on the Middle East feed (Guider, *Variety*, 25 July 2006: np).

However, according to a report published by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2006, Radio Sawa and Al-Hurra satellite television networks (Al-Hurra

regional stock markets, regional corporate news, women in business news, green business, in addition to "personal finance and the region's business and economic developments and financial news developments from Europe and America as they impact on the middle East beside Forex market" (*CNBC Arabiya*, 2009: np). Further, the channel claims to reach over 50 million households and is free-to-air in the Middle East via the satellite providers Nilesat and Arabsat. The channel has also established bureaus in Abu Dhabi, Jeddah, Riyadh, Cairo, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, in addition to its correspondents reporting from London (ibid).

networks include Al-Hurra and Al-Hurra Iraq)⁶⁰ are operated by the non-profit guarantee Middle East Broadcasting Network (MBN)⁶¹ which aims to reach Arabic speakers throughout the Middle East.

Spending for MBN's broadcasting services has increased in recent years and currently [2006] amounts about \$78million annually (GAO report 2006: 1).

Meanwhile, the news director of Al-Hurra, Daniel Nassif, in an interview with Adam Pechter of *The Middle East Quarterly*, claimed that the three channels; "Al-Hurra, Al-Hurra Iraq and Al-Hurra's Europe annual budget is about \$67 million", funded by the US government [through MBN] (Nassif cited in Pechter, *The Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2008: np).

In the words of McCarthy, the moving force behind the birth of Al-Hurra in Arabic, was Norman Pattiz, "The Californian radio executive who created West Wood One Inc, the nation's largest radio network" (McCarthy, *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2004: np).

Pattiz was appointed in November 2000 by President Bill Clinton to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which oversees federally funded international media efforts such as the Voice of America and Radio and TV Marti, which is aimed at Cuba. Pattiz quickly focused his attention on the Middle East, and, he said, he soon concluded that newscasts on Middle East stations often offered "incitements of violence, hate and disinformation." In 2002, the broadcasting board launched Radio Sawa,⁶² a radio station that mixes American and Arabic pop music with five hours of news programming. Meanwhile Pattiz, armed with a video of scenes of Arab citizens stomping on American flags and burning an image of President Bush, lobbied Congress to fund a TV station (ibid).

Further, according to its official website, Al-Hurra was founded as "a commercial-free" satellite television network (*Al-Hurra Online*, 2009: np). This, according to McCarthy, explains why the network "does not air commercials or generate revenue", since it relies on funding from the American government (McCarthy, *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2004: np).

⁶⁰ This report is dated on 4th August 2006, and did not include Al-Hurra Europe, as it was launched 3 days earlier than the issue of this document (author's note). However, the report states the \$78 million includes additional funding which MBN received in the fiscal year 2005 "to support a new Al-Hurra satellite television initiative to reach Arabic speakers in Europe" (GAO report 2006:1).

⁶¹ According to McCarthy (2004), MBN, which runs Al Hurra, is a non-profit corporation that was set up as a holding company for the Arabic television stations and it oversees its finances (McCarthy, *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2004: np).

⁶² According to their official website, "Radio Sawa, a 24-hour, seven day a week Arabic language network, began broadcasting on March 23, 2002." It originated its broadcasts from studios in the Washington, DC area and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, as well as news bureaus throughout the Middle East.

The network is a service of the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, Inc. and is publicly funded by the Broadcasting Board of Governors and the US Congress (*Radio Sawa Online*: 2009).

On the other hand, since its launch, it was noticed that Al-Hurra was perceived with a level of scepticism in the Arab world, for being American funded – the country that had just launched a war against Iraq and previously against Afghanistan - and also for being too close to the American administration itself. This is believed to have jeopardised its ambition to present itself as an accurate, balanced and alternative news provider in the Arab market.⁶³ According to Mascolo and Zand (2005), the channel has access to the administration, to correspondents in the White House, to the Pentagon and the State Department. On the other hand, “the administration has access to Al-Hurra” (Mascolo and Zand, *Spiegel Online*, 23 May 2005: np).

A most remarkable event which might cast doubt on this relationship between Al-Hurra and the American administration was when President Bush gave an interview to the channel following the abuse scandal against detainees by American soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq:

In the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, for example, President Bush gave the station an interview and said, directly to the Arab world, that America will bring those responsible to justice. Unfortunately, the camera was still running when Bush patronizingly told Harb [Mouafaq], the interviewer, that he had done a “good job” (ibid).

Mascolo and Zand added that as far as freedom of the press was concerned, “It wasn’t exactly Al-Hurra’s finest hour”. At the time, “Harb could barely muster a tortured smile” (ibid). Nevertheless, such an incident would clearly promote, as McCarthy pointed out, “more questions about the station’s independence” (McCarthy, *Washington Post*, 15 October 2004: np).

Further, in a critical attempt to evaluate the impact of Al-Hurra, Snow and Taylor (2006) stated that the greatest credibility hurdle to overcome seemed to be in the naming of the station itself. For many viewers, if Al-Hurra represents “the free ones”, then that makes “them” the unfree:

This magic bullet theory of communication assumes that the sender’s desire for more free speech and more accurate information about itself in a region coincides with the

⁶³ As given on its official website, it was stated that “The channel is dedicated to presenting accurate, balanced and comprehensive news. Al-Hurra endeavors to broaden its viewers’ perspectives, enabling them to make more informed decisions” (*Al-Hurra Online*: 2009).

receiver's needs. But many critics of Al-Hurra maintain that the US still "just doesn't get it" about what the Arab audience's true needs are (Snow and Taylor, 2006: 394).

Snow and Taylor added that one magazine writer, Amy Moufai, told an NBC News producer in Cairo that she had not watched the new US network, but was very surprised they would choose a name which highlights the fact they do not know what they are doing in the Middle East. "It reeks of the whole notion of white man's bread: 'let us teach you our free ways'" (ibid).

Further, Snow assumed that choosing such a name for the channel "The Free One" violated the "similarity principle" in creating "liking" and influencing individuals:

The principle is simple, the more similar a source and its audience, the more the audience will move in concert with a source's objectives. The more dissimilar the source and its audiences, the more the audience will move away from the source's goal of positive attitude change ... If the US were deemed the "Free One," that automatically assumed that our audience was unfree, and by definition, inferior. President George Bush said in 2004 that Al-Hurra would help in the war on terror and combat "the hateful propaganda that fills the airwaves in the Muslim world," as well as "tell people the truth about the values and policies of the United States." The "Free One" has been a Washington boondoggle (Snow, *The Huffington Post*, 12 December 2008: np).

Thus, Snow and Taylor argued that "the heart of the American propaganda problem" is this failure to "look at oneself through the eyes of others", especially if the others are also reading the American media as one of many sources of information to reinforce their viewpoint (Snow and Taylor 2006: 394).

In addition, Lynch (2007) stated that some of the problems with Al-Hurra had to do with management, others with more structural problems:

Al-Hurra's founders seemed to think that the Arab world was like former Soviet space, deprived of information and desperate for an objective, credible source of news and free debate. That would have been true in the 1980s. But at the time of its launch (2004) the Arab world was actually drowning in satellite television, with multiple sources of information and talk shows which already discussed all the issues which Al-Hurra claimed to be introducing. Al-Hurra, with its stigma of American funding, never had a chance to be more than a drop in the ocean (Lynch 2007a: np).

However, Lynch argued that Al-Hurra's extravagant budgets, and the "relentless boosterism in its endlessly chipper press releases" misled Congress and many Americans into mistakenly thinking that the US was "doing something" in terms of public diplomacy efforts (ibid). Thus,

Lynch assumed that the fate of Al-Hurra looks ever more like Radio and TV Marti – the anti-Castro stations,⁶⁴ which maintain exorbitant budgets year after year, “even though hardly any

⁶⁴ According to Jowett and O'Donnell (1999), the idea of Radio Marti originated in the Presidential Commission on Broadcasting to Cuba, which was established by President Ronald Reagan in 1981 to provide recommendations on how to break the information monopoly of Cuban government and to reach for the Cuban people (Jowett and O'Donnell 1999: 141). According to Jowett and O'Donnell, the U.S government was determined to undermine Fidel Castro's censorship barrier by making available to the Cuban people news about world affairs, as well as news about what was going on in Cuba itself (ibid). Thus, President Reagan signed the broadcasting to Cuba on 4 October 1983, and Radio Marti went on air on 20 May 1985, broadcasting to Cuba from studios in Washington, D.C., and relayed from a transmitter in Marathon Key in Florida (ibid: 141-142). It was named after a famous hero of the Cuban Revolution against Spain, Jose Marti (ibid: 142). Following the launch of Radio Marti, TV Marti went on air a few years later. According to Jowett and O'Donnell, it began beaming programmes into Cuba in August 1990 (ibid: 146). As Jowett and O'Donnell stated, TV Marti represents “the most blatant example of television propaganda” (ibid).

In 1997, TV Marti had a staff of 86 people and was budgeted at \$11.1 million. A specially designed antenna was constructed that guaranteed the signals could not be picked up within the United States or interfere with existing domestic or Cuban television reception. The antenna is housed in an aerostat balloon hovering 10,000 feet above the Cudjoe Key, Florida, and aimed at delivering a Grade A” signal into the heart of Havana. The Cuban government immediately retaliated by jamming the signal into Havana, but according to reports, the station is received on the outskirts of the city and in outlying areas (ibid: 146-147).

According to Jowett and O'Donnell, Radio and TV Marti “are bombarding” the Cuban people with propaganda in the guise of entertainment, as well as deliberate political messages (ibid: 147). The use of these two broadcasting units by the US government is as much a form of psychological warfare as it is “a threat to Cuba's economy”, as it forced the Cuban government to spend “a great deal of its already depleted cash reserve on the very expensive jamming operation” (ibid).

On the other hand, the US funding for Radio and TV Marti continued to rise in the following years, such that by 2006, Zajac (2006) stated that funding for Radio and TV Marti had grown to \$37 million a year (Zajac, *Los Angeles Times*, 24 December 2006: np). However, the budget began to reduce in the following years. It was stated on the (BBG) Website, that the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) - the entity which runs Radio and TV Marti - received \$34.7 million from the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), as its annual budget for 2009, with 151 employees (*BBG Website*, 2009: np). In 2010, this figure was reduced as it appeared on the BBG Website that the annual budget in 2010 is \$30.5 million and the number of employees went down to 136 (*BBG Website*, 2010: np).

Furthermore, on 29 April 2010, a report by the United States Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations was published regarding Radio and TV Marti. It stated in that in the FY 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Bill, the Senate approved a measure “to strip TV Marti of approximately \$ 4 million in funding”, in addition to a reduction requested by the President, and it ordered the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) to spend “not more than \$ 5.5 million for items other than salaries and benefits” (Committee on Foreign Relations Report, 2010: 1). Further, the report outlined the major issues concerning the two stations, including journalistic standards and audience capacity. It was stated in the report that:

From their inception, Radio and TV Marti have had several difficult problems, including a lax adherence to generally accepted journalistic standards, reports of small audience size, and Cuban Government jamming of broadcast signals (ibid: 5).

With regard to adhering to journalistic standards, it was stated in the report that issues such as “the representation of individual views as news, editorializing and the use of inappropriate guests whose viewpoints represented a narrow segment of opinion” were observed from 2003 to 2008, in addition to other problems, including “placement of unsubstantiated reports coming from Cuba with news stories that had been verified by at least two reputable sources; the use of offensive and incendiary language in broadcasts” (ibid).

As for audience size, it was stated in the report that Radio and TV Marti's audience is small “due to in large part to signal jamming by the Cuban government (ibid: 7). According to surveys commissioned by the international Bureau (IBB) – which “oversees [Voice of America] VOA and [the Office of Cuba broadcasting] OCB and

Cubans ever tune in” (Lynch, *The Guardian*, 16 June 2007b: np). Fandy (2007) contended that effective public diplomacy requires an understanding of the market and the level of competition. However, in the case of Al-Hurra, those elements were not applied effectively:

It is clear that the people behind Al-Hurra and Radio Sawa did not understand their target audience and have no idea that their voice is drowned out by their competitors (Fandy 2007: 115).

In addition, Fandy argued that this lack of understanding of the Arab market brought Al-Hurra and Radio Sawa to “have so little credibility” with Arab audiences:

Any international broadcasting effort is going to be fraught with difficulties and challenges. Understanding the audience, its sensitivities and vulnerabilities, is a crucial step in building an effective public diplomacy strategy. That step was left out in the case of Al-Hurra and Radio Sawa (ibid: 116).

Moreover, a study conducted for the Broadcasting Board of Governors by the USC Centre on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School, University of South California (2008) to evaluate Al-Hurra’s television programming, concluded that its programming was perceived by Arab audiences as similar to traditional, state-funded broadcasting in the Arab region.

Not only has Al-Hurra done little to distinguish itself from second-tier Middle Eastern broadcasters in terms of its news agenda, but it has also failed to develop a distinctive style, format, and breadth of coverage that might attract a substantial audience. Even Al-Hurra’s reporting of U.S. policies and American life is seen by Arab viewers as undistinguished. This opinion ran through the discussion group sessions and was supported by the content analysis. In short, Al-Hurra has failed to become competitive (USC, 2008: 4).

The study also pointed out that the quality of Al-Hurra’s journalism is substandard on several levels:

Its technical presentation is not as proficient as that of the best Arab channels. The study’s content analysis found that Al-Hurra’s news stories lack appropriate balance and sourcing. Discussion group respondents noted journalist’s apparent lack of

provides transmission service, administration and marketing for all broadcasters that fall under the jurisdiction of the Broadcasting Board of Governors [BBG]. These include Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti, TV Marti, Radio Sawa, and Alhurra Television” (ibid: 3) - the surveys indicated that “fewer than 2 percent of the respondents in 2003, 2005, and 2006 said they had listened to Radio Marti during the last previous week” (ibid: 7-8). In 2008, “fewer than 1 percent of respondents” stated that they had listened to Radio Marti during the previous week (ibid: 8). The situation with TV Marti, was not much different, as additional (IBB) audience research indicated that the “TV Marti’s audience size also is minute” (ibid). For these reasons, the report, and a recommendation, stated that IBB should move OCB back to Washington and integrate it fully into VOA, as this would help in ensuring that programmes, particularly news quality, “meets (VOA) standards” (ibid: 12).

experience and flawed presentation of news, including the poor use of graphics and lack of standardized Arabic language. The content analysis found that Al-Hurra relied on unsubstantiated information too often, allowed the on-air expression of personal judgments too frequently, and failed to present opposing views in over 60 percent of its news stories (ibid).

Thus, Al-Hurra's association with the U.S. government and policies raised scepticism among Arab audiences regarding its ability to report objectively about issues in the region. The USC study found several factors that could further such impressions of "bias", including:

- **Al-Hurra's news was likely to promote Western perspectives at the expense of Arab perspectives.** When Al-Hurra was critical of a particular view of issues, it was six times more likely to be critical of the Arab/other perspective than the western viewpoint. Moreover, it was twice as likely to praise the western outlook rather than the Arab/other perspective.
- **When personal judgments were expressed, they were likely to be pro-West or anti-Arab.** Rarely were opinions expressed that were critical of a Western perspective or supportive of an Arab position, particularly on such sensitive topics as the Israeli-Arab conflict and Arab human rights issues.
- **The use of unsubstantiated information was often associated with a bias in favour of Western perspectives and U.S. policies.** Reporting that was grounded in unsubstantiated information (which includes over 12 percent of Al-Hurra's news content) was twice as likely to favour the Western viewpoint over the Arab/other perspective, and almost three times less likely to be critical of U.S. policy.
- Al-Hurra was much more critical of Arab governments and political opposition groups than it was of U.S. policy in the region. Reporting was twice as critical of Arab political positions and policies as it was of U.S. policies (ibid: 5).

Further, the study also pointed out that Al-Hurra represented a false or biased perspective of events, especially with regard to its coverage of Iraq and the Israeli-Arab conflict, which brought the network to be perceived by the audience as a tool for "propaganda":

It is important to note that, while the U.S. policy and viewpoints were often clearly identified, participants thought that they were unpersuasive or included too little explanation. While some identified Al-Hurra's coverage as being more positive with regard to the possibilities of peace and stability in the region, these attributes were more often seen as evidence of an agenda rather than coverage that provoked a different point of view (ibid).

Thus, Al-Hurra represented "a lack of connection to the 'Arab street'", as the study revealed that discussion group participants felt that Al-Hurra too often relied on official sources about issues important to the general Arab public:

Rarely were sources entirely independent, and the voice of the average Arab was either non-existent or subordinated to official pronouncements. Moreover, coverage of highly divisive issues – Israeli-Arab conflict and Iraq in particular – was often seen

overly optimistic with regard to the possibilities of stability and reconciliation. Further, the paucity of coverage of Islam and Islamic-related issues indicates insensitivity to one of the fundamental elements of most Arabs' lives. When contrasted this to the approach of numerous new Arab media organisations, Al-Hurra seems out of touch with its audience (ibid: 6).

On the other hand, other findings on Al-Hurra revealed some developments on the channel's viewership, especially in Iraq. Snyder (2009) revealed that according to "the latest" TV ratings from the commercial Middle East polling firm, IPSOS-MENA, "Al-Hurra's Iraq channel has larger daily audiences in the country than the much heralded Al-Jazeera":

IPSOS-MENA's most recent TV ratings, taken in Iraq between March and May, 2008, show Al-Hurra with daily reach of 17.68 percent of adults 15 years of age and above, who watch Al-Hurra for at least five minutes daily, while al-Jazeera has 14.67 percent of adult daily viewership (Snyder, *Middle East Times*, 9 January 2009: np).

These results, according to Snyder, were the outcome of measures that were taken to boost Al-Hurra's viewership, such as providing easier public access to its broadcast signals, in addition to its satellite transmissions by increasing the number of its terrestrial transmitters "to five metropolitan areas within Iraq" so that its programmes can be received by standard TV antennas atop TV sets or on rooftops.⁶⁵ Another measure was by carrying "local" Iraq-specific programming tailored for viewers in Iraq through Al-Hurra Iraq TV, which is one of three channels that composed Al-Hurra's network⁶⁶ (ibid).

Having said that, it is also important to mention that when the American President, Barak Obama, decided to give his first interview as president to speak to the Arab world, the choice was Al-Arabiya news channel, not the American-funded channel Al-Hurra. Such a decision, according to Hasbani (2009), was significant for two reasons:

First, it emphasizes the high priority the new administration places on improving relations between the United States and the Middle East. And second, because it shows that the White House lacks confidence in the U.S. government's own Arabic language news channel Al-Hurra (Hasbani, *The Huffington Post*, 5 May 2009: np).

In addition, Hasbani stated that despite all the American efforts to promote Al-Hurra in the Arab region, the result of the channel's viewership represents less than 3% of the potential Arab market and drops below 2% in times of crises (ibid).

⁶⁵ As stated by Snyder (2009) those terrestrial transmitters are located in Baghdad (Ch.12); Basra (Ch.3); Al Hilla (Ch.35) and Tekreet (Ch.3) (Snyder, *Middle East Times*, 9 January 2009: np).

⁶⁶ The other two channels as discussed earlier are Al-Hurra and Al-Hurra Europe (author's note).

Then again, it is worth mentioning that the Al-Hurra network was not the only American funded media project in Iraq, The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) established the Iraqi Media Network in 2003, which in its initial phases included a terrestrial TV channel, two radio stations, and the newspaper, Al-Sabah (Al-Marashi 2006: 15). Nevertheless, Al-Marashi stated that the IMN faced two challenges to win a wider viewership in post-war Iraq:

The first was to demonstrate that it could serve as a public service broadcaster, serving as the voice of all Iraqis. The second was to establish a satellite channel that had the broadcast infrastructure and lively informative programming to compete with regional satellite channels being watched in Iraq, such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, and the Iranian-based Arabic language channel, Al-Alam (ibid).

In this regard, Al-Marashi argued that IMN was restructured into the Al-Iraqiya network and expanded to two terrestrial TV channels and Al-Iraqiya satellite channel, which began transmissions in May 2003, from the morning to the evening, then moved to 24-hour transmissions (ibid). However, according to Cochrane (2006) the original network contract (eventually totalling some eight other contracts worth \$108.2 million) was awarded to the San Diego-based Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) by the US Defense Contracting Command to set up a 24-hour news channel, Al-Iraqiya, a sports channel, two FM radio stations and a national newspaper. “SAIC was replaced by US-based Harris Communications with a one-year, \$96 million contract in January 2004, that was later renewed for six months” (Cochrane 2006: np). After that, Al-Marashi stated that Al-Iraqiya became the only national public service channel; “its financing comes from the coffers of the Iraqi state, and the Ministry of Finance approves the channel’s budget” (Al-Marashi 2006: 15). In its initial phases, Al-Iraqiya struggled to gain credibility, as it was used by the CPA as a means to communicate with Iraqis, and thus considered a tool of “American propaganda”. However, the channel eventually established itself as a broadcaster free of US editorial interference (ibid: 16).

Yet, while the channel was set up to be a public service channel, free from American editorial interferences, Cochrane argued that Al-Iraqiya seemed to be given more privileged access by the coalition forces than other channels.

During a joint US and Iraqi military operation on the northern city of Tal Afar in late September 2005, Al-Iraqiya was the only American camera team allowed to

accompany the troops, according to Al-Jazeera editor-in-chief Ahmed Al Sheikh (Cochrane 2006: np).

Thus, there is no doubt that Iraq, and consequently the Arab region - post the 2003 Iraq war - became an essential part of the media battles to win the hearts and minds of the Arab audiences in such a concentrated media environment with various media outlets serving various agendas and political interests.

4.3.2.3. BBC Arabic satellite TV

On 11 March 2008, the BBC launched its Arabic TV channel to be free “to everyone” in North Africa and the Middle East with a satellite or cable connection. The channel started with a 12 hour broadcast day, to be shifted to a 24-hour service, while the annual budget of the channel, as declared by BBC News Online, is US \$50m (UK £25m), coming partly from a UK government grant, and partly from BBC World Service funds freed up by the closure of radio services, mainly to Eastern Europe (*BBC News Online*, 11 March 2008: np). The channel shifted to a 24-hour service on 19 January 2009 to become a 24/7 multimedia service, bringing Arabic speaking audiences from across the world, news and analysis via radio, online, television and mobile (*BBC News Online*, Press Release, 16 January 2009: np).

This shift has been described by Husam El-Sokkari, the head of BBC Arabic at the time, as moving from “strength to strength”. Since the launch of the channel as a 12 hour a day operation in March 2008, the 24/7 television service would offer, according to El-Sokkari, a “non-stop news service for Arabic speakers whenever, and wherever, they want it” (ibid). However, according to Jarrah (2008), the channel arrived with baggage on board. Much of that is due to the political circumstances surrounding its inception, as a project initiated (or revived)⁶⁷ at the behest of the British government and funded by the Foreign Office.

Given the UK’s close identification with the U.S policy in the Middle East and the acknowledged failure of Washington’s attempt to penetrate the world of Arab satellite

⁶⁷ According to Amin (2005), the previous attempt to launch the BBC Arabic service TV was after negotiations with the Saudi-owned investment group Al-Mawrid’s subsidiary, the Rome-based Orbit communications. As a result, an agreement was signed on 24 March 1994, though the project was short-lived, as, on 21 April 1996, the BBC World Service Arabic Language Television channel was closed down. Amin argued that the reason behind this was due to “the BBC’s failure” to observe the cultural sensitivities of the Saudis- especially when it comes to their royal family.

The BBC had crossed an invisible line when its reporting focused on a Saudi dissident, Al Mes’ari, living in London and criticizing the Saudi royals. In addition, the BBC rebroadcast an Arabic-dubbed BBC show, *Panorama*, which criticized the Saudi judicial system in general and its application of capital punishment in particular (Amin 2005: np).

TV, it inevitably looked to many in the Arab world that BBC Arabic TV was conceived as a substitute for Al Hurra: a subcontracting of the public diplomacy side of the war on terror to the more sophisticated Brits. Some Arab pundits dismissed the new channel in advance as a propaganda tool, albeit one that would operate more subtly than its American equivalent (Jarrah 2008: np).

Abdel Bari Atwan, the chief editor of the London-based Arabic newspaper *Al-Quds Al-Arabi*, was among those who speculate about the aim of launching BBC Arabic by the Foreign Office:

The UK Foreign Office funds the BBC World Service at a cost of £239m per year. Jack Straw's⁶⁸ decision to axe 10 World Service foreign language radio stations in order to finance a new Arabic language satellite television station is not without a political text (Atwan, *The Guardian*, 25 October 2005: np).

Atwan argued that the need for a new strategy was obvious and the media are seen as crucial tools in improving the US/UK profile in the Arab world. Thus, concerns around the editorial independence of the new BBC Arabic station would obviously be raised, especially after the US launched Al-Hurra:

In February 2004, the US government funded a new Washington-based Arabic language broadcast at a cost of \$62m per year. Named Al-Hurra (the "free one") – apparently without a hint of irony – the radio and television stations produce such barefaced pro-American propaganda that they swiftly lost any credibility they might have enjoyed in the Arab world. Furthermore, Arab mistrust generated by the expensive PR exercise spread to include all American media outlets (ibid).

Nevertheless, Amin asserted that while the BBC Arabic service would compete with the US-funded Al-Hurra channel for Arab "hearts and minds", it would be more likely to gain a better position since it enjoys an established reputation for independence and credibility. Yet both channels, according to Amin, are considered important in terms of public diplomacy (Amin 2005: np). The credibility and popularity of the BBC in the Arab world would, according to Atwan, be used in a "propaganda offensive":

The BBC, however, has hitherto continued to enjoy a good reputation in the [Arab] region. The Arab World Service radio station still attracts audiences of around 7 million to 10 million⁶⁹ despite Britain's involvement in the Iraq war. This popularity

⁶⁸ Jack Straw was the foreign secretary between 2001 and 2006 (*BBC News Online*, 14 September 2006: np).

⁶⁹ This figure has significantly increased, as shown in the Arabic Radio Research Overview for January 2009. The document revealed that BBC Arabic Radio is listened to by 13.6 million adults weekly in North Africa and the Middle East, which has increased from 13.2 million weekly in 2008. Furthermore, the document revealed that Northern Sudan and Iraq are the BBC's [Arabic Radio] largest markets in the Arab speaking world, "both attracting weekly audiences in excess of 3 million". Along with Egypt and Syria, they account for "more than 80% of listeners" (BBC Arabic Radio Research Overview 2009).

and credibility makes the BBC an ideal potential weapon in any renewed propaganda offensive (Atwan, *The Guardian*, 25 October 2005: np).

However, in an interview with Husam El-Sokkari, for Transnational Broadcasting Studies (2006), Al-Sokkari denied that the BBC Arabic TV would fall within the public diplomacy umbrella. He argued that the channel would encourage people to look at issues from different angles:

The public diplomacy umbrella extends to encompass it, but you know it depends what you mean by public diplomacy. We believe that further understanding will help people make up their own minds about different issues. We do not believe that we have to get people reacting to or responding to certain issues in a certain way. So if that is considered public diplomacy, maybe. But we are not there to disseminate a particular message, positive or negative; we are there to let people have a chance to understand the multi-faceted angles, the different perspectives of any particular issues. But our message is professional. It is not political (Al-Sokkari interviewed by Pintak 2006: 221).

Alternatively, Amin contended that the content of the BBC's Arabic television most likely would present a British viewpoint, rather than an Arab perspective. This, on the other hand, would make Arab audiences, who have been on the defensive since the introduction of the Al-Hurra satellite channel, to be on the alert for any kind of approach that hints at bias or attempts to influence their opinion, especially from a television service that is broadcasting out of Great Britain, "a country is one of the 'occupying' forces in Iraq" (Amin 2005: np).

Yet, by comparing the output of BBC Arabic Television news to Al-Jazeera's, Jarrah noted that there were no fundamental differences in the selection and treatment of news. Therefore, Jarrah asserted that one would be hard-pressed to detect a British government agenda filtering through the coverage:

News-wise, a casual comparison between the daytime bulletins of BBC Arabic and those of Al-Jazeera showed that they tended to select broadly the same topics for their leading stories, and accord them similar treatment. Differences were more pronounced with regard to secondary news items they ran: the BBC carried more stories of shorter duration, while Al-Jazeera's tended to be fewer and longer. The BBC also broadcast relatively more stories that were unrelated to the Arab world, and more "lite" items. Presumably this is what its pre-launch publicity meant when it spoke of the channel's mission "to broaden the news agenda for audiences in the region" so as to "reflect the breadth of the Arab audiences' interests", although some of the selections might have struggled to interest any audience (Jarrah 2008: np).

Nevertheless, the number of Arab news satellite channels, with their various sources of funding and consequently the variations in the political perspectives influencing their news coverage, would perhaps allow the BBC Arabic Television to take its place in the Arab media market. However, this involvement, according to Jarrah, would probably need time for the channel to establish its place in such a crowded world of Arab TV news:

The role it plays and stature it acquires could depend largely on the performance of its main Arab competitors. Despite the different political biases commonly attributed to the editorial lines of Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera, the fact remains that both channels cover most of their news stories most of the time with a reasonable degree of accuracy, detail and balance. Distortion and omissions come mainly when their sponsor-government's agendas come into play. This is more of a problem with Al-Arabiya than Al-Jazeera, but both have demonstrated some degree of susceptibility to it over the years. Al-Arabiya is often accused of putting Saudi spin on its coverage of regional developments, while Al-Jazeera is seen constraining some of its reporting in deference to Qatar and its recent rapprochement with Saudi Arabia (Jarrah 2008: np).

If such trends deepen, especially in the conditions of growing political polarization within the Arab world, Jarrah argues that the BBC could therefore find itself filling a gap that has not hitherto been particularly apparent.

The more partisan or tongue-tied the home-based media become, the more Arab viewers will look elsewhere for a fuller picture. And if BBC Arabic TV helps keep its competitors on their toes, it will have rendered a valuable service to Arab broadcasting, whatever contribution of its own it makes (ibid).

This contribution, however, is subject to the way that BBC Arabic television would be able to provide a comprehensive coverage of the region, in a professional manner, with emphasis on objectivity and credibility in its news treatments.

4.3.2.4. France 24 Arabic

As demonstrated above, investing in Arabic language news channels has become “fashionable” for Western media outlets, certainly as reflected in the level of attention the Arab world has been receiving from major international news broadcasters. Another television broadcaster to invest in expanding its Arabic-language programming is France 24, the French international news channel.

France 24 inaugurated an Arabic television service on 4 April 2007, comprising four hours broadcast daily to the Maghreb, Levant and Europe, with plans to expand its Arabic

transmission afterwards (Heil Jr. 2007: np). “Since 3 pm”, 27 April 2009, France 24 has been broadcasting from 4 to 10 hours a day of Arabic programming, which more than doubles its content just two years after the service was launched. The decision to expand the programming hours is assumed to be an essential component of the channel’s development strategy to maintain its editorial policy to cover global news from a French perspective (Abdoun, *Daily News*, 28 April 2009: np). Christine Ockrent, the chief executive of France 24, believes that the news marketplace still has room for another perspective.

We believe that for us, as a French channel expressing ourselves in these three languages [French, Arabic and English], we can bring our viewers added value, or at least a difference, a French touch, both in the way we treat information and particularly debates that we want to develop ... We think that all the social debates - be it about education, public health and everything that is related to women’s status - there is content that distinguishes us from our competitors. These [debates] can have an impact there (Ockrent cited in Hagey and Gillet, *The National*, 6 May 2009: np).

France 24, though a relative newcomer, having started broadcasting in December 2006 in French and English, it offers a French rebuttal to CNN and the BBC. It is a subsidiary of the Audiovisual Extérieur de la France (AEF), a holding company that also includes Radio France Internationale, which also has its own Arabic-language, Monte Carlo Doualiya (Hagey and Gillet, *The National*, 6 May 2009: np). According to Chrisafis (2006), since its establishment, France 24 was seeking to report international news “through French eyes”. Not only it does it offer a French perspective on world events from the Middle East to Madagascar, it also aims to reflect a certain French “way of life”. At least 20% of the programming focuses on culture and lifestyle, embracing everything from “world museums to cuisine, fashion and French chocolate” (Chrisafis, *The Guardian*, 6 December 2006: np). In addition, Chrisafis asserted that the idea of France 24 “was first dreamed up when Mr. Chirac was prime minister in the late 1980s and became one of his election pledges for the presidency in 2002”. Nevertheless, in 2003 the need for a news channel with a French voice gained currency when Chirac’s efforts to slow the US drive to war in Iraq were “mocked” by some media in the US and Britain (ibid).

According to *BBC News Online*, France 24’s journalists signed a mission statement “to cover international news with a French perspective ... and to carry the values of France throughout the world”. However, the channel insists on its independence and that it will not just follow the government line (*BBC News Online*, 6 December 2006: np). Robinson (2007) argued that the idea of a state-backed, but privately run, domestic news service had been discussed by

French politicians for years. However, Chirac announced it would go ahead “in the dying days of his premiership”, spurred into action by frustration over a supposed bias of the establishment Anglo-Saxon competitors, such as CNN and the BBC, in the run up to the Iraq war (Robinson, *The Guardian*, 22 April 2007: np). Thus, , according to Ryley (2009), the channel is considered to be the “brainchild of Jacques Chirac” as part of his campaign to defend the French language and promote a Francophile view of the world (Ryley, *The Independent*, 2 February 2009: np). France 24 is “mostly” state-funded, with €82 million annually, which Hagey and Gillet describe as relatively modest compared with other international broadcasters such as the BBC, which has a “\$50 million” annual budget for its Arabic service alone. However, the French channel is seeking to expand on a budget of about 5 per cent of its advertising revenue, as the channel has sales representatives for its expanded Arabic service working out of Dubai. Ockrent declared that if the expanded Arabic channel proves a success, it plans to broadcast in Arabic 24 hours a day in 2010⁷⁰ (Hagey and Gillet, *The National*, 6.May.2009: np). Robinson asserted that France 24 has attracted bigger than expected audiences in the country’s former colonies in North Africa and the Middle East (Robinson, *The Guardian*, 22 April 2007: np).

In addition, Abdoun stated that according to a study by the TNS-Sofres Institute in January 2009, “88 percent in Algeria, 80 percent in Morocco and 73 percent in Tunisia say that they watch France 24” (Abdoun, *Daily News*, 28 April 2009: np). France 24’s Arabic target audience, according to Abdoun, “is everyone who is interested in what the channel has to offer, whether in opinion or programming”, in addition to the youth and young people (ibid). Nahida Nakad, a deputy director of this service, also added:

We also target the decision makers, in a sense that for years and years the leaders in the Arab world have been getting their information from the Anglo-Saxon media. They didn’t have this choice of different visions of the world and different ways of presenting the news and the priorities in the world (Nakad cited in Abdoun, *Daily News*, 28 April 2009: np).

⁷⁰ According to Ockrent the Arabic service has a team of 36 journalists, but draws on the resources of France 24’s team of 260 journalists. It broadcasts via satellite on Arabsat-Bader-4, Nilesat and Hotbird, as well as an array of pay providers. It is also available on the internet via france24.com and via mobile phone, and it now broadcasts from 2pm to midnight, Paris time (Ockrent cited in Hagey and Gillet, *The National*, 6 May 2009: np). In addition, in an interview with *Al-Hayat* newspaper, Ockrent stated that the broadcast of France 24 Arabic will expand gradually to reach a 24-hours a day in 2011 (Habib, *Al-Hayat*, 10 May 2010: np).

Having said that, the impact of France 24 Arabic is still assumed to be trivial in comparison with other broadcasters in the region, or perhaps needs more time to be evaluated, since the channel is only available for 10 hours a day and faces tough competition from other prominent Arab broadcasters, such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya. Nevertheless, the channel remains another vivid example of the necessity for active media strategies to communicate with Arab audiences to promote not only culture and lifestyles, but most importantly political policies, since these international broadcasters transmitting in Arabic are state-funded media projects.

4.3.2.5. Deutsche Welle (DW-TV Arabic)

On a similar basis, Germany launched its new Arabic TV service in 2005. This expanded the international broadcasts of Deutsche Welle DW-TV to include a three-hours, anchor-based Arabic programme with “two daily news shows of 26 minutes each” and “the latest from politics, business, the arts and sport” (*Deutsche Welle Online* 28 February 2005: np). Before this expansion, DW-TV had been broadcasting news with Arabic subtitles since 2002 (ibid). The development of Arabic-anchored news in 2005 marked a progressing pattern in the channel’s communication strategy. Erik Bettermann, the Director General of DW-TV stated that “this [development] strengthens the position of Deutsche Welle in Arabic-Islamic regions” (ibid). Further, it was stated on the DW-TV official website that the foreign ministry in Germany “supports the programme with special funds” (ibid). The Arabic service contributed to further developments. Thus, in 2007, the Arabic language broadcasting time grew to eight hours daily, instead of three. This included six news bulletins and allowed for more programmes and documentaries. By November 2008, the Arabic broadcasts reached twelve hours a day, in rotation with the English language broadcasts, to produce around the clock⁷¹ broadcasting (*Deutsche Welle Online* 2010: np). It could be argued that the Arabic broadcasts reflect the growing interest at the channel to reach wider audiences in the Arab world and consequently marks a strategic approach by Germany to promote its policies, image and culture to Arab audiences in the Middle East. Yet, as discussed above, in the case of the 10 hours of Arabic broadcasts on France 24, the impact of this channel would be likely to remain limited in comparison to other broadcasters in the region, such as Al-Jazeera. However, it offers another example of the international powers recognising the need to broadcast in Arabic, reflecting the strategic importance of these audiences.

⁷¹ The Berlin based DW-TV broadcasts in four languages; German, English, Spanish and Arabic (*Deutsche Welle Online* 2010: np).

4.3.2.6. Russia Today Arabic

Russia followed a similar approach in promoting its global image and policies. Russia Today was launched in English in 2005, funded by the Kremlin and designed to promote Russia abroad (Duke, *The Guardian*, 14 February 2006: np). According to Finn (2008) the Kremlin approved spending millions of dollars through various forms of public diplomacy, including new media ventures to target international audiences; foundations to promote the Russian language and culture around the world; and “conferences to charm Western opinion-makers; and non-governmental organisations” (Finn, *Washington Post*, 6 March 2008: np). Consequently, Russia Today started broadcasting on 10 December 2005, with a budget of \$30 million dollars (Kagarlitsky, *Transnational Institute*, 19 December 2005: np), sponsored by the state-funded RIA Novosti news agency to cover international and Russian news, and broadcasting to Europe, North America and Asia (*CBC News Online*, 7 June 2005: np). However, on its official website, the channel claims to bring to its audiences the human side of every story, by stepping “beyond the boundaries of bare facts” (*Russia Today* website 2009: np). This indicates that the founders of Russia Today planned to position the channel, as an international broadcaster, in direct competition with other existing broadcasters such as CNN and BBC. According to *CBC News Online* (2006), Russia Today aims to become Russia’s version of the BBC or have the same influence as CNN. However, some critics have expressed their doubts that, despite the Kremlin’s assurances that the new channel would be editorially independent, Russia Today would be seen mixing journalism and spin to promote a favourable portrayal of Russia (*CBC News online*, 10 March 2006: np). For this reason, Finn argued that, at the first glance, Russia Today “looks a lot like CNN, but it can be a breathless cheerleader for the Kremlin” (Finn, *The Washington Post*, 6 March 2008: np).

Nevertheless, the channel claims to provide an alternative perspective in its news coverage. As it appeared on its official website, “RT [Russia Today] is here to show you how any story can be another story altogether.” However, the channel also emphasised promoting the image of Russia internationally:

Apart from regular news updates, RT offers a unique insight into many aspects of Russian history, culture and opinions. Our special projects are specifically tailored to accustom the international audience with the Russian perspective (*Russia Today Online*, 2009: np).

According to Seib (2008), the Russian president at the time, Vladimir Putin, was reportedly angry about the consistently negative tone of international coverage of Russian policies, such as allegations about human rights abuses by Russian forces during the fighting in Chechnya,⁷² a conflict that Putin considered to be part of the Global ‘war on terror’ (Seib 2008:39). Putin thus recognised the new levels of competition for world opinion:

Like France 24, Russia Today provides news with a spin that favours the interests of its proprietors. The product is professionally slick and features a subtle but distinctly Putinesque view of the world. Many news consumers presumably recognise how the game is played and judge the information they receive accordingly (ibid).

The principle of promoting the image of Russia internationally could also be seen as the driving force that led to launching Russia Today in Arabic, especially when considering that the war in Chechnya was not perceived in favour of Russia among news consumers in the Arab and Muslim world:

In the Middle East the Chechens are seen as Muslim people fighting for survival – with the same power to attract sympathy as the anti-soviet struggle in Afghanistan once had (Fisk, *The Independent*, 11 January 1995: np).

Thus, the need to approach Arab news consumers directly through Russian satellite channel broadcasting in Arabic would obviously help to promote and explain Russian policies. Therefore, Rusiya Al-Yaum (Russia Today in Arabic) was launched on 4 May 2007, as part of RIA Novosti. Since its establishment, the Arabic channel maintains the same policy and principles of Russia Today, which is to promote the image of Russia by providing “an opportunity” to Arab viewers to “learn new things about Russia” and “Russian life” through selection of programmes and documentaries. The Arabic channel is structured to cover political, economic, sport and cultural news, in addition to media roundups and current affairs programmes and documentaries, it transmits 24 hours a day from Moscow and claims to reach 350 million via satellite transmission, in the Middle East, North Africa and Europe (*Russia Today Arabic Online*, 2009: np).

According to Yasmann (2006) it was on 15 June 2006, when RIA Novosti announced that it would launch its satellite television to broadcast to the Middle East and North Africa.

⁷² According to *BBC News Online* (2006) since Chechnya declared independence from Russia in November 1991, Russia launched two wars against the Chechen rebels, the first, during Boris Yeltsin presidency in 1994 and ended in a defeat for the Russian forces in 1996. The second war was launched in 1999 during Vladimir Putin era (*BBC News Online*, 10 July 2006: np).

In doing so, the state-run news agency joined the growing list of countries vying to gain media influence in the region (Yasmann, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 21 June 2006: np).

Yasmann points out in an interview with the *Financial Times*, on 15 June 2006, that an RIA source revealed that the Arabic service budget is \$35 million⁷³ (ibid). On the other hand, the channel aimed to reinforce its ambition in having a share of the market of the Arab audience by presenting its employees as a mixture of Arab journalists and Russian orientalists who are specialised in the region. Furthermore, the channel managed to open offices in various locations around the world, such as London and Paris in Europe, Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut, Gaza, Jerusalem, Cairo and Ramallah in the Middle East, as well as Washington and New York in the US. This is in addition to a network of other supported reporters in Russia and the former Soviet Union states (ibid).

According to the Russian-Arab Business Council (2007) the channel expresses Moscow's stance on international problems it covers. However, the Russian-Arab Business Council claims that within a short period after its creation, the channel began to win the attention of Arab viewers in the Gulf region, Middle East and North African states, which emphasised the mutual interests between Arab and Russian businessmen and thus development of political and economic relations between Russia and the Arab countries (*Russian-Arab Business Council*, 16 August 2007: np).

4.3.2.7. Arabic language satellite channels: A question of performance and popularity

It is relatively hard to assume that the international Arabic language state-funded media outlets such as Russia Today, France 24, Deutsche Welle, Al-Hurra, and even the BBC Arabic television or the Iranian state funded Al-Alam, would necessarily compete with existing and prominent Arab broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya. However, these channels clearly play an additional role to their original aims - to promote their countries' images in the Arab region - by expanding the media landscape to accommodate other views

⁷³ This figure is \$5 million higher than what has been stated by Kagarlitsky earlier in this section. This could probably mean that an additional fund has been granted to Russia Today Arabic after its inauguration on 10 December 2005. Kagarlitsky revealed a figure of \$30 million in his article, on 19 December 2005, a few days after the launch of Russia Today Arabic, on 10 December 2005, while Yasmann's interview with the *Financial Times* took place few months later, on 15 June 2006 (author's note).

on the region's issues and enriching the content of their news coverage with credible, thorough, reliable and objective accounts. This would certainly expand the potential impact of these channels and allow for more serious competition to take place with Arab broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and others.

In this regard, Hasbani insisted on the need for credible and balanced coverage of the region's issues to be conducted by these Western-funded Arabic language channels:

Western governments must do more than pour money into perceived propaganda machines like Al-Hurra. Arabic channels operated by Western states must maintain high journalism standards, provide balanced coverage and include uncensored news about controversial subjects of high importance to Arab viewers, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. This is the only way to attract a wider audience in the Arab world (Hasbani, *The Huffington Post*, 5 May 2009: np).

Failing to do so, or limiting their coverage to any obvious political agenda, at least without taking into consideration the complicated political environment in the Arab world, would lead to a negative impact on their popularity, as they would quickly be received with suspicion by Arab audiences. For instance, Hasbani argued that, much like Al-Hurra, BBC Arabic "failed to establish itself with Arab viewers" by missing the opportunity of the Gaza conflict at the end of 2008 /early 2009 to distinguish its coverage. According to Hasbani, news channels such as Al-Arabiya gained fame from its exclusive coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, and Al-Jazeera was made notorious during its exclusive coverage from Kabul in 2001. In the Gaza conflict there was an opportunity for the BBC to advance itself as a credible broadcaster, especially since this conflict divided Arab stations and their viewers along the lines of the Palestinian divisions:

Al-Jazeera Arabic's coverage supported the Hamas movement in lyrical and emotional storytelling rather than straight TV news coverage while [Al-] Arabiya leant toward Fatah. There was a clear gap in the market, and BBC Arabic could have set itself apart with breaking news coverage and factual content that did not favour a particular political position. It failed, offering instead more bland coverage from outside the war zone⁷⁴ (Hasbani, *The Huffington Post*, 5 May 2009: np).

⁷⁴ Hasbani argued that in order to understand what BBC Arabic could have done differently, "you needed to watch another newcomer who excelled in reporting Gaza conflict: Al-Jazeera English", which was launched in November 2006, Al-Jazeera English aired exclusive stories from correspondents inside Gaza, where journalists had been denied access by the Israeli army.

In fact, a top European Union diplomat admitted, "we only knew what was really happening inside Gaza thanks to Al-Jazeera English". Such an exceptional coverage marked the rise of the channel, but unfortunately for those in the Middle East, in English not Arabic (Hasbani, *The Huffington Post*, 5 May 2009: np).

This would explain that, in such a highly politicised region like the Arab world, marked with political disputes and differences in vision and conflicts, the need for comprehensive, balanced and neutral coverage is becoming more necessary. This would be a leading factor for the emerging 24-hour news channels broadcasting in Arabic, such as the BBC, Al-Hurra, France 24, Deutsche Welle and Russia Today, to play a role in covering such a vibrant region and effectively become part of its media mosaic, since, as mentioned by Amin (2005), the media scene in the Arab world has changed rapidly from the 1990s. Arab audiences nowadays have increasing loyalty to the many satellite news channels to watch, “while fewer and fewer Arabs” are turning to national TV channels for news and information (Amin 2005: np). Therefore, the question of the impact of western-funded satellite channels broadcasting in Arabic would primarily rely on their content, in other words, their ability to offer news coverage and current affairs programming that would meet the desired requirements of balance, credibility and neutrality. This challenge comes as part of the rapid changes in the media milieu in the Arab world, which is witnessing the further interest of regional and international powers to launch their own Arabic services. This development could clearly influence international news coverage in Arabic and perceptions of news in the Arab world, and offers an additional challenge to Western media organisations in terms of their news coverage in Arabic and their treatments of current affairs issues.

The emergence of other powers, broadcasting in Arabic, such as China, exemplifies these challenges and developments. China joined other international powers in investing in news in Arabic and launched its own 24-hour Arabic language satellite channel, China Central Television CCTV Arabic International, on 25 July 2009 as part of the Chinese government plans to promote its own viewpoints in the Arab world. The vice president of the CCTV’s Arabic International channel, Zhang Changming, stated that CCTV serves as “an important bridge to strengthen communication and understanding between China and Arab countries”⁷⁵ (*CCTV Online* 24 July 2009: np). Further, Bristow (2009) stated that Zhang Changming also made it clear that the aim was to counter some of the “distorted” views about China “that are put out by a number of foreign broadcasters” (Bristow, *BBC News Online*, 25 July 2009: np). Yet Zhang Chanming also asserted that their principle is “to be real, to be objective, to be

⁷⁵ Unlike the discussed western broadcasters, such as Al-Hurra and BBC Arabic, who are fronted by Arab presenters, CCTV employed Chinese presenters and anchors speaking Arabic. This could be seen as one of the major differences in the communication strategies of these parties towards the Arab world (author’s note).

accurate and transparent”⁷⁶ (ibid). Nevertheless, the emergence of CCTV-Arabic⁷⁷ as a state-funded channel underlines the strategic importance of the Arab world in the official Chinese view and provided further evidence of the interest of the international powers to develop their communication strategies to address Arab audiences in the region. Ying Chang, the director of Hong Kong University’s journalism and media studies centre, told Al-Jazeera that “there is no question that the Middle East is a very strategic area and China wants its voice heard there”⁷⁸ (Chang cited in *Al-Jazeera Online* 25 July 2009: np).

Having said this, it would probably suggest that since the content of these channels would most likely be presenting the point of view of their sponsors rather than an Arab perspective, then the need to assure Arab audiences of their credible, balanced and neutral manner in the coverage of the Arab region is becoming *the* determining parameter which would appeal to Arab news consumers and, consequently, would allow for competition with other existing Arab satellite news channels.

It is argued as important at this stage to scrutinize the annual report of the Arab Broadcasting States Union (ASBU) on the Arab satellite broadcasting milieu, within and outside the Arab region for the years 2007 and 2008. The report stated that the number of Arab corporations transmitting satellite channels, or re-transmitting satellite channels on their networks, amounts to 250, divided into 24 public corporations and 226 private corporations. These corporations broadcast about 520 multipurpose, multilingual channels, as around 130 channels provide various programmes, while around 390 offer specialized channels such as those for news, sport, music, children, commercial, economic, shopping, cinema, drama, serial, cultural, educational, documentary, interactive, religious and touristic (*Arab States Broadcasting Union*, Annual Report 2008: np). In the category of news, it was remarkable

⁷⁶ The channel offers news, entertainment, feature stories and education (*CCTV Online* 24 July 2009: np).

⁷⁷ According to Bristow (2009), CCTV has four other international channels, broadcasting in English, French, Spanish and Chinese (Bristow, *BBC News Online*, 25 July 2009: np).

⁷⁸ This view is shared by all established non-Arab satellite channels, broadcasting in Arabic, and forms the driving force for other powers to launch their own channels, such as Turkey, which announced in 2009 that it will also launch its own state-funded Arabic satellite channel (*TRT Online*, 2 October 2009: np). TRT Arabic was launched on 4 April 2010, to broadcast in Arabic around the clock, featuring “women and children programs, floor shows, documentaries and news” (TRT Online, 4 April 2010). Viewership capacity is expected to reach 350 million people in the Arab world (ibid). According to *Hurriyet Daily News* (2010), the launching of the channel was hailed by the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan as a landmark uniting the Turkish and Arab people (*Hurriyet Daily News*, 5 April 2010: np). Further, TRT Director-General Ibrahim Sahin stated that TRT Arabic would enable Turkey and the Arab countries to know each other better (ibid).

that the report revealed there are 26 news channels transmitting to the Arab region, 23 from the private sector and 3 from the public sector. These channels include the Arab satellite channels, in addition to other Western and international news broadcasters such as CNN, BBC, SKY, CNBC and others (ibid).

Thus, in terms of the broadcasting languages, around 70% of the total channels mentioned in the report broadcast their programmes in Arabic. Others broadcast all their programmes in English or French, though some also in Spanish, Hindi and Persian [predictably depending on the channel being re-transmitted, as in the case of Sony, Star News and Zee movies in Hindi]⁷⁹ (ibid).

This rich media environment has challenged the traditional methods of media control, especially in the Arab world, as it becomes much harder to avoid or block widely spread information, especially in terms of political news or crises. Yet political interference due to ownership or political ideology is also a remarkable feature of the broadcasts transmitted through Arab satellite channels.

4.4. Politics and Arab Satellite Channels

Since the number of Arab satellite channels has expanded rapidly over the last few years, offering a wide range of ideas and perceptions on political, cultural, social and religious issues, it is appropriate to explore the impact of the surrounding environment – most notably the political environment – that influenced the establishment and the performance of these broadcasters. Fairclough (1995: 45) clearly stated that “the media, and especially television with its massive audiences, have immense potential power and influence”. This power and influence arguably “includes a mobilising power, as well as the ideological potential of the media” (ibid). Therefore, according to Fairclough, this assertion would explain governments’ interest “in controlling media output” (ibid). With regard to Arab media, state-run Arab satellite channels could be viewed with no exception to what Fairclough asserted, as being subjected to their governments’ control and interests. However, the emergence of politically and business motivated private Arab satellite channels, as well as pan-Arab news broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya, have challenged the state-run media output in the Arab world by revealing a wide range of political, social or even religious positions.

⁷⁹ For further information on the names of the channels, their categories and geographical coverage, see the annual report for 2007 and 2008 on <http://www.asbu.net/www/en/doc.asp?mcat=5&mrub=33>

Nevertheless, they are affiliated to different political agendas, aims and objectives, depending on their source of finance and funding. One could notice that in such a highly politicised environment as the Arab world, political disputes and differences in vision could be clearly seen in media output, whether within the same state, as in Lebanon (Khatib 2007), or as in Iraq since 2003 (Cochrane 2006), or even between states as, for example, between Saudi Arabia and Qatar (Fandy 2007). Thus, media representation of political disputes could be seen as an extended arena for political powers in the region to exercise influence.

In Lebanon, Khatib (2007: 28) asserted that television remains in the hands of political figures with diverse political agendas. In examining the role of the Lebanese media, Nabil Dajani argued that television does not address any need of different sectarian groups in Lebanon to come to a rapprochement (Dajani cited in Khatib 2007: 29). Thus, for Dajani, the media in Lebanon still focused on the “disorienting views of the different political, sectarian and ethnic groups” (ibid). As a result, the media “failed to bring about national accord” (ibid).

After the 2003 war, Iraq has been going through a similar experience, which led Cochrane to call it the “Lebanonization of the Iraqi media” (Cochrane 2007: np). However, Cochrane argued that in Iraq the media landscape could change alongside political developments, while in Lebanon the “media publicly sustains already deeply rooted sectarian divisions, albeit with greater sensitivity towards other religions than in the past” (ibid).

Even on a larger scale, differences in political agendas or political disputes between Arab regimes could also influence the output of media organisations affiliated to these regimes, as in the case of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, where Al- Jazeera (sponsored by the Qatari government) and Al-Arabiya (owned by members of the Saudi royal family) “often exchange blows on behalf of their governments” (Fandy 2007: 54).

Pintak (2008) asserted that, in addition to state inference, other factors like the political agendas of the prominent or powerful - including businessmen, royal families or senior apparatchiks - would contribute to explaining the performance of Arab satellite channels in both domestic and pan-Arab scales (Pintak 2008: 22). The impact of these factors, as stated by Pintak, is reflected in the wide range of ideological positions that could be seen in the daily broadcasts of Arab satellite channels:

Arab satellite channels represent an array of interests that span the ideological divide; from Hezbollah's al-Manar to the LBC International, "the pan-Arab offshoot of a domestic channel funded by Lebanon's right wing Christian Phalangist Party and now financed by a group of Lebanese and Saudi investors"; and from Al-Zawraa, which supports Iraq's Sunni insurgency,⁸⁰ to O-TV, a youth channel owned by Egyptian mogul Neguib Sawiris. The strength is that channel-surfers in the Middle East can get a taste of a diverse range of opinion. The weakness is that everyone has an ideological axe to grind (Pintak 2008: 19).

Nevertheless, Pintak argued that Lebanon represents "a microcosm of this discontinuity" (Pintak 2008: 19) where a "cacophony of opinions have always characterized the Lebanese media landscape" (ibid). This is because news organisations in Lebanon "were largely bought and paid for by paymasters representing the entire spectrum of Arab political thought" (ibid). However, in terms of freedom of expression and limitations, Pintak argues that "all" Arab satellite channels have red lines that surround their coverage (Pintak 2008: 22). Yet, these red lines, according to Pintak, could vary from one channel to another, for instance Al-Arabiya's red lines would involve: "terrorism and anything to do with religion and religious politics" (ibid.), while for Al-Jazeera, the sensitivity would involve Qatari foreign policy:

In the complex evaluation that takes places in the newsroom and at the upper reaches of Al-Jazeera's management, before controversial stories are aired, as I have witnessed, the essential question becomes, "Will this have a negative impact on Qatar's foreign policy?" (ibid).

⁸⁰ According to Howard (2007), Al-Zawraa TV is a 24 hour satellite channel owned by Mishan Al-Jabouri, a member of Iraq's national assembly who had his parliamentary immunity stripped in 2007 following allegations of embezzlement. The channel started life as a mostly "song-and-dance" channel, but following the closure of its Baghdad offices by the Iraqi government in November 2006 for "inciting violence", it made an abrupt change of tone. Iraqi officials said that Al-Zawraa was a mouthpiece for the Islamic Army in Iraq, a Baathist dominated insurgent group. The channel transmitted its signals via the Egyptian-owned Nilesat network (Howard, *The Guardian*, 15 January 2007: np).

Further, Usher (2007) stated that the channel's original coverage was less of a celebration of the insurgency, but changed after Saddam Hussein was sentenced to death in November 2006. After the banning of the channel by the Iraqi government, Al-Zawraa switched to satellite and started broadcasting the kind of material found on hard-line "Jihadi" sites on the internet. Such as "insurgents blowing up trucks, snipers picking off American soldiers, the charred bodies of Sunni civilians burnt alive – Al-Zawraa offers a constant stream of these brutal images." Therefore, US officials tried to get the Egyptian government to have Al-Zawraa taken off air, but without success. "The Egyptians say it was purely a business matter and up to Nilesat management what they do (Usher, *BBC News Online*, 8 February 2007: np). However, according to Saleh (2007), Egypt finally stopped the transmission of the channel in February 2007 referring this decision to technical issues "because its [Al-Zawraa] frequencies interfered with other channels" (Saleh, *BBC News Online*, 26 February 2007: np). On the other hand, owner Mishan Al-Jabouri claimed that there were political reasons behind the Egyptian decision, accusing Egypt "of bowing to American pressure to stop carrying Al-Zawraa" (ibid). However, the channel continued to be carried by Arabsat, which is jointly owned by all Arab countries (ibid). Nevertheless, according to BBC Monitoring (2007), the station had apologized to viewers via on-screen caption over the interruption to its signal on 17 July 2007, "which it claimed was caused by jamming" (*BBC Monitoring research*, 30 July 2007, BBC Monitoring Archive, Accessed on 20 July 2007). Moreover, a Baghdad-based BBC correspondent noted that "the station was of the air" on 27 July 2007 (ibid).

For Pintak, Al-Jazeera succeeded in putting Qatar on the global map and has given the Qatari royal family an important weapon in the regional geo-political equation - as does the shift of the US military's central command from Saudi Arabia to Doha.⁸¹ This status made Qataris "walk a fine line" in exercising that influence, while maintaining stable relations with fellow Arab countries and the United States (ibid):

One Al-Jazeera staffer told me that Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani, the Qatari royal who runs the growing Al-Jazeera empire, has told the staff on at least one occasion, "Do you think the Emir likes getting angry calls from the President of the United States?" (ibid).

On the other hand, Rami Khouri argues that when it comes to domestic news, most of the pan-Arab satellite services enjoy mixed credibility, as they do not apply standards of free and open reporting and analysis to their own home countries. This, according to Khouri, would "retard rather than promote" real Arab democratisation, by providing a safety valve and release of tension and emotions through the "illusion of media liberalism" (Khouri, *Jordan Times*, 9 May 2001: np).

Further, Pintak asserts that the rise of Arab satellite channels is not necessarily a harbinger of the emergence of greater media freedom in the Arab world. Rather, what is emerging is a "corporate feudal model of ownership", with television shifting from government control to the control of powerful business interests "closely aligned with – or part of – existing authoritarian regimes":

The Emir of Qatar did not finance Al-Jazeera to get a membership card at Washington's National Press Club. He did it for the same reason he invited the US Central Command to set up shop - to make himself a player in the region. That is also why Saudis and Emiratis are building media empires in the Gulf (Pintak 2008: 22).

Saying that does not necessarily mean that the rapid growth of Arab satellite channels during the last few years has not contributed to political reform in the Arab region. Rather, it

⁸¹ According to Hiro (2008), Qatar allowed the Pentagon's central command (Cent-Com) to set up its operational headquarters at al-Udiid air base in November 2002. The Pentagon had previously used the Prince Sultan air base in Saudi Arabia until "it found Saudi public opinion turning against the presence of its forces on Saudi soil" (Hiro, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2008: np).

Borger and Taylor (2002) stated that the al-Udiid base in Qatar had been expanded and enhanced to serve as an alternative to Saudi Arabia, which acted host to US headquarters in the first Gulf War, but which had refused to get involved "this time". The US air force started from Spring 2002 moving computers and munitions to al-Udiid base, which has been described as the "home to the region's longest runway (4500 meters). (Borger and Taylor, *The Guardian*, 13 September 2002: np).

suggests that this remarkable growth of media outlets is forming an opportunity to examine the link between private ownership and political freedom in the Arab world and therefore exploring not only the achievements in stirring the political life in the region but also the limitations in which these channels can hardly go beyond them. In such an environment, Kraidy (2002) asserted that privately owned satellite television stations are still indirectly controlled by the ruling elites, whether through family relationships, such as the case of MBC,⁸² or with the board of shareholders such as LBC in Lebanon (Kraidy 2002: 18).

Thus, this form of ownership expands to include a wide range of satellite channels with various political, religious, and social agendas:

The overwhelming number of pseudo-independent media outlets in the region are owned by or heavily-influenced by members of royal families, such as Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, and its cousin MBC; tools of mega-rich would-be politicians and influence peddlers, such as Hariri's Future TV and Gen. Michel Aoun's⁸³ OTV; or bully pulpits of political parties and preachers of every stripe, from the Egyptian Wafd Party's satellite operation⁸⁴ to the "moderate" Islamic entertainment channel Al-Resalah (The Message),⁸⁵ owned by Saudi billionaire Walid bin Talal (Pintak 2008: 23).

This is also obvious in the coverage of Arab issues such as the 2006 Lebanon war, where Saudi media, notably MBC and Al-Arabia, were highly responsive to Saudi political interests.

⁸² The sister of Sheikh Walid Al Ibrahim - the founder of MBC- was married to King Fahd of Saudi Arabia (Pintak 2008: 23).

⁸³ According to Beeston (2005), General Michel Aoun, who is both French and an American-trained Lebanese Army officer, "shot to fame" in the mid-1980s when he was promoted to command the Lebanese military. A decade into the country's civil war, Aoun used his troops to take on the powerful militias, "notably the Druz and the Christians" (Beeston, *Times Online*, 5 May 2005). In 1989 he took on Syria, "then the dominant force in Lebanon" and waged "a war of national liberation." The battle lasted for six months and General Aoun was soundly defeated (ibid). Further, BBC News Online stated that Gen. Aoun found sanctuary in the French embassy – reportedly after scurrying, pyjama-clad, through the battle-scarred streets of Beirut – and 10 months later left for the south of France. In his years of exile in France, General Aoun continued to lobby against the Syrian influence, backing both the Syria Accountability act in the US Congress and UN resolution 1559, which called for Syria's departure. Aoun returned to Lebanon in 2005 after 14 years in exile (*BBC News Online*, 13 June 2005: np). Aoun founded the Free Patriotic movement Party, and leads the largest Christian block in Lebanon's Parliament. In July 2007 he launched his own television channel called Orange TV, which went on air on Friday 20 July 2007 with a news bulletin, followed by an interview with Aoun himself (*Ameinfo*, 22 July 2007: np).

⁸⁴ It is believed that Pintak is referring to Al-Hayat (The Life) satellite channel, which was founded in 2008 by Egyptian businessman Dr. Sayyed Al Badawi, one of the prominent leaders of the opposition party Al- Wafd (The Delegation) in Egypt. However, according to Al-Faydi (2007), Hafez Al-Mirazi –Al-Jazeera's former bureau chief in Washington and one of the leading presenters at the newly born channel – denied that the channel would be a mouthpiece for Al-Wafd, yet the channel would present "Egyptian life" with all its political, social, cultural and economic dimensions. Achieving that, the channel would be giving publicity to the political agenda of Al-Wafd, which sees the Egypt-Arab relationship as a secondary matter to Egyptians, as the party still raises the motto "Egypt for Egyptians" (Al-Faydi, *Al-Akhbar*, 14 May 2007: np).

⁸⁵ Al-Resalah satellite channel was established in March 2006 (Sakr: 2007: 7).

In the early stages of the conflict, when the Saudi government was criticizing Hezbollah for provoking the Israelis, Al-Arabiya's coverage was low key, downplaying the story apparently in order to avoid stirring up Arab public opinion in support of the Shi'ite militia and, by extension, its Iranian sponsors (ibid).

On the other hand, Al-Jazeera was focusing more on showing the full impact of the Israeli air raids on the Lebanese, with many horrific images of the dead and the wounded. Nevertheless, the channel continued to interview Israeli officials but hardly ignored footage of the destruction wreaked by Hezbollah shells in Israel. However, the overriding message was of Arab defiance of Israel (*BBC News Online*, 19 July 2006: np).

Al-Jazeera's performance during this war generated some criticism, such as that stated by Bassam Andari, a Lebanese journalist working in London:

They're [Al-Jazeera] giving the complete picture of the destruction and moving from one area to another to show what the Israelis have been doing. But certainly they sound as if they are on the side of Hezbollah (Andari cited in *BBC News Online*, 19 July 2006: np).

According to Fandy, Arabs were watching two different versions of the war in Lebanon presented on Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya and representing two camps shaping the geopolitical scene in the Middle East.

The first of the two camps is led by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan, while the second is made up of Syria, Qatar, Iran and Hezbollah. As Qatar and Saudi Arabia own the two news-channels that dominate the Arab airwaves, the Saudi-Qatari tension was reflected on the screens in the coverage of the Hezbollah-Israel war (Fandy 2007: 60).

Thus, as Fandy states, the story of the war as Arabs watched it followed the political positions of the owners of the media outlets.

At the beginning of the war, Al-Jazeera aired an exclusive interview with Hassan Nasrallah [General Secretary of Hezbollah] conducted by its bureau chief in Lebanon, Ghassan bin Jeddou. In this interview, Nasrallah blamed Egypt and Saudi Arabia for providing cover for the Israeli attacks on Lebanon.⁸⁶ Nasrallah gave two interviews to Al-Jazeera and gave none to Al-Arabiya. Al-Jazeera also ran two interviews with Hamad bin Jasim bin Jabar Al-Thani, the foreign minister of Qatar, blasting Saudi Arabia for saying that Hezbollah's kidnapping of Israeli soldiers was a miscalculation (mughamara). He blamed Saudi Arabia and Egypt for

⁸⁶As illustrated by Fandy, Saudi Arabia called the war at the start "an uncalculated risk, (Mughamara – In Arabic), while Qatar, Syrian and Iran, called it a pre-planned war against Hezbollah (Muamara). "Thus this was a war of words between the camps of Mughamara and Muamara" (Fandy 2007: 61).

providing “political cover” for Israel to wage its war against Lebanon, echoing Nasrallah’s interviews (ibid).

On the other hand, Fandy exemplified that while Al-Jazeera focused on Nasrallah, Al-Arabiya focused on the Lebanese prime minister, Fouad Al-Saniora, and on his speech to the Arab League’s foreign ministers (ibid). This conflict would certainly reflect the political rivalry between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and vividly demonstrates the relationship between ownership and overall performance of the two channels. This dispute between the two countries was not clear when Al-Jazeera was covering the US-led war on Afghanistan in 2001. However, when Al-Arabiya was launched prior to the 2003 Iraq war, the divide then became clearly noticeable regarding news selection and treatments on both channels.

Having said this, it is important at this stage to examine the rise of Al-Jazeera as a distinguished news provider that emerged as a controversial satellite channel in the Arab world. Understanding Al-Jazeera is a key element in realising the significant role it played in terms of news coverage of international conflicts such as the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq war, alongside the wide range of political and current affairs programmes. These were remarkably influential in terms of breaking taboos in Arab media.

It could be argued that, in a highly competitive market, Al-Jazeera managed to change the way Arab news was reported by offering more comprehensive coverage on the ground. This policy had an impact on other media outlets who imitated Al-Jazeera’s style in order to win a share of the Arab audience. This became more obvious during the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war and what followed in the region. Thus, it could be said that Al-Jazeera’s success and style of coverage encouraged Arab states and entrepreneurs to invest in the news industry in order to reach for wider audiences.

By 2003 and the beginning of the Iraq war, Al-Jazeera’s success had encouraged rivals, such as Al Arabiya and Abu Dhabi TV, to emphasise live comprehensive coverage. For the first time, many Arabs did not have to rely on the BBC, or CNN, or other outside news sources when a big story broke. They could instead find news presented from an Arab perspective (Seib 2008: 143).

This development in the Arab news industry would undoubtedly mark one of the major features occurring in the process of the development of Arab satellite media.

4.5. Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel (JSC)

According to Rugh (2004), the Qatari government issued a decree in January 1996 to establish Al-Jazeera “as an independent television station” (Rugh 2004: 215), which began broadcasting on 1st November 1996. The Qatari decision to establish Al-Jazeera as a significantly new kind of television network seems to have been motivated by several reasons. First, it was founded soon after the ruler, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, seized power from his father in a bloodless coup d’état in June 1995. Thus, creating Al-Jazeera was one of several innovative decisions which Sheikh Hamad took in the first years of his administration “which could be considered part of a pro-active and somewhat liberal trend in the country’s leadership” (ibid). This was particularly in evidence when he abolished the Ministry of Information in March 1998, sponsored municipal elections a year later, and allowed women to vote (ibid: 215).

The second reason was to gain favourable publicity for Qatar, both regionally and world-wide: the country was under new management.

Qatar is one of the world’s smallest countries, little known outside the Middle East, and not given much attention even by its neighbours. Although it has one of the largest natural gas reserves on earth, and has developed significant military cooperation with the United States, most westerners and even most Arabs know nothing about it. Putting his country “on the map” was clearly one of the Emir’s motives in founding Al-Jazeera (ibid).

The third reason seems to be strongly related to the two mentioned above, which was the desire to improve how Qatar’s foreign policy was viewed. As Rugh has suggested, establishing Al-Jazeera was a sign that Qatari foreign policy would witness some modifications, since Qatari leaders wanted to distinguish their foreign policy from neighbouring countries, most notably Saudi Arabia:⁸⁷

⁸⁷ It is appropriate to point out that though Qatar is a small country (11,000 square kilometres) it enjoys a strategic location in the central portion of the Southern Gulf region, as well as holding about 5% of the world’s gas reserves, which makes it the third largest in these terms. However, it witnesses notable border disputes with its neighbouring countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, which could indicate the importance for Qatar to develop effective and independent foreign policies in order to protect its existence as an independent entity, especially when it comes to regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia (Cordesman 1997: 213-214).

Thus, according to Cordesman, Qatar has pursued a clearly independent foreign policy since its independence in 1971, when the British government announced it would end the treaty it had with the Gulf emirates, and that it would leave the Gulf in 1971. Qatar since then avoided taking sides in the Cold War, and established diplomatic relations with the USSR and China in 1988. It also chose French rather than British arms after independence, and avoided entanglements in Arab issues outside the Gulf. Cordesman also states that Qatar became an early member of OPEC and was a founding member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in

Previously, Qatar had been politically and socially so indistinguishable from its big neighbour that it looked a bit like a small Saudi appendage, but the Qataris recently have taken pains to show that they are independent. When the Qatari leaders saw Saudis successfully invest in pan-Arab satellite television to the extent that they had become the dominant players in that market, this caught the attention of Qatari leaders who decided to try the same themselves (ibid: 216).

In addition, the collapse of the BBC-Orbit agreement in 1996 offered a great opportunity for Qatar as it put out of work a number of qualified Arab professional broadcasters in London with BBC Arabic service experience. Those professionals were then hired to form the core of the new Al-Jazeera station (ibid).

The Qatari leadership sought from the beginning to make the new station different, deciding to concentrate almost exclusively on news and current events, since the other Arab satellite channels carried a variety of programming which contained a great deal of entertainment, and considering there was no all-news channel in Arabic (ibid). Thus, El Oifi (2005) argued that Al-Jazeera gained its importance because it managed to disrupt the seamlessness of the Saudi media strategy through its journalistic practice and editorial choices:

Through Al-Jazeera, Qatar has in fact changed the way the Arab mediascape functions at all levels. Qatar's media strategy reveals a fundamental concern - distinguishing itself from neighbouring Saudi Arabia, a country with which it shares the same vital approach, namely American favouritism. Accordingly, Al-Jazeera has been taken to distinguish itself from Saudi media style, particularly when it comes to three important considerations: location, personnel and ideology (El Oifi 2005: 70).

The choice of location, to establish Al-Jazeera in Qatar was clearly remarkable, in terms of changing Arab perceptions about Arab news media. As described by El Oifi, there was a dominant belief before the emergence of Al-Jazeera that location outside the Arab world, particularly in Europe, was "the *sine qua non* for free Arab media" (ibid). For this reason, major Saudi satellite channels such as MBC and Orbit were established in European capitals such as London and Rome:

1981. Furthermore, the country joined other Gulf states in supporting Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War, and provided the UN Coalition with strong support during the Gulf War in 1991 (ibid: 218). Nevertheless, since the Gulf War in 1991, Qatar has steadily expanded its strategic ties to the West and the United States. It is providing prepositioning facilities for US Army brigades and the support equipment for a divisional base [and these facilities have been reinforced over the years to become an essential base in 2003 when US-led forces launched a war against Saddam Hussein's regime]. In addition, Qatar conducts regular exercises with British, French and US forces (ibid: 213).

Being set up in Qatar, Al-Jazeera has put an end to the perception that Arab media cannot thrive within the Arab world. The example of Al-Jazeera shows that Arab media implemented in an Arab country can, in fact, have a large margin of freedom. As a consequence, Saudi media in Europe has gradually started to come back to the Middle East region, albeit to the UAE and not to Saudi Arabia (ibid: 71).

The other trend mentioned by El Oifi concerns personnel recruitment of Arab professionals. On this subject, El Oifi stated that Al-Jazeera's pan-Arab recruitment policies and practices are noteworthy because they represent a clear break from the Saudi tradition in the press and media industry, which is often characterised by an informal alliance between Saudi money and Lebanese know-how (ibid: 71).

Interestingly enough, the urge to diversify the pool of Arab journalists was also in the minds of the managers of the BBC Arabic Services when recruiting the journalists and staff who later came to constitute the core of Al-Jazeera staff (ibid).

Nevertheless, Al-Jazeera continued to implement this policy of recruitment to ensure its appeal to wider Arab audiences. In addition, as stated by Sakr (2004), a balance of staff from a dozen different Arab states would probably contribute towards editorial balance, in both topics and perspectives. Thus, the staff of Al-Jazeera presented a unique mixture of the "tribal with urban, the Eastern with the Western, the leftist with the rightists and the religious with the secular" (Sakr 2004: 156).

Additionally, the third trend identified by El Oifi is that of ideology, which can be seen on Al-Jazeera's screen as a result of the "conflictual coexistence" of the three main ideological tendencies in the Arab world:

A close reading of the ideological orientation and editorial line of Al-Jazeera in light of the programmes it offers, the subjects it emphasizes and the allegiances its leading figures have reveal[ed] a subtle balance between three trends: the Arabist, the Islamic and the Liberal (El Oifi 2005: 72).

In terms of Arab nationalism, El Oifi argued that this is very important as a unifying sentiment on the channel, not only in the terminology that is used and the issues that are discussed, but also in the tendency of Al-Jazeera journalists to identify themselves first and foremost as Arabs:

Arab nationalism has in some ways become the basis of a sharp critique of the politics of Arab rulers who have come to favour the fragmentation of the Arab public sphere, sacrificing the ideal of Arab unity⁸⁸ (ibid).

Poignantly, Zayani and Sahraoui (2007) stated that Al-Jazeera has gone a long way towards strengthening the sense of pan-Arab identity - although in the view of some commentators this identity remains a distant prospect, as the ties that bind Arab viewers are based largely on sentiment, emotion and memory, making the virtual pan-Arabism that is fostered by a satellite channel like Al-Jazeera more of a rhetorical effect (Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 67).

In the decline of the Arab nationalistic cause, pan-Arab satellite TV in general and Al-Jazeera in particular have allowed Arabs to feel imaginatively bound in a common cause. Still, pan-Arabism is not only paramount to Al-Jazeera but also a driving force. This is inherent in the very image the network projects: opting to air its programmes from within the Arab world (during times when its most prominent competitors – mostly Saudi media outlets – were based in European capitals), broadcasting in modern standard Arabic, and favouring a diverse and inclusive workforce from almost every corner of the Arab-speaking world. In terms of subject matter, Al-Jazeera's programmes deal with a range of timely issues that bear either directly or indirectly on the Arab world (ibid).

On the other hand, in terms of the trend of Islamism that appears on the screen of Al-Jazeera, El Oifi also asserted that the Islamic referent is part of the identity of Al-Jazeera which is clearly assumed by the channel's management and journalists and imposes itself "as a universal code and goes down well with viewers in the Arab world and elsewhere"⁸⁹ (ibid: 73).

With regard to Liberalism, El Oifi stated that what the liberal discourse shares with the other two tendencies, the Arabist and the Islamist, "are a radical and often sarcastic critique of Arab regimes and a commitment to both democratic claims and national sovereignty"⁹⁰ (ibid).

⁸⁸ El Oifi says this rhetoric is illustrated in the weekly programme of the Syrian journalist Faisal Al-Kasim, *The Opposite Direction*. In this programme, advocates of Arab nationalism are regularly invited, slogans referring to the Arab nation or Arab solidarity are often invoked, and images which suggest the nationalists' struggle against colonialism or Zionism are frequently evoked (El Oifi 2005: 72).

⁸⁹ Representing the Islamic trend on the channel is the Egyptian journalist Ahmad Mansour, a former host of the weekly religious programme *Islamic Law and Life*, who currently presents the weekly programme *Without Borders*. According to El Oifi, Mansour is overtly hostile to Nasserism [a term invoking the ideas of Jamal Abdel-Nasser of Egypt, and his socialist and Arab nationalist views] (ibid). In addition to Mansour, The Egyptian Muslim clerk (Qatari by naturalization) Sheikh Youssef al Qaradawi, is a regular guest on Al-Jazeera's *Islamic Law and Life*, which is hosted by [the Algerian journalist] Khadija bin Ganna (ibid).

⁹⁰ As illustrated by El Oifi, at the forefront of the liberal line is the Jordanian Sami Haddad, host of the weekly programme *More Than One Opinion*. "The programme consists of a debate in which at least three personalities with different political views and ideological orientations are set against in each other" (ibid).

Thus, it is believed that all these trends contribute to distinguish Al-Jazeera from other Arab broadcasters and consequently influenced its success as a credible satellite news channel.

This success of Al-Jazeera is concomitantly an achievement for Qatar, as suggested earlier, which seeks to promote its image as a democratic state that could play a key role in the Arab region's politics. According to El Oifi, Al-Jazeera is considered one of the biggest successes for Qatar in terms of publicity and political communication:

Prior to the launching of Al-Jazeera in 1996, Qatar was very little known in the Arab world and internationally. Today it claims a central place among the Gulf States. More than any other Arab state, Qatar has arguably developed the potential to impose on Arab viewers a particular reading of world events. It is affecting not only how diplomacy is effected, but also the American administration's preferences in the region. For the US, Qatar is no less important an ally than Egypt or Saudi Arabia. Qatari diplomacy has managed with the evolution of the American strategic doctrine, while maintaining the credibility of Al-Jazeera in the Arab world as well as internationally (ibid: 75-76).

Accordingly, El Oifi suggested that the diplomatic influence of Qatar is due exclusively to the popularity and credibility of Al-Jazeera in the Arab world and in the rest of the world today. Therefore, to maintain its credibility, Al-Jazeera finds itself compelled to be in line with the political sentiments and preferences it deems dominant in the Arab world. "Thus, the bigger the concessions to the Americans are, the fiercer the critics to pro-American Arab regimes will be":

In order to "disguise" its contribution to American hegemony in the Gulf region, Qatar has played a crucial role in promoting freedom of expression in the Arab world. By presenting itself as the champion of media and political pluralism, Qatar tries to rebuff the accusations of being agent to the US but also Israel in the Gulf (ibid: 77).

According to Da Lage (2005), the case of Israel "warrants more than cursory attention" (Da Lage 2005: 57). Qatari-Israeli economic relations began after the Palestinians and the Israelis signed the Oslo Accord in Washington in 1993. Relations between Qatar and Israel began to develop, and in September 1996 an Israeli trade office was established in Doha, after the Qatari Minister of Foreign affairs, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim, met with his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, in New York in October 1995 (ibid).

Equally telling is the way Al-Jazeera interviews Israeli officials, a step considered to have broken another taboo among Arab media. Israeli officials are regularly invited to express themselves live on TV.

Although Al-Jazeera was not originally designed to be a means of communication between Arabs and the Israelis, the “media normalization” it has adopted – that is, inviting Israelis to appear in a space which previously was completely closed off to them – becomes a *de facto* form of communication between the Arab world and Israel (ibid: 58).

In addition, Da Lage assumed that Al-Jazeera’s overt anti-Israeli rhetoric makes it an even more effective means of communication as it pulls the rug from underneath those who accuse the channel of being ‘a tool in the hands of Zionists’ (ibid).

Nevertheless, Da Lage stated that Qatar knew how to market itself in the Arab world and internationally. Thus, Al-Jazeera became the symbol of the emirate, as well as the source of its fame.

In the eyes of Sheikh Hamad, who wants his small emirate to be promoted to the major leagues, Al-Jazeera instantly found its place in the panoply of instruments designed to achieve such an objective (Da Lage 2005: 55).

Thus, it was not surprising that Al-Jazeera angered many Arab governments through its critical coverage of these regimes and invitations to Arab dissidents, “except for Qatari dissidents” (ibid: 56). Arab dissidents, who are invited to take part in the channel’s talk show programmes, normally express different - if not opposing - views to their governments, whether on various political issues:

What has angered Arab regimes most is the fact that dialogical programmes have given a platform for Arab opposition groups living abroad to express their opinions on various political matters. Previously, and because of censorship, dissidents living abroad were not very effective in speaking out on issues (Al Kasim 2005: 97).

However, since Arab regimes, according to Al Kasim⁹¹ (2005: 102) “are not accustomed to hearing or listening to anybody opposing them”, official reactions from angered Arab

⁹¹ Faisal Al Kasim is the host of a weekly talk show on Al-Jazeera called *The Opposite Direction (Al-Ittijah Al-Moakis)* which is a crossfire-like programme (author’s note). According to El-Nawawy and Iskander (2002) the programme [which still runs on Al-Jazeera] is the most controversial show on the channel: “In a live, two-hour weekly broadcast, two guests from diametrically opposed sides on a variety of issues come face-to-face in debate and take calls and respond to faxes from viewers” (El-Nawawy and Iskander 2002: 92).

governments have included recalling ambassadors and “protesting strongly to Qatar over the content of certain programmes” (ibid).

Alternatively, by broadcasting dissidents’ views, Al-Jazeera has provided Arab dissidents “with a platform they never dreamed of” (Da Lage 2005: 56). According to Al Kasim, some of the speakers have even become “extremely popular amongst the masses for talking about issues that nobody dares probe within the Arab world” (Al Kasim 2005: 97).

In this sense, our programmes have globalised Arab political voices or “rebels” and made them known to a very large audience at home and abroad. They have also made Arab migrant communities in the west more involved in Arab politics (ibid).

Nevertheless, El Oifi argued that, with regard to foreign policy and diplomacy, Qatar’s intimidating use of the media, mainly through Al-Jazeera, has consistently upset Arab states, especially those in alliance with the United States (El Oifi 2005: 76).

Al-Jazeera has become a weapon to contend with and a source of influence at the disposal of the tiny country which does not possess any of the classical elements of power - it has no large population, no sizeable army and no big industry. The soft power of Al-Jazeera makes the latter part of the Arab political game (El Oifi 2005: 76).

This would perhaps explain the aggravated responses taken by Arab governments against the channel, including closing down its offices. These responses would clearly reveal the level of frustration felt by Arab regimes caused by the Al-Jazeera’s output:

In 1998, Jordan closed down the Al-Jazeera bureau in Amman for six months, only to come up against another crisis in 2002. Similar scenarios took place in Kuwait, Algeria and Egypt, among Arab countries. In one way or another, most if not all Arab states have at some point complained about Al-Jazeera or criticised Sheikh Hamad for its complacency (Da Lage 2005: 56).

For example, during the Gulf Countries Council summit [GCC] held in Muscat in 2001, the Saudi Crown Prince at the time [currently King Abdullah] strongly criticized Al-Jazeera and accused it “of being a disgrace to the GCC countries, of defaming members of the Saudi Royal family, of threatening the stability of the Arab world and of encouraging terrorism” (ibid). Yet Da Lage has argued that there is some merit to Qatar’s rationale for refusing to interfere with the broadcasts of Al-Jazeera:

Al-Jazeera is not a mouthpiece for the diplomacy of Qatar, [though] at the same time it is not at odds with it either. Qatar plays on this ambiguity (ibid: 56).

According to El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2002), although the Qatari government denies any influence over Al-Jazeera's broadcasts and editorial policy, most official Arab complaints are directed to the Qatari government, not to the network (El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002: 140).

In explaining this, El-Nawawy and Iskandar argue that because Al-Jazeera is a "new phenomenon in the Arab world" and because Arabs are not accustomed to an independent Arab network free of government control, many refuse to accept that Al-Jazeera operates on its own, and therefore cannot separate Al-Jazeera from the Qatari government:

There is no question that state sponsorship impacts the objectivity of Al-Jazeera coverage of events within Qatar, although not as much as one might expect, and there is no question that sponsorship of Al-Jazeera has helped the tiny Gulf emirate achieve a level of regional and international influence disproportionate to its military and economic strength. Al-Jazeera, arguably, is better known than its host country. The running joke is that Al-Jazeera is a country with Qatar as its capital (ibid).

4.5.1. Al-Jazeera: Sponsorship

According to Zayani (2005), since its inception Al-Jazeera had been envisaged as an "autonomous" network with editorial independence, although the channel is governed by a board of directors that is chaired by Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani, a member of Qatar's royal family. Yet the idea of a TV channel that is government-financed and yet independent is altogether new in the Arab region (Zayani 2005: 17).

It must be said that Al-Jazeera provides a rare case of the funder not interfering with and intervening in editorial policy. Nonetheless, some find the link between this source of the news and the government somewhat uncomfortable. Al-Jazeera may claim independence, but the network has only relative independence; it is not government-controlled, but is nonetheless government owned. To what extent state funding affects the independence and editorial decision-making of the network remains pressing issue (ibid).

Nevertheless, Zayani stated that the five-year loan granted from the Qatari government to Al-Jazeera was \$150 million. That is to say that the annual budget of Al-Jazeera when started in 1996 was \$30 million (Zayani 2005:14).

This funding formula, according to Sakr (2004) together with the choice of a name and logo that contained no reference to Qatar,⁹² was designed to distance the Qatari authorities from

⁹² Al-Jazeera in Arabic literally translates into "The Island", though Qatar forms a peninsula on the Gulf rather than an island. Thus it is assumed that the name of Al-Jazeera is referring to the Arab region in the Gulf, which

Al-Jazeera's output. Moreover, arrangements for repaying the loan were left open ended (Sakr 2004: 152).

Questioned on this subject after the five years had expired, the channel's [former] general manger, Mohammed Jassim Al-Ali, said the Qatari leadership believed it would recoup its investment in Al-Jazeera in the form of non-financial, 'intangible' benefits (ibid).

Accordingly, Sakr asserted that Al-Jazeera officially became "an independent broadcasting entity – a novelty in the region – being directly owned by neither shareholders nor a state" (ibid).

Thus, it is assumed that this funding formula was one of the key factors which also allowed Al-Jazeera to be more independent in terms of news and current affairs programmes. Consequently, this "independence" helped the channel to reach a wide range of Arab audiences with a style of news coverage that is different from the traditional state-run Arab media, which primarily relays favourable coverage of presidential and governmental activities in the Arab world.

4.5.2. New style of news coverage

It was visible for all to see that Al-Jazeera introduced a new style in reporting news in the Arab world's television, by avoiding the favourable coverage of state officials and by expanding the news agenda to cover other news materials of direct interest to the Arab publics - which normally do not appear on state run TV - such as reporting oppositions' activities and interviewing dissidents, as well as critically covering Arab governments and regimes' policies. This new style that is offered by Al-Jazeera represents, according to Zayani and Sahraoui (2007) a mixture of the BBC style with its emphasis on analysis and the CNN style with its inclination for hard-hitting news – a "focus on real time and an eye on action" (Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 45). Thus, Al-Jazeera tried to strike a balance between the desire to have strong programme schedules and a commitment to the continuous flow of news, between the tendency for regularly scheduled programming and the rush for attention-grabbing news drama (ibid).

The former is based on high-profile individuals whose personalities draw audiences, while the latter is based on the instinct for breaking news and the ability to provide

is commonly known in Arabic as "Al-Jazeera Al-Arabiya" (The Arabian Island). This name of Al-Jazeera perhaps suggests the role that Qatar would like to play through the channel, as a major player in the Gulf region (author's note).

sustained and continuous live coverage. Al-Jazeera is dedicated to round-the-clock coverage of big breaking stories while at the same time providing its viewers with fixed immovable scheduled programmes (appointment-based scheduled programming) which do not dilute the organization's focus on news, as a great majority of the fixed programmes deal with current affairs and political issues that are of interest to the Arab world (ibid).

Furthermore, as a news provider, the channel's capability for immediacy and its ability to be constantly on the site of events, providing first-hand accounts of events as they occur, enabled the channel to be in a leading position in terms of news broadcasting in the Arab world.

In organisational terms, Al-Jazeera's immediacy – its ability to react immediately to breaking news and events – puts an emphasis on rapid production turnaround while paying attention to high production values. In terms of infrastructure, this entails a high investment in technology, while in terms of programming paradigm, it means the freedom to interrupt any programme in order to move news scene or to broadcast a press conference live on the air. In terms of programming, this also means that the image Al-Jazeera projects is that of the right channel in the right place at the right time (ibid: 61).

This is achieved through its seemingly ubiquitous network of on-the-ground journalists and correspondents, who enable the channel to provide first-hand accounts of events (ibid).

However, Zaharna (2005) argued that, despite its BBC roots, Al-Jazeera reflects more of a unique Arab television news style than an American model, as Al-Jazeera's news style and interview format are anything but calm and sedate (Zaharna 2005: 194):

Interviewers as well as interviewees are highly vocal and emotionally expressive. This interplay between news and the human emotions it engenders is succinctly stated in the news philosophy of Ibrahim Helal, editor in chief of Al-Jazeera. "Emotions are part of the story," says Helal, "The soul of the news lies in the emotion. Emotion is the most important fact" (ibid).

Exemplifying the emotional factor as part of storytelling on Al-Jazeera has been apparent when reporting events such as the Palestinian Intifada, the war in Afghanistan in 2001 or the 2003 Iraq war. The focus on civilian casualties and the comprehensive coverage of the impact of these conflicts on the vulnerable is believed to have been very important for Al-Jazeera's narrative in order to engage its audience with the reported events. Additionally, Al-Jazeera's coverage also reveals an important element: that stories were covered at length, which differentiated the channel from Western media outlets, and this often revealed differences in perspective and different news agenda settings for both Al-Jazeera and western media outlets.

This element could be seen in providing the audience with political awareness, by engaging them in following the pain of suffering civilians because of wars and other armed conflicts.

Further, this emotional engagement which Al-Jazeera has frequently used in reporting such conflicts is functioning parallel to the credibility factor, which is thought to be carefully embraced in reporting news. In other words, it could be said that Al-Jazeera combines the emotional aspect of news stories with credibility in order to reach a wide range of Arab audiences. This formula has been noticed in covering the Palestinian Intifada in 2000, the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq war.

In addition, Zayani (2005) indicated that the geopolitical situation of the Middle East has also made politics an important component of Arab media programmes:

Regional developments, tensions, crises and wars over the past few decades have enhanced such an interest. Being a major component of TV programmes, political news had done much to develop the Arab viewers' political instinct (Zayani 2005: 5).

According to Rugh, during the Desert Fox operation, when American aircraft carried out air strikes against Iraq in December 1998, Al-Jazeera was there covering the event "while Western networks were not" (Rugh 2004: 217). This was regarded as a milestone event that brought the channel to the intentional attention of many Arab viewers and also to international prominence, because many international networks depended on Al-Jazeera for coverage, just as they had depended on CNN for coverage in Baghdad at the beginning of Operation Desert Storm in 1991(ibid).

In the words of Miles (2005), Al-Jazeera was the only news network to bear witness to the successive waves of laser-guided bombs and cruise missiles as they landed in Baghdad. Its cameras captured Republican Guard facilities and suspected chemical and biological plants being blown to smithereens:

Fifteen minutes after the explosions appeared on Al-Jazeera, they were on other networks all over the world, as the exclusive footage was sold (Miles 2005: 49).

In addition, Miles argued that, even though at this stage almost nobody in the West had even heard of Al-Jazeera, the channel's staff in Doha regarded Operation Desert Fox as the first landmark in its news coverage:

This was, by any standards, a sensational scoop and it ensured Al-Jazeera would become the Iraqi regime's news network of choice (ibid).

Thus, on 5 January 1999, Saddam Hussein selected Al-Jazeera for exclusive coverage of his army day speech, in which he called for an uprising against Arab monarchs, and this was a major news event that turned the spotlight again on Al-Jazeera (Rugh 2004: 217).

Besides reporting Iraq, Al-Jazeera managed to score another achievement by reporting the events that erupted in the Palestinian territories in Autumn 2000. According to Rugh, when the Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada began in late September 2000,⁹³ Al-Jazeera was covering the story as it evolved through its network of reporters in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel. As the Intifada continued, Al-Jazeera attracted a wide audience throughout the Arab world because it was reporting in Arabic and dealing in detail with issues and events that were of importance to Arabs, "unlike CNN or any other Western station" (ibid).

According to Miles (2005), during the second Palestinian Intifada, Al-Jazeera became a forum for those involved in the uprising and a window for those outside. This was "a shock" for the Israelis, who realised that their traditional hegemony over the media had come to an end, and that they would therefore have to develop new strategies in order to win over world public opinion. Even the Western television stations began to take notice of Al-Jazeera during the autumn of 2000 (Miles 2005: 68).

On the other hand, as the Arab audience followed the events of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, hour by hour, Al-Jazeera became a household name across the Arab world, although it remained still largely unknown for Western audiences (ibid):

Television coverage of the Intifada provoked international fury at Israel. Traditionally, Israel has cultivated a media image as David besieged by an Arab Goliath, but now the roles were becoming reversed. Israel could no longer claim to be using reasonable force to suppress the Palestinians, when Al-Jazeera showed

⁹³ As pointed out by Miles (2005), the spark that ignited the second Intifada was a visit to a holy site in Jerusalem sacred to both Jews and Muslims by the right-wing General Ariel Sharon, who was then the Israeli opposition leader. The site is known to the Jews as Temple Mount and to the Muslims as Al-Haram Al-Sharif. Nevertheless, Sharon was notorious among Arabs for the role he had played in the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, "when he had let his Christian militia allies slaughter between eight hundred and two thousand (depending on whose figures you believe) Palestinian men, women and children in refugee camps in a four-day killing spree" (Miles 2005: 72-73).

Thus, Sharon's visit was regarded by Arabs as a deliberate provocation and led immediately to spontaneous violent demonstrations. These quickly became known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, after Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque where they began (ibid).

otherwise. The Israelis no longer looked like the underdog, they looked like bullies, and a week after the fighting started the UN Security Council condemned Israel for its use of excessive force (ibid: 79-80).

Furthermore, Al-Jazeera would have probably brought Arab state networks to realize that they could no longer carry on broadcasting the way they had. Rather, midway through the Intifada, other Arab broadcasters, such the London-based ANN, and Abu Dhabi, “began to copy” Al-Jazeera’s news format of coverage in an effort to win further viewers. “They began to run regular news editions and hourly bulletins that opened with the most spectacular news story” (ibid: 92).

On the other hand, Al-Jazeera never denied that its footage of the Intifada had rallied support for the Palestinian cause, but mentioned that this was a natural but unintended consequence of the facts being shown, rather than any deliberate attempt at propaganda (ibid: 95). Nevertheless, Al-Jazeera continued to achieve further successes in terms of news coverage opportunities besides Iraq and the Palestinian authorities. In 1999 the channel opened its office in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime invited four news organisations, CNN, Reuters, AP Television News, and Al-Jazeera, to open offices in Afghanistan. It was only Al-Jazeera that accepted the invitation, while the other broadcasters declined the offer as Afghanistan (at that time) was insufficiently important for them (Rugh 2004: 217).

However, regarding Al-Jazeera, Sakr (2004) stated that opening an office in Afghanistan could be understood in light of its editors’ familiarity with aspects of such regional affairs (Sakr 2004: 156). Thus it could be said that Afghanistan formed a significant news opportunity for Al-Jazeera, for what it represents of Arab and Muslim news related stories, such as the “Afghan Arab”, which would be seen as a lesser priority for Western media such as CNN:

Few Western correspondents or politicians seem to have understood the “Afghan Arab” phenomenon, involving the cross-border movements of Arab nationals who fought against Soviet forces in Afghanistan and believed themselves called upon to defend Muslims in Bosnia and Chechnya. As a leader of the Afghan Arabs, Osama bin Laden had a particularly large following among Saudi Arabia’s alienated and unemployed youth (ibid).

This familiarity with the region’s political and current affairs issues would clearly indicate, as mentioned earlier, a different set of priorities from Western broadcasters. Thus, for Al-Jazeera, Afghanistan represented an extended link to Muslim and Arab related issues.

However, by reporting the Taliban and bin Laden, the channel managed to gain a number of exclusives which promoted its regional and international reputation as an alternative and yet controversial news provider:

As a result, Al-Jazeera was able to achieve several major scoops. On June 10, 1999, it became the first network to interview Usama bin Laden, and on January 9, 2001 it covered the wedding of Usama's sons, events which attracted considerable attention in the Arab world although not a great deal in the West. It provided exclusive coverage of the Taliban destruction of the Buddha statues in March 2001, which gave it some brief notoriety (Rugh 2004: 217).

4.5.3. Al-Jazeera and the war in Afghanistan

It is argued that the tragedy of September 11 marked a new phase for Al-Jazeera to become more internationally recognised, especially for reporting its political and military consequences, and ultimately covering the US-led war against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in October 2001. Zayani (2005) asserts that the events of September 11 represent in terms of media and international presence “a turning point in the history of the network”, which happened to be the only news provider to cover its direct implications from inside Afghanistan during the US-led war against the Taliban regime:

Virtually unheard of outside the Middle East and north Africa, Al-Jazeera caught the world by surprise during the war in Afghanistan in 2001, being for some time the only foreign news organisation with reporters in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan (Zayani 2005: 21).

According to Rugh, the Taliban regime expelled all journalists from Afghanistan after 9/11 except those from Al-Jazeera. Consequently, the channel became the only network to cover the US bombing of Kabul live and other events at the beginning of the war:

On September 26, 2001, it broadcast the only pictures of the Taliban attacking the US embassy in Kabul. After 9/11 it also rebroadcast the 1998 interview with bin Laden with English subtitles.⁹⁴ On October 7, November 3, and December 27, 2001 it broadcast exclusive footage of statements by bin Laden, all of which brought the network worldwide attention because they were used by CNN and many other broadcasters⁹⁵ (Rugh 2004: 217).

⁹⁴ According to Miles (2005), in 1998 Al-Jazeera had interviewed bin Laden for almost an hour, during which he had reminisced about his childhood and said that Muslims had a duty to wage religious war, “targeting all Americans”. Subsequently, the US embassy in Doha swiftly protested to the Qatari authorities (Miles 2005: 108).

⁹⁵ Rugh, however, asserted that immediately after 9/11, CNN made arrangements with Al-Jazeera to share material on an exclusive basis, but the agreement lasted only until 31 January 2002, when CNN decided to

The broadcast of bin Laden's messages on Al-Jazeera generated enormous criticism in the British and American press. As noted by Miles (2005), British tabloids declared that the channel was a "bin Laden Mouthpiece", and was run by "Palestinian and Syrian extremists". Further, *The Daily Telegraph* called it "Bin Laden TV" and on 4 October 2001 the *New York Post*'s headline read "All News Channel bin Laden Loves". Inside was a mock quote from bin Laden: "People say I don't watch TV - but what do they know? It's obvious that I watch Al-Jazeera, the Arab world's all-news channel, because when I want to get a message to the outside world, I fax my statements to them" (Miles 2005: 112).

On the other hand, Miles stated that despite the widespread condemnation of the channel, the western press was still extremely keen to use Al-Jazeera's pictures:

With the channel now widely dubbed "the Arab world's CNN, Sky was the first British station to strike a deal that enabled Arabic speakers and elsewhere in Europe to watch Al-Jazeera. Subscribers to BSkyB in Britain, a company part-owned by Rupert Murdoch's News International, could now watch Al-Jazeera for free. Al-Jazeera said it preferred to be compared to the BBC rather than CNN (ibid: 113).

When the war on Afghanistan erupted on 7 October 2001, Al-Jazeera was unlike virtually all other news networks covering the war. It was not a member of the press pool, nor was it beholden to the Pentagon for access.

[Al-Jazeera] was also the only foreign television broadcaster in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan at the start of the bombing and had the only uplink facility, with which it could do live two-way communications with Al-Jazeera headquarters in Doha. One Al-Jazeera correspondent was in Kandahar; the other in Kabul, and each of these two correspondents had established a working relationship with the Taliban (ibid: 141).

Therefore, Pintak (2006) asserted that Al-Jazeera's coverage of the early days of the war in Afghanistan was a revelation, as viewers in the Middle East were able to sit in their own living rooms and witness, what they considered to be, a huge disconnect between America's words and its actions:

As they heard the U.S. president boast that "we are showing the compassion of America by delivering food and medicine to the Afghan people," they saw on Al-Jazeera images of death, destruction and fleeing refugees (Pintak 2006: 156).

broadcast Al-Jazeera's 21 October interview with bin Laden without permission from Al-Jazeera, which accordingly terminated the agreement (Rugh 2004: 218).

Pintak emphasises that there was clearly a significant difference regarding how the American and Arab audiences watched the war. From the early days of the conflict, Americans watched US reporters focusing more on the activities of the American troops on the ground, while Al-Jazeera provided its audience with the devastation for Afghan civilians caused by these military activities.

Al-Jazeera viewers were experiencing coverage that, as the *Columbia Journalism Review* concluded in lengthy side-by-side-analysis, “conveyed far more of the human truth of massive bombing attack and its effects at ground zero” (ibid).

In addition, El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2002) stated that Al-Jazeera’s grainy footage of a black sky with firefly flickers of white light, together with its exclusive bin Laden video, represented some of the most significant news on a day when American TV media struggled to monitor the rapidly unfolding events during the first hours of the war:

In fact, it was that very day – one marked by images of war action in Afghanistan, the video cloaked in a surreal green haze – that heralded Al-Jazeera’s breathtaking rise to international acclaim (El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002: 144).

In comparing the media situation in Afghanistan in 2001 with the 1991 Gulf War, El-Nawawy and Iskandar stated that Al-Jazeera was in a situation similar to CNN in Baghdad during the Gulf War.

When the United State launched the bombardment of Iraq in the Gulf War, it was the Baghdad-based CNN crew who announced the onset of the war when Bernard Shaw suddenly declared, “something is happening outside.” But when the British and the U.S. planes started bombing Afghanistan, Al-Jazeera was the only TV network, operating from Kabul, with its permanent, live, twenty-four-hour satellite link. Its Qatar-based anchorman, Mohammed Kreshan, was talking on camera when a voice came through his earpiece. “Mohammed, you are now on CNN ... and BBC ... and Sky News.” This time, Al-Jazeera was in the right place at the right time. No wonder Al-Jazeera has been dubbed the “Arab world’s CNN since its inception (El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002: 144).

However, El-Nawawy and Iskandar stated that Al-Jazeera’s exclusive footage from Kabul was not its only scoop that evening, as the channel had also aired bin Laden’s first video.

The network soon boasted its second exclusive of the night: a videotape speech from Osama bin Laden. This bin Laden video, which first broadcast over Al-Jazeera and then rebroadcast by CNN and other U.S. and European networks, provided America’s most wanted man with his most visible platform to date (ibid).

As mentioned by Bessaiso (2005), following this, Al-Jazeera was criticized for providing him with the opportunity to state that the war in Afghanistan was a “religious war” and to call on Muslims throughout the world to join this “holy war”:

Renaming the war, applying one of the common propaganda tactics, pushed Western leaders to strongly deny any links between Islam as a religion and the so called War on Terrorism.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, bin Laden was exploiting the anger of the Arab and Muslim societies caused by the US foreign policy in the Middle East, its military presence in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, and its unconditional support for Israel in its occupation of the Palestinian Territories (Bessaiso 2005: 154).

Interestingly, Al-Jazeera was also the medium which Western leaders used to counter bin Laden’s propaganda video tapes. As mentioned by El-Nawawy and Iskandar, after Al-Jazeera broadcast the bin-Laden statements, many in the West quickly clued in to the seriousness of the propaganda machine that bin Laden had created:

British Prime Minister Tony Blair was the first Western leader to act, requesting an interview with Al-Jazeera in order to explain to the Arab and Muslim worlds the reasons for attacking Afghanistan (El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002: 156).

Further, the Blair interview seemed to have prompted US officials to request airtime on the network. On 15 October 2001 Condoleeza Rice, the US National Security Advisor, appeared on Al-Jazeera to explain the bombing of Afghanistan and to appeal for peace between the Israelis and Palestinians. Also, the day after Rice’s interview, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld appeared on the network, blaming Taliban anti-aircraft fire for some of the civilian casualties, and stating that the US had approved \$320 million in aid for Afghanistan and that US troops were stationed abroad at the request of foreign governments for only as long as those governments approved (ibid: 157-158):

This effort is not against the Afghanistan people, it’s not against any race or any religion. It is against terrorism and terrorists and senior people that are harbouring terrorists (Rumsfeld cited in El-Nawawy and Iskandar 2002: 158).

On the other hand, Al-Jazeera explained that broadcasting bin Laden’s video tapes gave its audience the chance to hear the other side of the story and to know more about the most “wanted man” in the world (Bessaiso 2005: 154-155).

⁹⁶ “The so-called War on Terrorism” is a phrase that was adopted by Al-Jazeera’s policy-makers during the war in Afghanistan (ibid: 162).

Nevertheless, Al-Jazeera's remarkable achievement in reporting the war in Afghanistan was not just its decision to broadcast bin Laden's messages, but its ability to reveal the devastation of the Afghan civilians, who were subjected to American air raids that caused large numbers of casualties.

The coverage of war casualties was no less bold, "Why are you bombing civilians?" was a common question facing American officials whenever Al-Jazeera hosted them. Images of innocent casualties and destruction were repeated over and over again. What was obvious was that Al-Jazeera questioned the legitimacy of the American war in Afghanistan. What was new was that Al-Jazeera was not a "Western channel"; it was a channel with a different cultural background from Western media organisations (ibid: 162).

Thus, Ibrahim Helal, the head of news at Al-Jazeera during the war in Afghanistan believed that the Americans were not able to accept a channel that would not follow their political line. In his view, no one should expect Al-Jazeera to operate as other networks in the West do because of the differences in their perspectives.

Our understanding differs from the US. The Americans have the right to think how to protect their national security, and we have the right to say what exactly is happening (Helal cited in Bessaiso 2005: 162).

According to Miles, consistent reports of Afghan civilian casualties were weakening public support for the war, even in America. Thus, American officials' efforts to win the hearts and the minds of the public to support the war in Afghanistan were not effectively able to counter the impact of the horrific images of Afghan civilian casualties that were constantly broadcast on Al-Jazeera.

"US Appears To Be Losing Public Relations War So Far," ran a New York Times headline. In a CNN phone-in during the Talk Back Live show, viewers were asked to consider the heavily loaded questions; "Is it unpatriotic to speak out against the war?" The poll showed that although the vast majority of Americans still supported the military action in Afghanistan, in the past two weeks support had slightly waned. The American public was becoming tetchy about the lack of good news and, more importantly, the lack of good television pictures, coming out of the war. In terms of dramatic impact, coalition reports of bombed-out, empty caves and demolished Taliban training camps did not compare with Al-Jazeera's grisly pictures (Miles 2005: 162).

Nevertheless, as Bessaiso states, Al-Jazeera's exclusivity negated the American and British efforts to control the flow of information and to restrain the footage transmitted from Afghanistan by Al-Jazeera.

Tony Blair reached a point where he warned frankly, on October 11, 2001, that the West was in danger of losing the propaganda war against Osama bin Laden and the Al-Qaeda network (Bessaiso 2005: 161).

Subsequently, in a remarkable incident, Al-Jazeera's office in Kabul was hit by an American missile, resulting in total destruction of the building. The same missile that destroyed Al-Jazeera's office also damaged the AP and BBC bases in Kabul. On the other hand, the Pentagon denied that it had deliberately targeted Al-Jazeera, "but it said it could not explain why the office was hit" (ibid):

Speaking by telephone to the News World Conference in Barcelona, Ibrahim Helal said that he believed that the Al-Jazeera office in Kabul had been on the Pentagon's list of targets since the beginning of the conflict but the US did not want to bomb it while the broadcaster was the only one based in Kabul (ibid).

Furthermore, journalists and officials at Al-Jazeera headquarters in Qatar believed that the attack was a punishment because Al-Jazeera was covering the war in Afghanistan in a way which did not please the American administration in its effort to build a coalition against the Taliban regime (ibid).

In Afghanistan, the day following the bombing of Al-Jazeera's office in Kabul marked the fall of the Taliban and the end of the major battles in the country. In relation to media access, the defeat of the Taliban allowed media networks to operate from inside the country, ending the exclusivity of Al-Jazeera during the war. According to Rugh (2004: 217), it was not until after 13 November, when Al-Jazeera's office was hit by US missiles and the Taliban regime collapsed, that other news agencies gained access to Afghanistan.

Yet Al-Jazeera had already achieved its international reputation. Sakr asserted that despite the disapproval of Al-Jazeera's news agenda, both in the United States and among Arab ruling elites, the channel had managed to attract a great deal of attention in late 2001, highlighting the absence of any other pan-Arab news and current affairs channel in Arabic that could compete with Al-Jazeera on its own terms, or take its place (Sakr 2004: 160).

4.5.4. The development and expansion of Al-Jazeera

The expansion of Al-Jazeera could be seen as visible evidence of the channel's will to keep advancing as an influential media outlet in the region. It also demonstrates the success of the

network and their ability to advance, despite the regional and international pressures on the Qatari governments to rein in Al-Jazeera.

Thus, it could be said that the comprehensive coverage of the Palestinian Intifada in 2000 and the war in Afghanistan in 2001 were among other influential factors such as their persistence and the ability to maintain credibility, which led to the success of Al-Jazeera and encouraged the Qatari government to continue funding the network.

Similarly, the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war⁹⁷ enhanced the channel's image as a credible and yet controversial media outlet that could play - alongside other prominent broadcasters such as CNN and the BBC - a vital role in the coverage of international conflicts of that kind. All these factors are believed to have influenced the decision to extend the media services of Al-Jazeera to include other projects among the network's activities. According to Zayani and Sahraoui, Al-Jazeera's ability to expand in its few years of existence was evidenced not only in its new programmes but also in its new concepts.

In 2001, Al-Jazeera launched an Arabic website, in 2003 added an English-language website and in 2004 it started its mobile service – a fairly novel approach to news dissemination in the Middle East, utilizing GSM technology to transmit news information via SMS and WAP, with the intension further down the line to have its services include both text and multimedia messaging service (MMS) (Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 164).

Moreover, Al-Jazeera also invested in launching a variety of specialized sports channels.

In 2003, it launched Al-Jazeera Sports Channel. Two years later, it launched two new round-the-clock sports channels, which offer live coverage of prime world renowned tournaments such as the Spanish football league⁹⁸ (ibid).

In addition, in 2005 Al-Jazeera launched its “first” specialized live channel in Arab broadcasting called, Al-Jazeera Live, [Al-Jazeera Mubasher in Arabic] which, according to Zayani and Sahraoui, is similar to “C-Span in the USA”, airing conferences, meetings, discussions and other significant gatherings covering political, cultural and economic issues,

⁹⁷ Al-Jazeera's coverage of the 2003 Iraq war will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six.

⁹⁸ Zayani and Sahraoui explained that the latter two channels are different from the former one insofar as they are encrypted – “a move that is more motivated by the need to meet international legal and technical requirements than by the desire to generate revenue”. Thus, the decision to charge a nominal annual subscription fee for these two sport channels was impelled by the tendency of Al-Jazeera's free signals to Arab viewers on Nilesat and Arabsat to spill over to some Western countries and encroach on the ability of some Western channels providers to generate revenue on live coverage of these sports events (ibid).

with neither anchor people nor editing processes. This service, as described by Gassan bin Jeddou (Al-Jazeera's bureau chief in Beirut), served as an extension to the news channels which "cannot convey everything and focus on the live broadcasts of official news conferences which carry some political stance"⁹⁹ (bin Jeddou cited in Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 164).

However, in relation to certain events, the Al-Jazeera news channel violated the rule of Al-Jazeera Live, as when Lebanese demonstrations took place in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2004. Commenting on this, bin Jeddou reveals that these particular events drew attention at Al-Jazeera to the fact that they need to make use of the materials they can "acquire through live broadcasts" (ibid). Nevertheless, Sakr contended that by broadcasting live events such as parliamentary debates from Palestine or Kuwait into Arab homes, the channel seemed implicitly intent on widening political participation:

Live coverage of developments in the Sudan crisis on Al-Jazeera Mubasher had generated enough feedback to indicate that certain types of content on the channel would be closely watched. It was launched when imminent Lebanese, Egyptian and Palestinian elections promised a succession of political events that could be broadcast live and would in turn generate word-of-mouth recommendations among viewers. Al-Jazeera Mubasher was presented not as a means of boosting advertising but as 'public service' (Sakr 2007: 144-145).

In addition, in 2005, Zayani and Sahraoui stated that Al-Jazeera launched a new children's channel in conjunction with the Qatar Foundation, Science and Community Development, which is headed by the Emir's wife, Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Misned. This particular project aimed to produce programmes combining "edutainment" with respect for traditional values and teaching tolerance by introducing modern values "such as open-mindedness and tolerance to Arab children age 3 to 15 and their families" (Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 165).

Likewise, the network opened a documentary channel¹⁰⁰ and has concrete plans to start a business channel "which capitalizes on Al-Jazeera's news channel and caters to a largely untapped market niche in satellite broadcasting" (ibid).

⁹⁹ It was personally observed that Al-Jazeera announces events on Al-Jazeera Live channel in the news bar running at the bottom of their screen, and sometimes the news channel broadcasts a news conference and then the anchor in the studio announces to the audience that they could follow the rest of the news conference on the Al-Jazeera Live channel, before the anchor moves to read the ensuing stories in the running order of the news bulletins (author's note).

¹⁰⁰ According to *CBC News Online* (2007), the Al-Jazeera network began broadcasting a 24-hour Arabic documentary channel on Monday 1st January 2007 (*CBC News Online*, 2 January 2007: np). On its official

Nevertheless, what is considered to be the major expansion among the other mentioned projects of Al-Jazeera was the launch of its English language news service in 2006, called Al-Jazeera International. This newly established channel, according to Zayani and Sahraoui, is the first Arab media outlet to transmit news in English twenty-four hours a day for what is perceived as a “ready audience”, some of which is located in North American and Britain, but the bulk of which lies in Asia, which has sizable Muslim populations and is teeming with English-speaking viewers. However, Zayani and Sahraoui argued that although the channel is well positioned to gain quick popularity in countries such as Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia, this position however “does not make it a Muslim channel, nor is that something the network’s management is after” (Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 166).

The idea of Al-Jazeera International is not so much to be a mirror image of its Arabic-language sister where news, commentaries and current affairs programmes are dubbed into English using live translations, but an English channel that is managed by a Western team, staffed with native English speakers for the on-air jobs, caters to an international market and has its own specificity but which nonetheless operates in accordance with Al-Jazeera’s code of ethics¹⁰¹ and aspires to be professional in the full import of the term (ibid).

website, Al-Jazeera documentary stated that it is first documentary channel in the Arab world (Al-Jazeera Documentary 2009: np). In an article on Al-Jazeera website, Tawfiq Founi, director of Al-Jazeera Documentary Channel stated that they “will look at stories that are distorted or ignored by the Western media on the grounds that they are marginal and insignificant from a Western standpoint, even though these issues are a priority for Arabs and Muslims” (Founi cited in *CBC News Online*, 2 January 2007: np). Further, *Middle East Online* stated that the broadcast of the documentary channel would include “different aspects of human activity, including social, political, cultural, scientific, historical and environmental” (*Middle East Online*, 2 January 2007: np). In addition, the documentary channel stated on its website, that it will adhere in its performance to Al-Jazeera’s code of ethics (Al-Jazeera Documentary 2009: np). Al-Jazeera’s code of ethics was developed and presented in an international conference organised by Al-Jazeera in July 2004. This code of ethics is shown below (author’s note).

¹⁰¹ As it appeared on Al-Jazeera’s website, Al-Jazeera’s code of ethics consists of 10 major points, and states the following:

Being a globally oriented media service, Al Jazeera has adopted the following code of ethics in pursuance of the vision and mission it has set for itself:

1. Adhere to the journalistic values of honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity, giving no priority to commercial or political considerations over professional ones.
2. Endeavour to get to the truth and declare it in our dispatches, programmes and news bulletins unequivocally, and in a manner which leaves no doubt about its validity and accuracy.
3. Treat our audiences with due respect and address every issue or story with due attention to present a clear, factual and accurate picture while giving full consideration to the feelings of victims of crime, war, persecution and disaster, their relatives and our viewers, and to individual privacy and public decorum.
4. Welcome fair and honest media competition without allowing it to affect adversely our standards of performance so that getting a “scoop” will not become an end in itself.
5. Present diverse points of view and opinions without bias or partiality.
6. Recognise diversity in human societies with all their races, cultures and beliefs and their values and intrinsic individualities in order to present unbiased and faithful reflection of them.
7. Acknowledge a mistake when it occurs, promptly correct it and ensure it does not recur.

Thus, the channel's purpose is to report global news and provide a Middle Eastern perspective. In order to achieve this, Al-Jazeera International established four key news centres: Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington (ibid). The distribution of these news centres is believed to be essential in terms of covering news around the globe, especially that they are located in significant places in the Middle East, Asia, Europe and America.

For this reason, Rushing¹⁰² (2007) contended that Al-Jazeera International became the network of firsts:

The first global, high definition television network, the first to split its airtime between four separate broadcast centres, and the first to stream all of its content live on the Internet, 24/7 (Rushing 2007: 205).

In addition, as part of its policy to attract global audiences, besides hiring Western professionals with experience with international broadcasters such as BBC and Sky, to senior management positions, Al-Jazeera International hired a combination of well known journalists for on-air jobs, who were previously working for major broadcasters in Britain and the US such as Sky news presenter David Foster, BBC reporter Rageh Omar, and CNN anchors Riz Khan and Veronica Pedrosa (Zayani and Sahraoui 2007: 166).

It was thought that the accrued credibility would gain the channel the required access to global audiences. This, according to Rushing, was the desire of the Emir of Qatar, who wanted to extend this credibility with the Arab network to a broader, international audience. In order to achieve that, Al-Jazeera International looked for a news agenda that would distinguish the channel from its Western competitors:

With this twenty-first century, cutting-edge technology, Al-Jazeera English wants to shake up the news agenda of the West. The BBC represents an old-world news

8. Observe transparency in dealing with news and news sources while adhering to internationally established practices concerning the rights of these sources.

9. Distinguish between news material, opinion and analysis to avoid the pitfalls of speculation and propaganda.

10. Stand by colleagues in the profession and offer them support when required, particularly in light of the acts of aggression and harassment to which journalists are subjected at times. Cooperate with Arab and international journalistic unions and associations to defend freedom of the press (*Al-Jazeera Online*: 2009: np).

¹⁰² During the 2003 Iraq war, Josh Rushing was serving as a media officer at the US media centre in Doha, providing reports of the white house spin over the war, however, he joined Al-Jazeera international since it was launched in 2006.

paradigm – Anglo expats trekking around the globe and reporting back to the motherland – and CNN International is the redheaded step child of the CNN family. Al-Jazeera, as a brand, is seen by many in the world as David standing up to the Goliath of the Western world (Rushing 2007: 206).

In order to shake the news agenda of the West, Al-Jazeera International had initially to face fundamental questions on what and who to report.

The questions we ask ourselves are, “What can we add to the coverage that exists?” and especially “Who does not have a voice in this story?” That is the question that comes up often (Rushing 2007: 194).

Thus, Rushing asserted that if Al-Jazeera English has a stated mission, it is to cover the developing world – often simply referred to as “the South” – which Western competitors often ignored.

We try to serve those underreported places and peoples while presenting aspects of western culture too often neglected in other international coverage (ibid).

To achieve that, Al-Jazeera was keen to hire local journalists - with little enough accent to be understood around the world - to report on the news that stems from their homelands and most directly impacts their lives. This, according to Rushing, helps in representing the cultural diversity of the channel’s audiences¹⁰³ (ibid: 211).

Thus, it could be said that the overall expansion of Al-Jazeera and the introduction of all its new media projects demonstrate a successful experience that started in 1996 with Al-Jazeera Arabic and continued to expand in an attempt to become more influential in the Arab world and internationally. There is no doubt that Al-Jazeera was an inspiring model for various media outlets in the Arab world to imitate its style of coverage and programming. Therefore it is argued that the satellite channels which evolved in the Arab world were motivated by the presence of Al-Jazeera in terms of competition over news coverage and current affairs programmes. A similar influence of Al-Jazeera could be assumed to have played a role in encouraging regional governments and western governments like Iran, the US, Britain,

¹⁰³ For example, Al-Jazeera International hired a Zimbabwean journalist and film maker, Farai Sevenzo, and ran a live report by him on the day it was launched from Zimbabwe (ibid). Similarly, with Amr el Kahki, an Egyptian journalist, who joined from Al-Jazeera Arabic, to report from Egypt in English for Al-Jazeera International (author’s note)

Other examples would include Nour Odeah, a Palestinian journalist, reporting for Al-Jazeera International from Gaza, then Ramallah; Melissa Chan, a Chinese journalist, covering from Beijing; Mark Seddon, a British journalist covering from London, and many others covering more places in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia (to see more on Al-Jazeera’s international network of reporters and correspondents, see Al-Jazeera International’s website).

France and Russia to launch their own Arabic service media outlets to advance their respective images and seek to enhance their political communication strategies with Arab audiences.

Thus, in the words of Seib (2008), Al-Jazeera becomes a symbol in this new, media-centric world, as it has come to affect global politics and culture, particularly by enhancing the Islamic world's clout.

As it delivers its programming in Arabic and English (and perhaps soon in additional languages), and as its message meshes with content from Islamic Web sites, blogs, and other online offerings, Al-Jazeera helps foster unprecedented cohesion in the worldwide Muslim community (Seib 2008: ix).

Beyond this, Seib believes that Al-Jazeera has become a paradigm of the new media's influence, similar to the role of the CNN in the early 1990s:

Ten years ago, there was much talk about "the CNN effect", the theory that news coverage - especially gripping visual storytelling - was influencing foreign policy throughout the world. Today, "the Al-Jazeera effect" takes that a significant step farther. Just as "the CNN effect" is not about CNN alone, so too is "the Al-Jazeera effect" about much more than the Qatar-based media company. The concept encompasses the use of news media as tools in every aspect of global affairs, ranging from democratization to terrorism and including the concept of "virtual states"¹⁰⁴ (ibid: x).

Interestingly, Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani, the chairman of the board of members of Al-Jazeera stated¹⁰⁵ that "Al-Jazeera is a strategic project, it is not based on reactions" (bin Thamer Al-Thani, Al-Jazeera 2006).

It is perhaps revealing that, since its establishment, there has been a strategic view which encouraged Al-Jazeera to operate in an independent manner. In other words, the channel is presumed to serve as a motivating and essential element for Qatari foreign policy, although it

¹⁰⁴ According to Seib, the nation of Kurdistan is a good example of a virtual state. "It is not officially recognised by governments and does not appear on commonly use maps, but it exists, knitted together largely by combination of radio and television stations and an array of websites and online communication". Thus, a wide variety of media carrying Kurdish concerns reach Kurds who live in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and elsewhere, sustaining the Kurdish identity and accelerating its political maturation (ibid). For this reason, Seib contends that the phenomenon of the virtual state could encompass entities far larger than Kurdistan, such as individual nations' diasporic populations and the global Islamic community. Therefore, if new media bring cohesion to the global Islamic community, then policymakers throughout the world would have to reckon with a significant new player in international affairs (ibid).

¹⁰⁵ The statement of Sheik Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani was in Arabic on 2 November 2006 in a special programme broadcast on the channel called "The Biggest Adventure: The First Part" celebrating the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the network (author's note).

is not a state-run television. This unique status of Al-Jazeera is thought to explain the strategic approach which has been indicated by Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer Al-Thani, and clearly reveals that Al-Jazeera is more than a media outlet that could enhance freedom of expression or an ability to offer critical coverage. These are considered to be the aspects for which the channel has become widely recognised in the Arab region, though the Qatari's aspirations are assumed to extend beyond these, and its aims as a small, rich country - with a strategic location in the Gulf region, surrounded by regional powers such as Iran and Saudi Arabia - are believed to primarily defend its political and economic independence. Thus, the use of all possible elements, whether economic, political and even religious, and its significant media presence would help the "tiny country" to ensure its independence and also allow Qatar to invest these strategic elements to play a key part in the regional politics. However, it could be said that the considered political and strategic visions of Qatar are thought to be implemented and run without losing the assets of Al-Jazeera, which continues to operate as an "independent broadcaster", although it is financed by the Qatari government.

Having said that, what would probably further explain the popularity of Al-Jazeera is its capacity to engage Arab audiences with a multiplicity of voices. However, what is likely to be equally important is that, since Al-Jazeera's establishment in 1996, it has become an important media organisation in the Arab world, combining state sponsorship with critical performance, and such a combination has enabled it to be among the leading broadcasters in the region.

Nevertheless, with its further and remarkable expansion through its English service - which is believed to have brought the network an international presence that has not been achieved before by any Arab media - Qatar consequently becomes more visible on the map of regional players and that of international broadcasters.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the major developments which have occurred within the Arab media environment since the advent of satellites in the early 1990s, outlining the rapid growth of Arab channels and the different types of ownership, varying between state-run to privately owned channels, but which importantly have challenged the traditional policies of media control in Arab countries.

The development of Arab satellites has gone through various stages since the inauguration of the Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC) in early 1991 and the establishment of the Saudi-owned satellite channel, Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) in London in 1991. These channels provided two different examples in terms of ownership and audience; while ESC is a state-funded station with a target audience mainly comprising Egyptians, MBC is privately owned by Saudi entrepreneurs and initially located in London (before later moving to Dubai), targeting Arab audiences in general. Thus, if we consider that ESC and MBC represent two different models in terms of ownership and funding, then it could be said that the emerging Arab satellite channels in the 1990s and after, could be categorised as state-run or privately owned channels (either by businessmen, members of royal families or political parties and movements).

However, the rise of Al-Jazeera in 1996 introduced a new element to these two models, since it is funded by the Qatari government but not operated as a state-run channel. With Al-Jazeera, the Arab region began to witness a new phenomenon in terms of news coverage and independence, the performance of the channel - as discussed - has challenged traditional taboos in Arab media, by tackling issues such as political reform, democratization, and reporting opposition activities. This new style of coverage, accompanied by a variety of programmes dealing with current affairs, provided Arab audiences with more inclusive coverage of the region. In addition, it was noticed that the growth of Al-Jazeera influenced Arab countries to invest in news media or to expand news slots and current affairs programmes on their channels.

Further, the other feature that was illustrated to be part of the process of the development of Arab satellite media was the advent of politically motivated channels which are considered as political representatives of parties and movements, and this was particularly noticeable in Lebanon with the establishment of channels such as Future TV, NBN, and Al-Manar. This trend continued to mark the scene in the Arab world, especially within Iraqi media after the military incursions of the US-led coalition against Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003.

Nevertheless, satellite channels such as the Arab News Network (ANN) and Al-Mustakillah which were established in London, respectively in 1997 and 1999, marked another example of channels that were established outside the Arab world, and perceived as opposition

channels to ruling regimes, whether the Syrian regime (as in case of the ANN) or the Tunisian regime (as in the case of Al-Mustakillah).

Subsequently, by 2000, there was a model encapsulating three types of satellite channels that shaped the Arab mediascape (Rugh 2004). The traditional terrestrial state owned channels, in addition to state-funded and privately owned satellite channels. This was the case until 2003 and the establishment of the Saudi-funded Al-Arabiya, a few days before the US-led war on Iraq. However, the chapter demonstrated that by 2003, this model also witnessed a new trend with the emergence of regional and international broadcasters in Arabic, such as Al-Alam of Iran, Al-Hurra of the US, BBC Arabic Television, France 24, Deutsche Welle Arabic, Russia Today and China Central Television CCTV Arabic. Thus, it could be said that, just as the 1991 Gulf war motivated Arabs to launch their own satellite channels, the 2003 Iraq war motivated regional and international powers to expand their international broadcasting services by launching satellite channels in Arabic.

These remarkable examples have been discussed to reveal how the mediascape in the Arab world began to change shape with a new element that could be seen as motivated by the desire for better strategies of communication, which consequently could be seen as one of the outcomes of the 2003 Iraq war. Therefore, it could be said that this constitutes a fourth category to be added to Rugh's model, and cannot be ignored in any full understanding of the dynamic and vibrant media scene in the Arab world.

Importantly, the chapter has also discussed the political economy of the Arab media outlets, as well as governmental interference with the output of these channels, which can clearly affect their broadcasts. Having said this, the chapter offered a particular emphasis on the role of Al-Jazeera, as a distinguished broadcaster in the Arab region. The reason for this choice is because the channel represents a unique example in the Arab world. It is financed by the Qatari government, yet it largely performs in an independent manner. This is considered to be a significant phenomenon in allowing the channel to play a notable and influential role in the news coverage and treatment of current affairs issues in the Arab world and internationally. From the beginning of its broadcasting life, Al-Jazeera is believed to have been seeking to play a prominent role in the Arab media, and has provided Arab audiences with significant coverage of the Palestinian Intifada in 2000, the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003

Iraq war. This coverage by Al-Jazeera was the centre of attention for many scholars who were interested in evaluating this new phenomenon in the Arab media world.

As mentioned above, before Al-Jazeera, the media scene was largely dominated by state-funded and controlled media, though pan-Arab and private channels such as MBC, Orbit, and ANN had had to operate from European capitals such as London and Rome. However, the start of Al-Jazeera marked a shift in this concept of broadcasting from abroad to avoid governmental regulations or interference, since the channel operates from Qatar in the Arab world with a remarkable degree of freedom to tackle various subjects and issues in Arab life and politics.

In addition, the expansion of Al-Jazeera to a network of various media services added to the existing Arabic channel, like Al-Jazeera Sport, Al-Jazeera Documentary, Al-Jazeera Live and Al-Jazeera Children, and, in addition to the Arabic and English website, would reveal the success of the Al-Jazeera experience in the Arab world. However, as discussed in the chapter, the most important expansion of all is argued to be the establishment of Al-Jazeera International as the first 24-hour Arab news channel broadcasting in English. Therefore, it could be said that these media projects which have been evolved in recent years could indicate the achievements of Al-Jazeera - amid the persistent support of the Qatari government - that have enhanced the network's position on the map of international media as a significant player.

Yet it is believed that the 2003 Iraq war – which will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters - was a milestone in Al-Jazeera's cumulative experience in reporting the region, and which granted the channel further credibility among Arab audiences and also contributed to accelerate the plans of Qatar to expand Al-Jazeera into a network of several channels, following its performance during the 2003 Iraq war.

Equally importantly, it could be also said that the 2003 Iraq war was probably the major reason that led to further development in the media scene in the Arab world, especially since Al-Jazeera provided coverage that was able to challenge the American media and the US government's information strategies during the war by providing the other side of the story from Iraq. Therefore, it is argued as reasonable to conclude that the 2003 Iraq war was a momentous experience in the channel's journey of becoming "the CNN of the Arab world".

Chapter Five: Media War or War on Media: Lessons from Iraq¹⁰⁶

5.1. Introduction

The flurry of reports, leaks, and misinformation about the looming US war against Saddam Hussein's dictatorship in Iraq continue with increasing density. It is impossible to know, however, how much of this is a brilliantly managed campaign of psychological war against Iraq, and how much the public floundering of a government uncertain about its next step (Said 2004: 232).

There is no doubt that the 2003 Iraq war marked a new era in warfare, where war and media technologies became an essential factor in the conduct of war. Unlike Afghanistan in 2001, the Iraq war introduced new elements to the concepts of information control and news management, and subsequently to war reporting and the role of journalism during conflicts.

Iraq, for instance, became the ground to test new media strategies adopted by the Pentagon - like the embedding policy, where reporters had to join military units and cover the war from their side. It could be argued that such a policy elevated controversial discussions among many journalists, scholars and analysts, since reporters were too close to the military, and their movements were strictly limited. However, independent reporters, or "unilaterals" as they were described during the war, who decided not to join the embedding programme, provided the other side of the stories, yet their safety and movement were constantly at risk, whether because of the Iraqi authorities or the "Coalition Forces".

The use of language and terminology by politicians during the war was crucial in advancing preferred messages in communicating with the public, such as labelling Iraq as part of the "Axis of Evil" and allegations of their having "weapons of mass destructions", "links to the Al-Qaeda terrorist group", and being "threats to world peace". All these were echoed by the press and contributed to Western public understanding of the conflict, yet this required an extensive diplomatic effort to build up an international coalition, as in the 1991 Gulf War, and a massive "public diplomacy" to ensure that these messages were reaching the public domestically and worldwide.

¹⁰⁶ A much reduced version of this chapter was published in 2009 with the same title in Heinemann, A., Lamoum, O., Weber, F. (2009), *The Middle East in the Media: Conflicts, Censorship and Public Opinion*, Saqi, London, pp. 71-97.

In addition, the role of media corporations was no less central in the campaign, especially those who decided to align themselves with the war effort, such as Fox News. Big corporations in the US contributed to and influenced the media's performance during the war, and their common interests with the American administration was another part of the remarkable pattern in understanding the developments that occurred within media campaigning and wartime propaganda during the Iraq war.

This chapter will seek to critically scrutinize the major media strategies which were implemented by the US and UK governments during the war on Iraq, starting in March 2003, but not going beyond the 9th April, 2003, the date Saddam's statue was toppled, as this is argued to have marked the end of the war, and the defeat of the Iraqi army, regardless of President Bush's declaration on 1st May 2003 of the end of the major offensive in Iraq. The Iraqi regime had practically collapsed on the 9th April 2003, and it is argued that events after this date are part of the discussions on the aftermath of the war proper. Since Iraqi governmental institutions were paralysed and what was left of the Iraqi Army were described as "pockets of resistance", the discourse of the period following the 9th April could therefore fall within the ongoing "Occupation Period" of Iraq.

The chapter will also examine the means of government control over information and the media to project a positive image about the war. In this regard it will also illustrate and discuss certain examples of the use of PR during the war, such as the Private Jessica Lynch rescue operation and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue at Al-Ferdaws Square in central Baghdad.

5.2. The Development of Communication Strategies and Wartime Propaganda During the Iraq War

In previous wars, most importantly Vietnam, media control was a key factor in winning the conflicts. According to David Miller, the US and UK governments have shown themselves adept at learning propaganda lessons from successive conflicts (Miller, *Scoop online*, 28 March 2003: np).

The lessons of Vietnam were put into effect in the Falklands conflict in 1982. There was close control of the 29 journalists who were allowed to accompany the military to the South Atlantic and no independent facilities for reporting. A dual system of censorship operated which ensured that journalists' copy was censored on naval

vessels in the South Atlantic and then again at the Ministry of Defence in London before being released (ibid).

However, in 1983, Lt Commander Arthur Humphries of the US Navy noted that: "In the Falklands the British failed to appreciate that news management is more than just information security censorship. It also means providing pictures" (Humphries cited in Miller, *Scoop Online*, 28 March 2003: np). According to Miller, this lesson was learned in the Gulf War in 1991, when journalists were isolated from the fighting in Saudi Arabia, and newsrooms on the other end were supplied every day with new footage of 'precision' bombs hitting their targets (ibid). Miller stated that the assumption that the 1991 Gulf War was a new clean war in which civilians would not be harmed, as 'smart' technology that enabled 'surgical strikes' turned out to be untrue.

This was a systematic charade. Only 7% of the ordnance was 'smart', the other 93% being indiscriminate weapons, including weapons of mass destruction. The smart technology turned out not to be so smart and missed its target in 40% of cases according to official figures (ibid).

The situation in the 2003 Iraq war witnessed major developments, often arising from the 1991 Gulf War, in the way communication strategies were implemented and practiced in more sophisticated ways. There is no doubt, however, that lessons from previous wars helped to improve media strategies in this war. It is believed that the effectiveness of communication strategies in this war strongly relied on the development of technology in order to efficiently shape public opinion and win support. During the 2003 Iraq war it was observed that major developments in communication strategies and wartime propaganda have taken place throughout the phases of planning and conducting the military campaign. This perhaps is what had made this war the most sophisticated so far. As Martin Bell (2003) asserts, major changes have occurred since the 1991 Gulf War in terms of technology:

Times change. Weapons and strategies change with them. In the first Gulf War there was a time lapse of five weeks between the air and ground campaigns. In the second Gulf War that was cut to just twelve hours. The campaign started on 20 March. It was the world's first real computer war - a high tech attack against a low-tech defence. Shocking and awful - no contest. On the second night Iraq was hit with 1,000 precision-guided missiles and bombs. The presidential compounds on the West bank of the Tigris River in Baghdad were reduced to rubble within seconds. General Tommy Franks, the commander of the mainly American forces, described it as a campaign unlike any other in history (Bell, 2003: 193).

Since this war, much research has examined the developments of wartime propaganda and war reporting, as well as the relationship between the media and the military in the twenty-first century. However, it can be argued that the significance of this conflict extended beyond the remarkable use of modern technology in reporting conflicts or the implementation of new techniques of media operations to manage and control information during the course of wars: this was the substantial integration of the media into the war machine and the effects of this on coverage. According to Robin Brown (2003), there are three concepts of communication as a tool of influence that have been used by the US “in waging war on terrorism”. These are “military concepts of information warfare, foreign policy concepts of public diplomacy, and approaches to media management drawn from domestic politics” (Brown 2003: 90).

The first is based on the Information Operations (IO) doctrine, which, according to Brown, can be seen as “a systematic attempt to make sense of warfare as an exercise in information processing”. Computer systems thus become tools to gather, process and disseminate information, so that IO can include any effort to attack or defend the information necessary for the conduct of operations. However, the military had taken the idea of information warfare a step further, providing a coherent framework to bring together existing activities: “psychological operations (PSYOPS), deception, public affairs – that is the military-press interface – and civil military affairs with computer network operations” (ibid).

The second concept is public diplomacy. Brown suggests this aims to draw together international broadcasting, cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges and overseas information activities (ibid: 91).

The aim of these civilian information operations was to advance American interests through the creation of a positive image of the US by fostering knowledge and understanding about the country. By presenting the truth, including negative stories, the US would build trust and credibility (ibid).

The third principle is political news management or “spin”, which Brown described in institutional terms as “a newcomer to the international arena”. In defining the role of spin, Brown declared that this is about developing elaborate mechanisms to secure and control media coverage, where this machinery normally focuses on short-term media coverage and a strategic communications function that develops proactive communications strategies, “for instance by using the activities of leaders to communicate key messages” (ibid). Therefore, spinning is aimed to persuade the media that one version of reality rather than another is the

“real” story, and that the way it has told it is the correct one. This approach would seek to balance an active approach to shaping the media environment with a broader commitment to some imposed rules of the game (ibid: 92).

Furthermore, Justin Lewis et al (2006) stated that in an age of increasingly sophisticated digital and satellite communications, the use of information as a weapon is becoming a dominant feature of modern warfare. Information management is also a globally increasingly important part of government and foreign policy (ibid: 16-17). It was therefore the impact of ‘Information Dominance’ during the war on Iraq, which was the key strategy in the US and UK to influence public opinion domestically and worldwide to support the war efforts and the governments’ policies. According to David Miller (2004a), the concept of Information Dominance is the key to understanding the US and UK’s respective “propaganda strategies”, as it redefines our notions of spin and propaganda and the role of the media in capitalist societies (Miller 2004a: 7). In his analysis, Miller pointed out two new elements to Information Dominance when compared to traditional conceptions of propaganda.

The first is the integration of propaganda and psychological operations into a much wider conception of information war. The second is the integration of information war into the core of military strategy (ibid: 8).

According to Miller, traditional conceptions of propaganda involve crafting the message and distributing it via government media or independent news media. Current conceptions of information war go much further and incorporate the gathering, processing, and deployment of information by way of computers, intelligence, and military information systems (command and control). The key preoccupation for the military is *interoperability*, where information systems talk to and work with each other.

Interoperability is a result of the computer revolution, which has led to a so-called revolution in military affairs. Now propaganda and psychological operations are simply part of a larger information armoury. As Colonel Kenneth had written, the 2003 attack on Iraq “will be remembered as a conflict in which information took its place as a weapon of war” (ibid).

Furthermore, the experience in Iraq in 2003, according to Miller, showed how the planned integration of the media into instruments of war is developing. It also showed the increased role of the private sector in Information Dominance, a role that reflects wider changes in the armed services in the US and UK (ibid: 9). Miller regarded applying the concept of

Information Dominance to media management's activities would also allow the US and UK's strategists to tolerate dissent in the media and alternative accounts on the Internet.

Dissent only matters if it interferes with their plans. As US military authors Winters and Giffin put it, "Achieving Information Dominance involves two components: 1) building up and protecting friendly information; and 2) degrading information received by your adversary." Both of these refer not simply to military information systems but also to propaganda and the news media (ibid: 9-10).

Therefore, Miller believed that the embedding policy was a clear means of building up and protecting friendly information, a policy which allowed journalists better access to the fighting than that given in any conflict since Vietnam (ibid: 10).

On the other hand, Martin Bell (2003), who also considered the new framework for warfare in Iraq as a high tech evolution of blitzkrieg, introduced a new term to war reporting: the "embed" (Bell 2003: 198), Bell argued that embedding was a bold experiment that confounded many predictions, including his own, that it would muzzle the press and deliver only news that pleased the Pentagon. According to Bell, censorship was applied with a lighter touch than the previous Gulf War (ibid). However, Bell also indicated the confusion among journalists who decided to embed with the military about their role in covering the battles. "Not only the younger embedded journalists, but some of the older hands as well, failed to grasp the difference between being *with* an army or being *of* an army" (Bell 2003: 200). Furthermore, Bell observed how the situation on the ground would influence the reporter's attitude in reporting the battles:

You saw the outgoing fire, but not the incoming, the winners but not the losers; the soldiers but not the civilians; the living but not the dead. One of the American TV reporters, charging north with the 3rd Infantry Division on the second day of the war, boasted live on his network: 'This is historic television! This is historic journalism!' Whether or not it was historical, it was certainly hysterical (ibid).

Bill Katovsky (2003) defined the embedding policy during the Iraq war as "a slick new public-relations concept". For Katovsky (2003: xi), the introduction of this concept was due to the need of war planners in their building up to the new Iraqi campaign to toss aside any lingering doubts they had about the media. In agreement with Katovsky, Howard Tumber and Frank Webster (2006) stated that the military attempted a range of strategies to ensure that they get appropriate and acceptable reportage about their activities, from long term cultivation of contacts in the media, to the granting of privileged access to favoured reporters,

and to aggressive physical threats towards journalists who get too close to situations the military did not want them to see (Tumber and Webster 2006: 21).

Pentagon officials, according to Philip Seib (2004), made it clear that the embedded journalists would receive better treatment than the approximately 1800 unilateral journalists. When Kuwait blocked some “unembedded” reporters from entering Iraq, Pentagon spokesperson Bryan Whitman said:

We are going to control the battle space. Reporters that are not embedded are going to be treated like any other civilian, approached with a certain amount of caution. For many journalists, proving their identity can sometimes be problematic (Whitman cited in Seib 2004: 53).

Whitman justified this policy by raising the assumption from the angle of security that the Iraqis might have “individuals pose as journalists” (ibid). Nevertheless, Michel Massing (in Seib 2004) who was in the war zone to monitor the fighting for the Committee to Protect Journalists, found the military unconcerned about the safety of the unilaterals. He said that “the US military believed that only reporters who were officially embedded had the right to protection. Everyone else was at risk - and expendable” (ibid). Consistent with Massing, Bill Katovsky stated that in the early days of the war several unilateral journalists were killed by venturing too close to the fighting, though two other journalists were killed and they were embeds¹⁰⁷ (Katovsky 2003: xiv).

At this point, it would be also worth mentioning that the other impact of the use of high tech war technology during the Iraq war was the scope of devastation and the nature of war victims, including journalists. According to Philip Seib, at the beginning of the twentieth century, “the ratio of military to civilian casualties was 8:1. By the 1990s it had become 1:8” (Seib 2004, 19). Consistent with this, Simon Jeffery at *The Guardian* pointed out that at least 5000 civilians were killed during the invasion of Iraq, and between 1700 to 2356 civilian died in the battle for Baghdad alone. (Jeffery, *The Guardian*, 13 June 2003: np).

Iraq Body Count (IBC) - a volunteer group of British and US academics and researchers - compiled statistics on civilian casualties from the media reports and estimated that between 5000 to 7000 civilians died in the conflict (ibid).

¹⁰⁷ The first embed journalist was *The Washington Post's* columnist and *Atlantic's* monthly editor and columnist Michel Kelly, who died in a Humvee crash while riding with the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division at south Baghdad airport. The second was The NBC news correspondent David Bloom who died of a pulmonary embolism while travelling with the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division outside Baghdad (www.freemedia.at).

In contrast, Jeffery also stated that the Iraqi authorities on the other hand, estimated that “2278 civilians died in the 1991 Gulf War” (ibid). Additionally, the number of journalists killed during the war in 2003 was also much greater than any previous conflicts. According to the International Press Institute (IPI):

At least 14 journalists had been killed during the six-week campaign; with two others missing and believed dead”, however, the hostilities did not end after President Bush Declared on 1st May 2003 that “major operations in Iraq had ended” the death toll was to grow to 19 by the end of 2003 (International Press Institute, 2003: np).

Furthermore, it is worth mentioning at this stage that the continuity of the conflict since 2003 produced more horrific accounts on the death tolls among civilians and journalists. In a report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) called “Slaughter in Iraq” on the journalists who were killed in Iraq between 20th March 2003 and 20th March 2006, the organisation stated that the war on Iraq had proved to be the deadliest for journalists since WWII. “A total of 86 journalists and media assistants have been killed in Iraq since the war began”¹⁰⁸ (RSF, 20 March 2006: 2). According to RSF, this is more than the number killed in Vietnam or even the civil war in Algeria.

Around 63 journalists were killed in Vietnam during the 20 years from 1955 to 1975. A total of 49 media professionals were killed in the course of their work during the war in ex-Yugoslavia, from 1991 to 1995. During the civil war in Algeria from 1993 to 1996, 77 journalists and media assistants were killed (ibid).¹⁰⁹

Thus, the looming presence of injury or death must be assumed to have been at least at the back of the minds of media personnel, but what would happen to their words and pictures must also have been to the fore. This was also a clear concern of the coalition, far more than the demise of a mere journalist, provided the mainstream media did not voice overt concern. For the coalition, their messages to the various publics via the largely compliant media (certainly in the US) were the first priority. Kari Lydersen argued that one aspect about the

¹⁰⁸ According to the report, twelve of the journalists and media assistants killed since the start of the war have been from a country that is a member of the coalition led by the United States, as against 74 from other countries. “Journalists of 14 different nationalities have died during the war. Four of them were Americans and one was British (RSF 20 March 2006: 4).

¹⁰⁹ According to Iraqi news service, *Iraq Updates* (IU), the Paris-based Reporters without Borders (RSF) said in October 2007 that 54 journalists and media workers have been killed in Iraq since the beginning of 2007, while the International Federation of journalists (IFJ) said that a total of 234 journalists have been killed in the country since the US-led invasion in March 2003 (*Iraq Updates*, 2 January 2008: np).

Furthermore, according to *The Huffington Post* (2009) Aidan White, general secretary of the (IFJ) stated that Iraq remains the “deadliest” place to work despite a sharp drop in the murder rate of media staff (*The Huffington Post*, 2 April 2009: np). Sixteen journalists were killed in Iraq in 2008, compared with 65 in 2007. The decline was due to “lessening sectarian violence in Iraq” (ibid).

domination of news is the control and manipulation of viewpoints and information coming directly from the government – and sometimes that control meant suppressing other voices. This was an explanation why attacking the alternative media on certain occasions had its own strategic justifications.

The Bush administration has also been hard at work on limiting and ideally silencing opposing or challenging viewpoints and factual narratives coming from other sources. The administration has attacked Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based and state funded media outlet which is the primary news source for much of the Arab world.¹¹⁰ On March 25 the New York Stock Exchange revoked Al-Jazeera's credentials. Meanwhile hackers have prevented either its Arab or English-language sites from being accessible in the US. And the administration has pressured Qatar amir, Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, to force Al-Jazeera to give more emphasis to their versions of events (Lydersen, *Alternet.org*, 31 March 2003: np).

As John Simpson (2003) suggests, whether the attack on Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad was deliberate or not, it was disturbing that the channel's offices had been hit twice in two consecutive wars – in Kabul 2001 and Baghdad in 2003 – and that “on each occasion American command had complained that Al-Jazeera was supporting the enemy” (Simpson 2003: 345).

Furthermore, by recalling the NATO bombing of Belgrade in 1999, Simpson stated that the Serbian state television had been treated as an enemy target and therefore it was attacked. Yet Simpson argued that, although “all senior editorial figures had been warned to keep away on the night of the bombing”, several media personnel were killed (ibid). Simpson added that the attack was intentional, just as the Kabul one was. Thus, “there are those who believe it was a war crime, which should be punished as such” (ibid: 346).

In the case of Iraq, Simpson argued that there were no warnings, and the attack on Iraqi state television on 26th March 2003 by a joint US/UK bombing mission did indeed take out the Iraqi television station, yet several civilians were also killed as the station was in a residential

¹¹⁰ According to the International Press Institute Report for 2003 ‘Death Watch’, “Tariq Ayoub, a cameraman and correspondent for the Qatar-based satellite television network, Al-Jazeera, was killed during a US air raid on Baghdad. Ayoub, a Jordanian citizen, died in hospital after he was wounded in the strike, which set ablaze Al-Jazeera's office near the Information Ministry, the network said. Another member of Al-Jazeera's Baghdad crew, Zohair al-Iraqi, was wounded in the attack” (International Press Institute, 2003: np).

The report also stated that on the same day, 8th April 2003, “Taras Protsyuk, a Reuters cameraman, and Jose Couso, a cameraman for the Spanish television channel Tele 5 were killed when a US tank fired a shell at the Palestine Hotel, the base for many foreign media in Baghdad. Protsyuk, a Ukrainian based in Warsaw was killed immediately; Couso was wounded and later died in hospital. Three other members of the Reuters team in Baghdad were hurt in the tank shell blast” (ibid).

area. The mission was supposedly justified, as the station was “part of a command and control centre” and the station was housed in “a key telecommunications vault” for satellite communications. Nevertheless, the operation was widely condemned, with the International Press Institute declaring the attack a violation of the Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amnesty International also questioned whether it might constitute a war crime, while Human Rights Watch and Reporters Sans Frontiers both condemned it outright (Simpson 2003: 314-315). Yet, according to Simpson, “John Gibson of Fox News, by contrast, claimed the credit for this attack”. Gibson stated that “Fox’s criticism about allowing Saddam Hussein to talk to his citizens and lie to them has had an effect” (Gibson cited in Simpson 2003: 315).

5.3. Media Battles and News Management

According to Philip Seib (2004), when a superpower is at war, it must then decide how much effort it wants to put into justifying its actions. “If the outcome of the conflict is certain, the temptation exists to just fight, win, and be done with it”. However, when the superpower also takes into consideration what people around the world would think of it, then it must make its case. In doing so, news coverage can be useful, but other media tools must also be brought into play (Seib 2004: 125).

As indicated by Lewis et al (2006), the “key messages” of the 2003 coalition’s media operations in Iraq were carefully crafted and presented to the global public by teams of professionals skilled in the art of perception management, and considerable effort was put into the presentation of a united front at the more strategic level (ibid: 22-23). Thus, the need to structure a media campaign in order to push the message on a daily basis was a key element in the efforts of media strategists to win public support.

In his dairies, Alastair Campbell - Tony Blair’s then director of communications and strategy - referred to this issue during a meeting with Gordon Brown on 25th March 2003:

He [Gordon Brown] felt we need to structure things more like a campaign. We need to be clear what it was we were pushing every day. [For] example, today we would push on Baghdad with a line out on humanitarian and reconstruction. The problem was there were currently too many places and people setting an agenda from somewhere (Campbell 2007: 683-684).

According to Campbell, the most important thing for Tony Blair was to communicate to the Iraqis that the British government would see this through, and they [Iraqis] would benefit from the fall of Saddam.

We should not expect them to welcome with open arms, because they will find it hard to believe the Saddam era is ending. We were doing OK with public opinion in our own country but we were nowhere in Iraq (ibid).

Likewise, in the US, the White House defined the invasion as a war of liberation, and produced a media campaign to support that idea.

The official theme was “Iraq: From Fear to Freedom” and the news media were given “liberation updates” and heard “voices of freedom” from Iraqis who appreciated Saddam Hussein’s ouster (Seib 2004: 125).

In the UK, Alistair Campbell and his directorate worked closely with the White House and the American military, co-ordinating the British and American public relations efforts. In an interview with Matt Peacock of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) on 31st March 2003, Campbell expressed his views about the importance of the media during previous wars like Kosovo and Afghanistan in changing the nature of the conflict. He also pointed out the challenges in Iraq (Peacock, *ABC Online*, 31 March 2003: np).

If you take somewhere like Kosovo, militarily there was never any doubt. If you put together the forces of NATO against the forces of Milosevic’s regime, there was never any doubt. The only doubt was actually whether we could sustain public opinion sufficient to make sure the democratically elected governments that make up NATO would see through the mission that they’d set themselves about. We saw the same thing with the Taliban; we are seeing the same thing now. Militarily there is no question at all. This will be won and it will be seen through. But meanwhile and this is the other big difference, which I do not think our media, the media in democracies, understand sufficiently or communicate sufficiently, more to the point, dictatorships are at a huge in-built advantage when it comes to, if you like, this battle for public opinion (ibid).

In his attempts to contain and confront any counter-information coming from the other side, Campbell believed that when the media allows a broadcast of Saddam Hussein or Bin Laden to go on air, it would allow them to exploit the media system for their own advantage by transmitting their own propaganda.

Saddam Hussein can go off and do a broadcast, and you know how many of our media then stand and say what an amazing propaganda coup that was. Bin Laden can sit in his cave and throw out a video, and you get the BBC, CNN and all these other guys saying what a propaganda coup, when all that happened is they exploit, in their

eyes, the weakness in our democracy, the weakness of our media system. They exploit them to their own advantage, and I think sometimes our media allow them to do that (ibid).

Nevertheless, Campbell underlined the propaganda efforts during the war on Iraq in his diaries, in which he also expressed the necessity for integration between the embedding policy and other media efforts in order to provide the public with a wider perspective about the war. On 29th March 2003 he wrote:

ORHA [Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance] was in a state of chaos because of internal US difficulties. They appeared unable to agree on anything. Tony Blair asked afterwards if I thought the propaganda effort was working. I said not. He agreed. The embedded media were treating the whole thing like scenes from a war movie and there was no place for the big picture. The media here were pretty much set on presenting things in the worst light. We had to raise our game (Campbell 2007: 686).

In his interview with Campbell, raising the game was perhaps translated by Matt Peacock of ABC into a question of how important it was to set the agenda and thus to create the news for the day or the week. In his response, Campbell denied this, though he described his role as being clear about what he was seeking to communicate at any given point (Peacock, *ABC Online*, 31 March 2003: np). According to Campbell, this meant being able to provide a wider picture of the conflict than what the embedded correspondents offered from the field, in other words being able to provide the public with a sense of the political situation around this conflict in order to win the required support.

Our job, I think, in terms of trying to plan the communications, is actually to make sure the public is ultimately the audience, our audience is the public, not the media, is that the public at the moment, that means a global audience, has a sense of the big picture. And what we are putting our energies into is really trying to focus upon those events and those messages that communicate the big picture (Campbell cited in Peacock, *ABC Online*, 31 March 2003: np).

However, it is therefore believed that this role required daily coordination with the US in order to harmonise the message and to manage the news. According to Tumber and Palmer (2004), information planning by the US government before the war was based on a 24-hour news cycle, a kind of global PR network to be activated from different parts of the world, from the Pentagon, from Qatar and from the embedded journalists (Tumber and Palmer 2004: 64). Furthermore, Suzy DeFrancis, President Bush's deputy assistant for communications, outlined the way the media would introduce this news cycle:

When Americans wake up in the morning, they will first hear from the [Persian Gulf] region, maybe from General Tommy Franks, then later in the day, they will hear from the Pentagon, then the state department, then later on the White House will brief (DeFrancis cited in Tumber and Palmer 2004: 64).

In keeping with this strategy, Ari Fleischer, the White House Press Secretary, used to set the day's message with an early morning conference call to Alastair Campbell, a conference call to White House Communications Director Dan Bartlett, State Department spokesperson Richard Boucher, Pentagon spokesperson Victoria Clarke, and the White House's Office for Global Communications Director, Tucker Eskew. This routine was similar to the procedures introduced during the Afghanistan War in 2001 (ibid).

Additionally, in their analysis of the media during the Iraq war, Tumber and Palmer have also pointed out the mechanisms adopted by the British Ministry of Defence in order to manage the news during the conflict:

In the UK the Ministry of Defence (MoD) cemented its existing media staff in the MoD headquarters and throughout parts of the forces. Lt Colonel Angus Taverner, the director of news media operations policy, had a remit to co-ordinate the military and civilian press functions within the MoD. The MoD then set up a core press office of 24 people in London, headed by Director of News Pam Teare with, according to reports, more than a hundred media reservists called up with secondary roles to act as media operators when needed. Some of these worked in the UK operations, while others were deployed to the Middle East as part of a 160-strong public relations office contingency (ibid).

Moreover, Angus Taverner stated that the MoD was torn between fulfilling its public duties to keep the British public informed and that of keeping issues of national security closely guarded:

We learned in Kosovo, when there were a lot of incorrect accusations made against NATO by the Milosovic regime, that the media won't wait, and the timeliness of our response is key. The one battle we lost in the Falklands was the media battle, and it produced a lot of work in its wake. By the time we got to the last Gulf War, people thought we had come a long way but we still have not got everything right (Taverner cited in Tumber and Palmer 2004: 64-65).

Nonetheless, Steven Tatham (2006: 86), who served as the Royal Navy's public spokesman during the Iraq war, stated that while the world's media waited for the conflict to begin, both Britain and US had already begun their media-handling strategies months before. In his explanation of the efforts to manage the media battle space during the war, Tatham indicated that the US military had a dedicated uniformed Public Affairs Organization which provided

an entire military career structure, from Private to General, for Public Affairs Officers (PAOs).

Most US military units have their own PAO and there exists a substantial support staff both in the Pentagon and in major US military commands around the world. PAOs come from all branches of the services, many having completed front-line tours before choosing to move to their new specialization (ibid).

According to Tatham, the organization has its own journalists and photographers, who are tasked with providing substantial material support for those officers whose job is essentially the promotion of the US military to the US public and taxpayers (ibid). On the other hand, Britain, according to Tatham, chose to conduct itself differently.

Public Affairs is given a much more operational and military focus. Media Operations Officers (as Britain prefers to call its PAOs) come from all disciplines of the service and will remain in the media operations world for no more than three or four years before returning to their source specialization and career. As such British officers are able to offer substantial military experience but maybe short of media operations know-how (Tatham 2006: 87).

In keeping with Tatham, routine public relations activity is often conducted by the Government Information and Communication Service staff. Regular service officers were often supplemented by reservists, some of whom have been, or still are, employed within the media industry itself (ibid). For most Media Operations Officers the major support is that offered by the MoD Press Office and its updated versions of “Lines to Take” on particular issues, “Key Themes and Messages” and “Questions and Answer’ materials”. These briefing notes provide the central government’s direction on what can and, importantly, what cannot be said (Tatham 2006: 88).

5.4. Information Control, Spin and the Role of the Private Sector

The Pentagon’s desire for the total control of information had extended well beyond Iraq into the living rooms and bedrooms of America and around the world. That was, according to Paul Rutherford, driven in part by the dubious assumption about “The CNN Effect”, the way television images could impact on war decisions - for instance, the claim that “television got us in and television got us out” in Somalia a few years ago. More important was the realization that victory was the single most important product that had to be sold to the citizens as taxpayers and consumers (Rutherford 2004: 61-62). That meant the Pentagon had to find ways to script what constituted the news and how the news was reported. “In

wartime”, Winston Churchill once said, “truth is so precious that it should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.” Rumsfeld had cited those words just after 9/11 when asked whether the Pentagon might ever lie to the media (ibid).

In keeping with Rutherford, early in 2002, rumours hit the press that the Pentagon was playing with the notion of “Black Propaganda”, the planting of false stories, not in the US but elsewhere in the world. Indeed, Maud Beelman, the director of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists in Washington, told CBS Radio during the war that the Pentagon was grouping its PAOs and its psychological operations into one discipline called “Information Operations” (ibid).

For propaganda expert, Nancy Snow, propaganda has not changed in terms of its purpose.

Not much has changed (since Wilson’s times). Propaganda is still used more as an antecedent to war; in other words if the war is paint, then propaganda is the paint primer that makes possible the total devotion of the public to the just cause of the state in wartime (Snow cited in Gutierrez, *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 27 June 2004: np).

According to propaganda specialist, Randall Bytwerk, the primary change is the technology rather than the method: “It is now possible to spread much more information much faster” (Bytwerk cited in Gutierrez, *Inter Press Service News Agency*, 27 June 2004: np). Therefore, various techniques were adopted by strategists to manipulate the media in order to sell the war and to control the messages put out. As Danny Schechter (2004) states, these techniques targeted the media through cultivation and co-operation. They included message development, polling, psychological warfare, and “perception management”. A number of intelligence directorates, “public diplomacy” channels, and public relations firms were used, as were civilian and military agencies (Schechter 2004: 26). Therefore, Deepa Kumar (2006) indicated that the Bush administration used propaganda techniques in order to justify the war, and stressed that what the news media simply presented as factual information should have been carefully scrutinized (Kumar 2006: 48).

Further, David Miller also pointed out that the war on Iraq was the most censored conflict of modern times. He argued that media coverage in mainstream media was controlled as never before, as the US government was determined to eliminate independent reporting of and from Iraq to ensure that its propaganda and spin dominated media agendas in the UK and the US,

and expended massive resources to minimize critical coverage across the world (Miller, *Scoop Online*, 28 March 2003: np). Moreover, as indicated by Danny Schechter, what was additionally new in the war on Iraq was the sophisticated way in which corporate public relations techniques were adapted by the Bush administration to create the rationale for the war, to orchestrate support for it, bring the media on board, and then sell it to politicians and then to the public (Schechter 2004: 25-26).

According to Kumar, the mechanisms used for information control were successful due to two prime co-existing factors:

The development and testing of government information control strategies over the last three decades, and the emergence of a for-profit conglomerate media system that lends itself to propaganda due to its structural limitations (Kumar 2004: 49).

Furthermore, Kumar stated that several new facets of censorship were incorporated, making the system more sophisticated.

In part, this evolution and perfecting of the media-military industrial complex propaganda system is voluntary and conscious. For instance, Bush advisors Karl Rove and Mark McKinnon met with the heads of Viacom, Disney, MGM and others after 9/11 to discuss how the media could “help” the government’s efforts. Before the start of the Iraq war, CNN set up a system of “script approval” where reporters had to send their stories to unnamed officials in Atlanta before they could be run. This would ensure if the military made any errors, CNN monitors would act as the second layer of filtering. Rupert Murdoch of News Corporation took an active role in setting the tone of his news media outlets, so that, not coincidentally, all 175 editors of Murdoch’s worldwide newspaper empire took a position in support of the war. Fox, also owned by News Corporation, took this support to the extreme, going so far as to ridicule antiwar protesters (Kumar 2006: 51).

As for the CNN’s script approval system, Robert Fisk (2003) cited the CNN document, “Reminder of Script Approval Policy”, which was issued on 27th January 2003:

All reporters preparing package scripts must submit the scripts for approval ... Packages may not be edited until scripts are approved ... All packages originating outside Washington, LA (Los Angeles) or NY (New York), including all international bureaus, must come to ROW¹¹¹ in Atlanta for approval ... A script is not approved for air unless it is properly marked approved by an authorised manager and duped (duplicated) to burcopy (bureau copy) ... when a script is updated it must be re-approved, preferably by the originating approving authority (cited in Fisk, *The Independent*, 25 February 2003: np).

¹¹¹ Fisk clarifies this: “‘ROW’ is the row of script editors in Atlanta who can insist on changes or “balances” in the reporter’s dispatch” (ibid).

Fisk argued that that the key words in that document were “approved” and “authorised”. For him, reporters in “Kuwait or Baghdad – or Jerusalem or Ramallah – may know far more about the background of their stories than the “authorities” in Atlanta. However, according to Fisk, CNN’s chiefs would decide the spin of the story (ibid).

In a further message, dated 31 January 2003, CNN staff were told that a new computerised system of script approval would allow “authorised script approvers to mark script (i.e., reports) in a clear and standard manner. Script EPs (executive producers) will click on the coloured APPROVED button to run it from red (unapproved) to green (approved). When someone makes a change in the script after approval, the button will turn yellow” (ibid).

Fisk stated that CNN’s reporters were not told who “this someone” would be; however, Fisk added that “when we recall that CNN revealed after the 1991 Gulf War that it had allowed Pentagon ‘trainees’ into the CNN newsroom in Atlanta” then suspicions would rise (ibid). Nevertheless, Fisk also asserted that other networks followed slimier policies in order to manage and control reports: “CNN, of course, is not alone in this paranoid form of reporting. Other US networks operate equally anti-journalistic systems” (ibid).

Supporting such ideas, Douglas Kellner argued that the media have become the “arms of conservative and corporate interests”, due to the concentration of ownership. Thus, instead of acting in the interests of the public, they advance the interests of political and economic elites (Kellner cited in Kumar 2006: 49). For that reason, Norman Solomon stated that the military-industrial complex “extends to much of the corporate media” (Solomon, *FAIR*, July/August 2005: np).

In the process, firms with military ties routinely advertise in the news outlets. Often media magnates and people on board of large media-related corporations enjoy close links - financial and social - with the military industry and Washington’s foreign policy establishment (ibid).

Solomon pointed out that media owning corporations can also be significant weapons merchants. In a combined study with Martin A. Lee, he found in 1991 the stake one major company had invested in the latest war.

What we found was sobering: NBC’s owner, General Electric, designed, manufactured or supplied parts or maintenance for nearly every major weapon system

used by the US during the Gulf war - including the Patriot and Tomahawk Cruise missiles, the Stealth bomber, the B-52 bomber, the AWACS plane, and the NAVSTAR spy satellite system. "In other words", we wrote in *Unreliable Sources*, "when correspondents and paid consultants on NBC television praised the performance of US weapons, they were extolling equipment made by GE, the corporation that pays their salaries (ibid).

Additionally, Solomon revealed that during one year, 1989, General Electric had received close to \$2 billion in military contracts related to systems that ended up being utilised for the Gulf War.

Fifteen years later, the company still had a big stake in military spending. In 2004, when the Pentagon released its list of top military contractors for the latest fiscal war, General Electric ranked eighth with \$2.8 billion in contracts (ibid).

According to Danny Schechter, the benefits from such a media environment were shaped by a wave of media consolidation, seen in the number of companies controlling the US media dropping from "fifty to between five and seven in just ten years". The impact has been in "the merger of news biz and show biz", and such entertainment-oriented shows help "depoliticise viewers, while sensation-driven cable news limits analytical journalism and in-depth issue-oriented coverage" (Schechter, *Alternet.org*, 1 May 2003: np).

One of the major motives for such a development was, as indicated by Kumar, the aftermath of the Vietnam War, when a section of the political elites came to believe that it was due to the media coverage of the war that led to US defeat. Among other things, they argued that television distorted the war by showing graphic images of the dead, turning Americans against the war (Kumar 2006: 50). Therefore, according to Kumar, the convergence of media and government interests in war propaganda derives from shared economic and political interests.

In order for US-based media conglomerates such as AOL-Time Warner, Disney, Viacom, etc., to continue to be profitable and to extend their reach, they rely on government to protect their interests domestically and internationally. Domestically, policies like the Telecommunication Act 1996 have allowed for unprecedented media concentration. Internationally, the US government through institutions like the World Trade Organization pries open foreign governments for US media investments. In the case of Iraq, the conquest of that country and the strengthening of US control in the region allows US-based media conglomerates and telecommunications giants to be better positioned to dominate Middle East markets (Kumar 2006: 51).

In keeping with Kumar, the convergence of these two trends had seen a further integration of the media into the military industrial complex, building upon the existing Cold War relationship. This integration and the pressure to increase profit by giant media conglomerates has led to methods of operation that have compromised journalists' ethics.

“The Fox effect” shows how this works. The Fox news channel emerged, over the course of the war on Iraq, as the most watched source of news on cable. Fox's approach to the war was self-consciously biased in favour of war, and it sought to tap into a conservative niche market. Anchors and reporters openly chided antiwar voices and abandoned any pretence of neutrality and objectivity. Despite the obvious violations of journalistic integrity, Fox received high ratings, and disturbingly other channels took steps to emulate Fox (ibid: 52).

From the above, it follows that those who were responsible for waging the information war devoted great attention to “perception management” for the population at home and, indeed, worldwide. This, according to Tumber and Webster (2006: 35), was pressing the “democratic nations” where public opinion can be an essential and vital factor in supporting the war. However, perception management, according to Rampton and Stauber (2003: np), has been much more successful at “influencing the emotions, motives, and objective reasoning” of the American people than it has been in reaching “foreign audiences”.

5.5. Media Strategies: Techniques and Practice

Information planners in the US and UK used various techniques during the war in order to control the flow of information coming from the battlefield and to be able to push the message forward to influence public opinion. As indicated earlier, some of these techniques had been used and tested in previous conflicts, while others were implanted for the first time, such as the embedding policy. The overall result was to produce a proactive media strategy to cultivate media allies and target key programs through close consultation and other services, including supplying videos, photos, and media training in war survival (Schechter 2004: 26).

The Pentagon set out to win at least three wars: the one on the battlefield of the moment, the so-called war for hearts and minds in Iraq, and “the media war”. To translate further, we rely on the always blunt Richard Holbrooke, a Balkans negotiator and former UN ambassador who, true to form, doesn't mince words: “call it public diplomacy or public affairs, or psychological warfare or ...” he pauses, to cut through this fog, “if you really want to be blunt - propaganda” (Schechter 2004: 30).

5.5.1. Selling the war and the use of language

In its strategy to win international support for invading Iraq, the US administration implemented extensive diplomatic efforts to address the UN Security Council and to assemble convincing evidence about the dangers posed by the Iraqi regime in order to build an international coalition. The significance of this strategy was to portray that the war on Iraq was not just an American war, but the will of the international community to remove Saddam Hussein. This was encapsulated in a phrase used by President Bush, “the coalition of the willing” in naming his administration’s strategy to win international support.

However, the term “coalition of the willing” refers to Military intervention with a humanitarian purpose (Evans et al, ICISS¹¹² Report 2001). According to the report, this type of military intervention which acts for human protection purposes has “different objectives than both traditional warfighting and traditional peace keeping operations” (ibid: 57). The report states:

While military intervention operations require the use of as much force as is necessary, which may on occasion be a great deal, to protect the population at risk, their basic objective is always to achieve quick success with as little cost as possible in civilian lives and inflicting as little damage as possible so as to enhance recovery prospects in the post-conflict phase. In warfighting, by contrast, the neutralization of an opponent’s military or industrial capabilities is often the instrument to force surrender (ibid).

The report stated that with the end of the Cold War, the issue of intervention for human protection purposes “has been seen as one of the most controversial and difficult of all international relations questions” (Evans and Sahnoun, ICISS Report Forward 2001: VII).

External military intervention for human protection has been controversial both when it happened – as in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo – and when it has failed to happen, as in Rwanda (ibid).

Further, Acharya (2002), argued that in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, French Minister Roland Dumas asserted that the international community had a “right to intervene” to alleviate human suffering caused by repression, civil disorder, inter-state conflict or natural disasters (Acharya, 2002: 374). However, the ICISS report questioned the justification for

¹¹² The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established in 2000 by the government of Canada. It was announced at the General Assembly in September 2000 (Evans and Sahnoun, ICISS Report Forward 2000: VII). The commission’s report was “largely completed” before the attacks of 11 September 2001. The report aimed at providing “precise guidance” for states faced with “human protection claims”; it has not been framed to guide the policy of states when faced with attacks on their own nationals, or the nationals of other states residing within their borders” (ibid: VIII).

military intervention by a “coalition of the willing” that bypasses and marginalizes the UN system, by acting without Security Council approval (ibid: 1).

Interventions by ad hoc coalitions (or, even more, individual states) acting without the approval of the security Council, or the General Assembly, or a regional or sub-regional grouping of which the target state is a member, do not – it would be an understatement to say – find wide favour (ibid: 54).

Yet, in terms of its operational dimension, the report also stated that any effective coalition building means “creating and maintaining a common political resolve, and working out a common military approach” (ibid: 59).

Enforcement actions conducted by coalitions of the willing have to take into account the politics of member states and the impact of the media (ibid).

As to the media, the report asserted that “there is no question that good reporting, well-argued opinion pieces” and in particular live transmission of images of suffering could generate “both domestic and international pressure to act” (ibid: 73). This focus by the media on human suffering can also influence diplomatic and military decisions:

By focusing attention on human suffering, media attention sometimes tends to divert policy makers from hard diplomatic and military decisions, with time pressures sometimes pushing them to become involved before serious analysis and planning can occur. This is perhaps a lesser sin than those of total inertia or excessive delay, but it can create problems nonetheless (ibid).

Having said this, Acharya on the other hand, asserted that the coalition of the willing’ approach is undesirably controversial because of its questionable basis in international law, and because such interventions are usually “dominated by powerful states” (Acharya 2002: 377).

It comes at a time when the post-Cold War intervention debate has turned full circle. In the wake of Iraq and Somalia, the concept of intervention was said to have shifted from being geopolitically-motivated to being principle-based. We were told to expect an era in which humanitarian impulse, rather than national interest, would form the chief initial rationale for intervention. Now, in post-post-Cold War Era (after 11 September), the US is reverting unabashedly to renewed geopolitical interventionism that includes pre-emptive intervention against states accused of sponsoring terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (ibid: 380).

For this reason, the term “coalition of the willing” was used by the Bush administration to describe the US efforts in seeking an international alliance in its war on Iraq in 2003.

According to Steve Schifferes of the BBC on 18th March 2003, the US named 30 countries who had decided to associate their efforts with the US actions in Iraq, only a few of these countries, the US state department admitted, were “providing any major military presence in the Gulf, notably Britain and Australia” (Schifferes, *BBC News Online*, 18 March 2003: np). In addition, there were 15 countries providing assistance, such as over-flight rights, but which did not want to declare their support (ibid).

Many of the countries on the list are from Eastern Europe. Where countries like Romania are providing basing rights, while Poland has offered 200 troops and the Czech Republic is sending chemical-biological warfare support¹¹³ (ibid).

Nevertheless, Laura McClure (2003), noted that in order to build this coalition, the US administration used the strategy of offering large amounts of foreign aid in exchange for supporting the Iraq war, such a strategy was described by McClure as the US “brandishing its wallet as a weapon” (McClure, *Salon.com*, 12 March 2003: np). Turkey, for instance, was offered \$6 billion in direct aid, plus billions more in loans, if it would allow the US to base soldiers there in advance of the invasion, and other nations like Guinea, Mexico, Chile, Angola, Cameroon and Pakistan - which were the six undecided countries of the 15 members of the UN Security Council - faced the same dilemma, whether to ignore the “mounting opposition to war at home, or face the wrath of Washington”¹¹⁴ (McClure, *Salon.com*, 12 March 2003: np). In referring to the US efforts to win international support for its decision to launch a war against Iraq, McClure used the phrase “Coalition of the billing” (ibid).

¹¹³ With regard to Arab states, this was unlike the 1991 Gulf War, where Arab countries such as the Gulf states, Egypt and Syria joined the international coalition to “liberate Kuwait”, in this war Schifferes stated that “all of the Arab states, including those countries where US troops are massing for an invasion, like Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain” felt it “wise not to be publicly identified with the US action” especially with feelings running high in the Arab world against the invasion. Even “traditional US Arab allies, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, clearly did not want to associate themselves with military action against Saddam Hussein (Schifferes, *BBC News Online*, 18 March 2003: np). According to Lacey (2009), in 2002 the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia in 2002, Abdullah [currently the King], instructed his personal spokesman, Adel Al-Jubeir, to go out and make clear his opposition to a US invasion of Iraq: “There is no country in the world that supports it”, declared Al-Jubeir in August 2002. “There is no legal basis for it. There is no international sanction for it. There is no coalition for it” (Lacey 2009: 288). Further, Al-Jubeir did the rounds of US TV newscasts systematically rebutting a speech Vice President Cheney had recently made that called for invasion (ibid).

So far as the Saudis were concerned, the same reasoning applied in 2002 as ten years earlier, when there were calls for the victorious Gulf War allies to march on Baghdad: better the devil you know ... Saddam might be a villain, but he was a Sunni villain whose power kept the Shia- and the ayatollah of Iran – at bay. Bringing down the Iraqi dictator risked making Tehran, not America, the new Rome in the Middle East (Lacey 2009: 288).

¹¹⁴ As stated by McClure, the Bush administration required 9 votes from among the 15 members of the UN Security Council to authorise the invasion, therefore its policy was to influence the six undecided countries by offering them economic and financial support (ibid).

However, according to Andrew Calabrese (2005), the principle arguments offered to the UN Security Council for why the US and UK should invade Iraq were twofold:

One being that the regime of Saddam Hussein had continued to store, produce, and find ways to further develop the capacity to produce biological, chemical, and nuclear “weapons of mass destruction” (WMDs), and the other being that there were covert links between the Iraqi government and members of the Al-Qaeda network, perhaps even implicating Iraq in the terrorist attacks on US targets on September 11, 2001 (Calabrese 2005: 155).

According to Janice J. Terry (2007), Powell’s speech came a few days after President Bush stated that Iraq intended to buy uranium from Africa,

In the pivotal State of the Union Speech on 28 January 2003, just weeks after meeting with Blair, Bush uttered the now famous sixteen words, “The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa” (Terry 2007: 31).

However, Terry asserted that such a statement was not true and that “the White House knew it was not true”. Terry indicated that many documents discredited this statement by Bush, including CIA documents.

A 90-page 2002 National Intelligence Council report, ‘Iraq’s Continuing Programmes for Weapons of Mass Destruction’ cast doubt on allegations that Niger sold yellowcake to Iraq (ibid).

Still, Calabrese stated, US Secretary of State Colin Powell appeared before the UN Security Council on 5th February 2003 and presented what he characterised as “compelling evidence of the existence of WMDs in Iraq and of links between Al-Qaeda and Saddam Hussein’s regime.”¹¹⁵ Powell stated that Saddam Hussein had the ability to deliver “lethal poisons and diseases in ways that can cause massive death and destruction” (Powell cited in Calabrese 2005: 156). The same language was used one day later when President Bush addressed the American nation, stating that the Iraqi regime had “acquired and tested the means to deliver weapons of mass destruction”, including spray devices on “unnamed aerial vehicles” which, if launched from a ship off the American coast, “could reach hundreds of miles inland”. Bush also made sure on the same occasion to link Saddam Hussein’s regime to Al-Qaeda, stating

¹¹⁵ According to the Elana Schor (2008), a US military study officially acknowledged for the first time on 12th March 2008 that Saddam Hussein had no direct ties to Al-Qaeda, undercutting the Bush administration’s central case for war with Iraq (Schor, *The Guardian* 13 March 2008: np). Schor added that the Pentagon study was supposedly based on more than 600,000 documents recovered after US and UK troops toppled Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003, yet it was discovered that there was “‘no smoking gun’ (i.e., direct connection) between Saddam’s Iraq and Al-Qaeda” as its authors wrote (ibid).

that there were “longstanding, direct and continuing ties to terrorist networks ... [Therefore] the danger Saddam Hussein poses reaches across the world” (Bush cited in Calabrese 2005: 156). However, such claims were disputed, and the evidence used to support them was discredited “before, during and since the US invasion of Iraq” (ibid).

Similarly, Britain’s Tony Blair, according to David Miller (2004b: 5), was very careful in his use of the language which “exploited the media’s thirst for dramatic threats”. In a key address to the House of Commons Liaison Committee, Blair stated: “I think it is important that we do everything we can to try to show people the link between the issue of weapons of mass destruction and these international terrorist groups, mainly linked to Al-Qaeda” (Blair cited in Miller 2004b: 5).

Nevertheless, Miller considered that the attack on Iraq showed “the integration of propaganda and lying into the core of government strategy”, which was coordinated by “Downing Street, the White House and the Pentagon” in order to make invading and occupying a sovereign country a successful operation. According to Miller, they elevated the Iraqi threat story into “the premier league of big lies” (ibid). In agreement with Miller, other scholars have also pointed out their use of language, and criticised the way the US administration used language to promote its policies towards war on Iraq. Douglas Kellner (2007), for instance, accused the administration of constantly lying about Iraq and other political issues. Kellner stated that the Bush administration has practised “the Goebbels-Hitler strategy of the Big Lie, assuming that if you repeat a slogan or idea enough times, the public would come to believe it - that the words would become reality” (Kellner 2007: 135). According to Kellner, Bush was projected for years as “a compassionate conservative”, that his tax breaks would help everyone, and his plan to privatise social security would also do so, and that Iraq was a dangerous threat to US national security. Therefore invading Iraq was necessary, while “Bushspeak”¹¹⁶ involved continual repetition of simplistic slogans aimed to mobilize conservative support without regard to truth (ibid).

Similarly, Rampton and Stauber (2003) also pointed out the use of the phrase “Axis of Evil” by Bush on 29 January 2002, which included Iraq, Iran and North Korea, and where he accused them of destabilising world peace. According to Rampton and Stauber, the concept

¹¹⁶ It is assumed that Kellner’s use of Bushspeak is developed from George Orwell’s use of the term “Doublespeak” in his novel 1984.

of an “axis” evokes memories of the Axis powers of WWII and functioned to prepare for acceptance of war against nations that purportedly belong to this axis (ibid: 114). However, this use of the term “was misleading; it suggested an alliance or confederation of states that pose a significant danger precisely because of their common alignment”. In reality, Iran and Iraq had been bitter adversaries for decades, and there was no pattern of collaboration between North Korea and the other two states (ibid: 115). Likewise, Rampton and Stauber illustrated other terms and phrases used by the US administration such as “Operation Iraqi Freedom” - the American military campaign against Iraq, which served as a powerful framing device, particularly when television networks, including Fox and MSNBC, used “Operation Iraqi Freedom” as their tag line for the war, with the phrase appearing in 3-D logos accompanied by imagery of flags and other symbols of patriotism (ibid). Other phrases, like “Old Europe”, were also assumed to be propagandistic since it was aiming to marginalise the role of Germany and France in opposing the war on Iraq. The term was used by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld on 22 January 2003 in dismissing French and German insistence that “everything must be done to avoid war” with Iraq, saying most European countries stood with the US in its campaign against the Iraqi regime (*CNN News Online*, 23 January 2003: np).

... You look at vast numbers of other countries in Europe. They are not with France or Germany on this, they are with the United States, ... Germany and France represent old Europe, and the NATO expansion in recent years means the centre of gravity is shifting to the East (Rumsfeld cited in *CNN News Online*, 23 January 2003: np).

It is believed that the use of such language during the war extended beyond selling the war through focusing on the brutality of Saddam’s regime and his military arsenal or links to terrorist groups, to frame certain incidents with phrases that would not reveal the awfulness of the war’s reality, and at the same time would appeal to the public as a positive approach – as in such phrases as “precision bombing”, “surgical strikes” and “friendly fire”. Sainath argued that though some of these phrases had been used in previous conflicts, they were still common during the run-up to the Iraq war and served alongside other propaganda techniques to shape public opinion (Sainath, *The Hindu*, 13 April 2003: np).

It is engaging how the myth of “precision bombing” and “surgical strikes” linger, despite having been discredited many times in the past. The idea, of course, is that technology in the hands of caring American and British soldiers helps avoid civilian casualties. For audiences fed on Western journalism’s instant history of last week it might seem novel. Not so. In 1986, a U.S. “surgical strike” on Libya reduced the French embassy in Tripoli to rubble. The Americans also succeeded in killing

Gaddafi's three-year-old daughter - apparently a dangerous terrorist. Then as now, the U.S. struck to "decapitate the regime" (ibid).

In addition, the phrase "collateral damage" was widely used during the course of the war to describe Iraqi civilians who had been shot by the "coalition troops". According to Mariellen Diemand, it was also observed that as Iraqi forces attempted to fight back against the US military, "their defence was framed as terrorism", their deaths as "collateral damage" and progress (Diemand, Media Education Foundation, 2003: np). Accordingly, Sainath described the amount of destruction that occurred among civilians through military attacks as "The Coalition of the Killing" rather than "The Coalition of the Willing".

In this war, an astonishing amount of firepower has been directed at everything Iraqi. But most civilians killed become "paramilitary" or soldiers "disguised as civilians". Any residential area flattened was really harbouring the Iraqi military. No one can count the number of "command and control" structures the Coalition of the Killing have taken out. It's as if every Iraqi phone booth destroyed becomes, posthumously, a "command and control structure" (Sainath, *The Hindu*, 13 April 2003: np).

Nevertheless, recalling George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language" in 1946, propaganda expert Nancy Snow quoted Orwell saying that political language "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidarity to pure wind" (cited in Snow 2004: 23). Snow argued that based on Orwell's classic example of language control, the slogan "War is Peace", it is impossible to hold two opposing ideas in "our minds" at the same time and believe in them, therefore when thinking about the language that defines our communication, "the war on terror" or "we are at war", as President Bush said on 11 September 2001, people would think "war" meant something with a definite conclusion. Then, with a pending war in Afghanistan and another in Iraq, a phrase like the "war on terror" becomes a symbol of perpetual thinking about perpetual war (ibid).

According to Nancy Snow (2003), information about such a war will continue to be led by the control of language from the top. In the case of Iraq, slogans and facile statements about freedom over tyranny from President Bush seemed to satisfy the appetite of the press, while opposing thoughts from the grassroots that required evidence beyond reasonable doubt (Snow 2003: 81).

The President's pet slogan "war on terrorism" remains a convenient state tactic to control public opinion, expand the climate of fear, and shut down opposition to war in Iraq and elsewhere (ibid).

Many peace and social change activities, according to Snow, were legitimately concerned with the manner in which countering terrorism through better intelligence and policing has been replaced by aggressive war talk about “primitive strikes” and “regime change”. Snow argued that the intention of such propaganda phrases such as the “war on terrorism” and attacking “those who hate freedom” is to paralyze individual thought as well as to condition people to act as one mass.

The enemy - terrorism, Iraq, Bin Laden, Hussein - becomes one threatening category, something to be defeated and destroyed, so that the public response will be one of reaction to fear and threat rather than creativity and independently thinking for oneself (Snow 2003: 82).

Additionally, Rutherford (2004) stated that control of language about the war was one of the first priorities of the propaganda campaign launched to sell the policy of going to war. According to him, the Pentagon’s struggle to get “the right words” such as “collateral damage” (civilian deaths) and “friendly fire” (killing your own) in earlier wars was in itself not new. However, the new twist this time was the effort amounted to a particular application of a new technique called “viral marketing” that had been born out of the experience of selling on the Internet (Rutherford 2004: 62). “The idea was to get any promotion to propagate itself by infecting other messages, much as a virus can spread rapidly through an unsuspecting population” (ibid). To reach this “unsuspecting population”, Rutherford assumed that the White House and Pentagon were keen to get to “reporters and thus consumers to utilize the right terminology” in order to ensure the right spin on events (ibid).

What was most telling was the way the Pentagon terminology did circulate through the media, not just because of the official briefings but because it was used by anchors, analysts, and reporters. That was most obvious in the case of “shock and awe”, which became part of common parlance, recognised by just about everyone who consumed the war (ibid: 64).

Thus, Rutherford believed that the Pentagon has left its mark on the vocabulary of journalism. He pointed out that even the embedded reporters produced a form of “embedded language”, which Geoffrey Nunberg of the *New York Times*, described as “the metallic clatter of modern military lingo ... such as ‘asymmetric warfare’, ‘emerging targets’, and ‘catastrophic success’” (Nunberg cited in Rutherford 2004: 64).

5.5.2. The embedding strategy

This is perhaps one of the most controversial strategies, designed by the Pentagon to deal with the media during the 2003 Iraq war. It is assumed that the desire to engineer a supportive public opinion to the war, by managing and controlling information coming from the battle zones was the major reason to adopt such a policy, therefore the Pentagon was keen to succeed in providing a favourable style of reporting through the embedded reporters. Such a strategy was described by Chris Paterson (2005) as “The greatest coup for American information control which came during the war with the thoroughly critiqued practice of embedding” (Paterson 2005: 55).

According to Paul Friedman (2003), a former executive vice president and former managing editor for *ABC News*, “the embedding process was, in a sense, a bold return to the Vietnam War, “the last time the government was willing to take chances with giving reporters the freedom to cover military action up close, with few restrictions” (Friedman 2003: 29). Friedman argued that, for television, the combination of access and new technology meant the possibility of covering the war live from the battlefield. However, the situation was more complicated than that, due to the complex relationship between the military and the press, which obviously had an impact on the reporting of events as the war went on.

War meets the small video camera and instant transmission via computer, videophone, and satellite. How much more dramatic could it get? Yet embedding did not live up to advance billing, at least at the beginning. Still, as time went on, the impact of embedded reporters became very important, and a central part of the debate over the war (ibid).

Nevertheless, Terrence Smith (2003) considered the embedding strategy as the most innovative aspect of the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war. For Smith, the strategy was a bold experiment initiated by the Pentagon that established new standards for war reporting.

It made possible a kind of intimate, immediate, absorbing, almost addictive coverage, the like of which we have not seen before. In the twenty-one days between the first airstrike and the collapse of Saddam’s regime, a new standard was set for war reporting. It is impossible to imagine a future US military campaign without reporters embedded in the frontline units, without instant transmission from the battlefield, without “tank cams,” “lipstick cams,” satellite phones, grainy-green night-vision cameras, and all the high-tech paraphernalia that brought war in Iraq directly into our living rooms and collective consciousness. There is no going back (Smith 2003: 26).

Yet the experience of embedding created a rich discussion among reporters who were part of the process and experienced its regulations and outlines. Some supported the concept of embedding, while others criticised it for threatening journalism's concepts of objectivity and neutrality. For instance, Bob Arnot, of *MSNBC* and *NBC News*, regarded the embedding process as "the best single move the American military had ever made in its relations to the press" (Arnot 2003: 42).

The Pentagon went from one blunder after another – the 1991 gulf¹¹⁷ war, Grenada, Panama – to placing us inside the story. Television pictures showed why the northward advance was at times slow. Viewers at home experienced the sandstorms. You witnessed NBC's David Bloom out there getting blown around by the sand and not being able to see his hand in front of his face. In the middle of a prolonged live firelight, viewers could observe for themselves how strong the resistance was, and how the US forces were trying to protect their soldiers and marines (ibid).

However, John Burnett of *National Public Radio*, saw the embedding policy as a flawed experiment that served the purposes of the military more than it served the cause of balanced journalism (Burnett 2003: 43). According to him, the Pentagon developed the embedding system in response to the media's desire for front-row access to the war. However, during his travels with the marines, Burnett realised that he could not "shake the sense" that they were "cheerleaders on the team bus" (ibid).

Much of the Marine command that I met saw us, not as neutral journalists who had a job to do, but as instruments to reflect the accomplishments and glory of the United States Marine Corps. A press officer leaned back in the chow hall one day and scanned a colour spread in *Time* on marines preparing for battle. "Money can't buy this kind of recruitment campaign" he said (ibid).

Nevertheless, the position of embedded reporters with the military units limited their movements and their views of the surroundings of stories they were reporting. According to Gavin Hewitt (2005), this was the issue since day one of the war. The only thing embedded reporters were seeing were the flashes of the shells being fired at "targets".

Then the war started. The terrible beauty of shock and awe. Salvo after salvo of rockets launched into the night sky trailing arcs of brilliant white light. Sometimes we could pick out the rockets before the heat exhausts faded and they continued their journey in the darkness. There were flashes, orange flashes as the artillery fired and the sound, the rumble from the multiple-rocket launchers and the sharper crack from the guns of the Paladins (Hewitt 2005: 267).

¹¹⁷ Non capitalisation is as in original quote.

For Hewitt, reporting back to London live on the BBC, it was like “being on a viewing platform, describing a giant fireworks display”. The more descriptive he was, made him feel the more he was in danger of sounding like a cheerleader (ibid).

The fact was that the ground war had begun, it was happening in front of me, but I did not know who or what was being fired at beyond the low horizon of the desert. War was like this. You had a frontline seat, but even so, you ended up partially sighted. Weapons were fired but you rarely saw where they landed (ibid: 268).

In the same view, John Burnett stated the most common criticism of the embedding system was the lack of mobility, which limited the movement of reporters to the accompanying military units and consequently made them depend on the accompanying military units, not only for information but also for safety and transportation.

Without our own transportation or translators, embedded reporters lived exclusively within the reality of the US military. In briefings, we were told about targets destroyed, territory claimed, and enemy soldiers surrendering (ibid).

In agreement with Hewitt and Burnett, George Wilson of the *National Journal*, who also covered the Vietnam War for *The Washington Post*, commented on the limited mobility of reporters by saying “We would see a shell go downrange. But we had no way to find out what it hit” (cited in Burnett 2003: 43).

Nevertheless, Burnett added that even when some unilaterals decided to travel with the troops in their own vehicles they offered “little aggressive, independent reporting” because they were afraid of losing their place or of the military denying them food and fuel (ibid: 44).

There is no doubt that the issue of mobility was of great concern to many reporters, especially the embedded ones. Friedman agreed with Burnett and Wilson by illustrating that “on the move, the reporters and their cameramen followed a story they usually could not see”, However, Friedman referred to this as being in the nature of warfare - that much of it took place with a distant “enemy” (Friedman 2003: 30).

The embedded reporter and camera see weapons fired at an unseen enemy and, if they are lucky (or unlucky), they may see tracers of weapons fired back. But there is seldom the time or the mobility needed to reconstruct what happened and tell a complete story ... as American troops closed on Baghdad, there was video of destroyed Iraqi armor, pickup trucks with mounted weapons, and other vehicles. Both nothing matched the reports of hundreds of tanks destroyed, and there was certainly no video to document reports of thousands of Iraqi soldiers killed. Either bodies were

removed before the embedded units caught up with the targets they'd attacked from miles away or they were steering around them. Or the reports were off base (ibid).

Nevertheless, Joel Campagna (2003), of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), considered that during the Iraq war reporters were allowed "the most access to front-line American troops since the Vietnam War". However, he argued that it was due to the plan to accommodate journalists within the troops, as officials at the Pentagon had formulated a detailed plan to "embed" more than 500 reporters with the US troops in and around the battlefield (Campagna, CPJ, 25 February 2003: np). This approach, according to Campagna, aimed at improving the military's strained relationship with the press during the conflict. However, it was seeking to ensure positive coverage of military endeavours, and giving the military the upper hand in any "information war" that would ensue during the attack on Iraq by having reporters counter negative news about troop activities, such as reports about civilian casualties (ibid). The concern about this type of reporting, according to Campagna, was that it would lead to "one-dimensional and uncritical reporting on US troops" (ibid).

In addition, Shrivastava (2003) stated that the public affairs guidance on embedding of media "during possible future operations/deployments in the US Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility" was ready on February 03, 2003. Within this, Paragraph 2A says:

The Department of Defence (DOD) policy on media coverage of future military operations is that media will have long-term, minimally restrictive accesses to U.S. air, ground and naval forces through embedding. Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and the years ahead. This holds true of the U.S. public; the public in the allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and the public in countries where we conduct operations whose perceptions of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement. Our ultimate strategic success in bringing peace and security to this region will come in our long-term commitment to supporting our democratic ideals. We need to tell the factual story - good or bad - before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people in the field need to tell our story - only commanders can ensure the media get the story alongside the troops. We must organise for and facilitate access of national and international media to our forces, including those forces engaged in ground operations, with goal of doing so from the start. To accomplish this, we will embed media with our units. These embedded media will live, work and travel as part of the units with which they are embedded to facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of the U.S. forces in combat and related operations. Commanders and public affairs officers must work together to balance the need for media access with the need for operational security (cited in Shrivastava 2003: np).

According to Eilders (2005), the method of embedding journalists in military units was one of the US government's new strategies to control information. This strategy had replaced the "pool system", adopted since the Vietnam War but mainly during the 1991 Gulf War, in which journalists had been grouped and headed by the military, which had consequently affected the media coverage through censorship and restricted movements of journalists to the actual fighting (Eilders 2005: 643-644).

In agreement with Eilders, Miller also stated that in past wars (including the 1991 Gulf War), the pool system has been "the main means of control of journalists "in theatre" – a propaganda term adopted by many journalists" (Miller, *Scoop Online*, 28.3.2003: np). This time, according to Miller, the Pentagon had become more sophisticated and more determined to "eliminate the possibility of independent reporting ... The pool system this time has a further new feature known as "embedding" which entails those reporters to operate in close proximity to military units" (ibid). For Eilders, the embedding strategy allowed journalists to be right on the spot with the troops and to report in a relatively unrestricted manner. However, she argued that this strategy had also generated a great deal of criticism, especially among journalists themselves, and any critical stance depended on the actual involvement in the hostilities or on the degree of support for the US forces in the Iraq war (Eilders 2005: 644).

Furthermore, Danny Schechter (2006) assumed that the embedding experience grew out of the experiences during the Afghan War, where there were clashes between journalists who wanted access to the story on the ground and the military units who physically threatened media representatives. This was stage-managed from the central command's military base in Tampa, Florida, and had been deliberately moved out of Washington to ensure secrecy (Schechter 2006: 26). Therefore, to avoid extra pressure from the media, the Pentagon offered the media the chance during the war on Iraq to embed their reporters in designated military units, though only some of these were in the main invasion force. This would also include that the journalists would undergo a mild version of basic training to prepare them for battlefield discipline.

Rutherford (2004) additionally states that embedded journalists had to sign contracts to signify their willingness to self-censor so that information deemed vital to the ongoing military operations would not be released in their reports. Close-ups of dead or wounded

soldiers, for example, were taboo, at least until next of kin were notified. In return, the Pentagon and the military would do their best to make sure these embedded reporters could send their stories and their images back to their news outlets (Rutherford 2004: 72). On the subject of self-censorship, Deepa Kumar argued that this scheme positioned viewers, quite literally, to witness the skirmishes from the viewpoint of the military:

If you shoot the action from the side of the US and British forces, it becomes very clear who the “good guys” and the “bad guys” are and whom to support (Kumar 2006: 61).

According to Kumar, far from achieving objective reporting, the embedded reporters were telling the story both physically and ideologically from the vantage of the US and British troops.

Ideologically, the journalists seemed to identify with the soldiers. This would seem natural; after all, they ate with them, they slept together, and they even wore the same clothes (ibid).

In agreement with Kumar, Gordon Dillow of the *Orange County Register*, who was embedded with Alpha Company, First Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment, stated that it was extremely hard not to be emotionally engaged with the marines:

But the biggest problem I faced as an embed with the marine grunts was I found myself doing what journalists are warned from J-school not to do: I found myself falling in love with my subject. I fell in love with “my” marines (Dillow 2003: 33).

In addition, Dillow pointed out the reasons behind this identification with the marines, which dominated his view of the war:

When you live with the same guys for weeks, sharing their miseries, learning about their wives and girlfriends, their hopes and dreams, admiring their physical courage and strength, you start to make friends – closer friends in some ways than you’ll ever have outside of war. Isolated from everyone else, you start to see your small corner of the world the same way they do (ibid).

These clearly influenced the style of reporting of events and incidents, though it did not necessarily mean the embedded reporter would hide certain stories due to this bonding with the soldiers. However, it certainly affected how the embedded reporters would report these incidents and which context they would use:

I did not hide anything, for example, when some of my marines fired up a civilian vehicle that was bearing down on them, killing three unarmed Iraqi men, I reported it

– but I did not lead my story with it, and I was careful to put it in the context of scared young men trying to protect themselves. Or when my marines laughed about how .50-caliber machine gun bullets had torn apart an Iraqi soldier's body, I wrote about it, but in the context of sweet-faced, all-American boys hardened by a war that was not of their making (ibid).

As Dillow described it, the point was not about whether he was reporting the truth or not, but that he was reporting “the marine grunt truth”, which had also become his “truth” (ibid).

For Kumar, war planners seemed clear when setting up this system that it would create identification with the soldiers and would lead to country self-censorship by the journalists (ibid). Furthermore, the system of embedding made journalists dependent on the military for transport, food, and most importantly physical protection. BBC reporter Ben Brown related his experience:

There was an Iraqi who ... jumped up with an RPG and he was about to fire it at us because we were just standing there and this other Warrior just shot him with their big machine gun and there was a big hole in his chest. That was the closest I felt to being almost too close to the troops ... because if he had not been there he would have killed us and ... afterwards I sought out the gunner who had done that and shook his hand (Brown cited in Miller 2004a: 10).

Perhaps most remarkable was when the bonding between the reporter and the unit they were embedded with reached an advanced level of cooperation, as when Gavin Hewitt of the BBC admitted picking out targets for the military.

I shouted across to the Captain “that truck over there – I think these guys are going to attack us.” ... Within seconds a Bradley fighting vehicle was opening up – tracers were flying across the field ... eventually the truck went up – boom – like this ... And of course all the unit were delighted. From then on the bonding grew tighter (Hewitt cited in Miller, 2004a: 11).

Accordingly, this had led to “militarisation” of the media, as Walid Shmait suggested, and who argued that such a concept was generated by the amount of reports coming from the battlefields focusing on the vocabulary and the technicality of the military rather than critically questioning the events and incidents. This, according to Shmait, dominated the coverage of the war and provided a limited view of the war (Shmait 2005: 227-228). Furthermore, Shmait highlighted the effect of that part of the agreement with the reporters, where the military had the right to censor reports for security related reasons, or to provide the embedded reporters with footage that the military wanted published or broadcast. Nonetheless, these procedures brought some television networks to mention that “certain reports were conducted under the supervision of the American or the British military” (ibid).

On the other hand, John Simpson underlined some of the limitations that embedded journalists had to take into consideration, particularly that “it was harder to write stories about hold-ups, lack of success, deficient morale, looting, war crimes” (Simpson 2003: 350), and that journalists who did write about these issues were threatened by the military. The case Simpson illustrated in his narrative of the war was when reporter Chris Ayres had been intimidated by a military officer after he wrote about these issues.

When I reached the headquarters of the 1st Marine division in Central Iraq, a senior Public Affairs Officers called me “a piss-poor journalist” because I had written a story saying that the supply lines were being attacked by the Iraqis and that we had not moved from our position in several days (Ayres cited in Simpson 2003: 350).

Furthermore, Chris Ayres described the attitude of officer in more detail:

“I am glad you are leaving, because otherwise I would be kicking your ass off here” he said. A marine behind him, overhearing the conversation, grabbed my camping-chair and pulled it away. “You can sit in the fucking dirt,” he said. “I ought to be fucking shooting you” (ibid).

According to Simpson, even though Chris Ayres’s story was not typical of the way journalists were treated by the American military, attitudes towards embedded journalists were one of the major reasons why many journalists, including him, preferred not to be embedded.

We did not want to be beholden to the very people whose actions we were obliged to report on impartially. Nor did we think that it was right that the only reporting on this war should come from embedded correspondents or else from those based in Baghdad (Simpson 2003: 351).

Yet this decision to report the war as a unilateral was unsafe for many journalists, as their safety was not taken into consideration. Simpson stated:

This, however, turned out to be every bit as dangerous as we feared it might; not so much because of the Iraqis, though plenty of journalists found themselves being held up and threatened by them, but because of the Americans. It was clear that the only journalists, who the American soldiers and pilots were aware of, were those who were embedded. Anyone who was out there in the open was a potential target (ibid).

In agreement with Simpson, Mark Austin, a unilateral with ITV news, found that the military deliberately hindered his operations:

They were not happy at all about having journalists on the battlefield that they did not control and they made that very clear. And they had there embedded journalists and this immediately in my view raises an issue ... I think that the Army has to rethink and reconsider the way they treat unilateral journalists who have for reasons of the way they operate to be in the battlefield or in the war zone and were deliberately hindered. They were not at all set up to deal with us and not only made our job a lot more difficult, it also made our job a lot more dangerous (Austin cited in Lewis et al 2004: 22).

Further, according to Paterson (2005) major media from around the world who did not accompany US troops, and especially the European public broadcasters, were denied access to Iraq in the early stages of combat and “ruthlessly frustrated in their reporting by the US military” (Paterson 2005: 55).

The European Broadcasting Union made a rare complaint to the Pentagon about what they termed a ‘caste system’ amongst journalists, enforced by US troops (who had no legal authority in Iraq to begin with). American action ranged from the refusal to allow journalists access to transmission facilities, to arrest of journalists attempting to operate independently (ibid).

These actions were noted by Michel Massing, who was at the Media Centre in Doha monitoring issues of journalistic safety and access on behalf of the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). Massing talked about many incidents involved the US military, for instance, the case of four journalists – two Israelis and two Portuguese – who had been detained by US troops at gunpoint in central Iraq.

According to the journalists, the US – accusing them of being spies – had held them for more than forty-eight hours, denying them food and water. When one of the Portuguese journalists tried to talk with the soldiers, he was beaten, thrown on the floor, and handcuffed. Eventually, the journalists were flown by helicopter to Kuwait City and released (Massing 2003: 34).

According to Massing, the incident raised serious questions about the military’s treatment of unilateral journalists (ibid). In addition, the incident of the killing of Terry Lloyd, a veteran correspondent of the British TV broadcaster *ITN* on 22 March 2003, indicated the immense danger facing unilateral reporters during this war. Lloyd, according to *BBC News Online* was shot in the head by American soldiers while he was in a makeshift ambulance, having already been hurt when he and his three colleagues were caught up in a firefight between US and Iraqi forces near the Shatt Al Basra Bridge (*BBC Online News* 13 October 2006: np). Lloyd’s Lebanese interpreter, Hussein Osman, was also killed and French cameraman Fred Nerac,

pronounced officially missing, “presumed dead”. Belgian cameraman Daniel Demoustier was the ITN crew’s only survivor (ibid).

Oxfordshire Assistant Deputy Coroner Andrew Walker stated, after an eight-day inquest, that it was his view that American tanks had been first to open fire on the ITN crew’s two vehicles. He added that “Mr Lloyd would probably have survived the first bullet wound he received, but was killed as he travelled away in a makeshift ambulance” (Walker cited in *BBC Online News* 13 October 2006: np).

On the other hand, in response to the killing of Terry Lloyd and his colleagues, a spokesman for the US Department of Defence denied that US troops deliberately targeted non-combatants, including journalists, stating that an investigation in May 2003 “had found that US forces followed the rules of engagement”, adding that “it had been an unfortunate reality that journalists have died in Iraq. Combat operations are inherently dangerous” (ibid).

In contrast, as Lewis et al (2004) suggest that “the death of unilateral journalists – many of whom were killed by US forces, none by the British forces - was regarded by the Pentagon as an inevitability of a certain kind of warfare” (Lewis et al 2004: 22). For the Pentagon, issuing a “Fair warning” to journalists was apparently the end of the matter, while for the MoD, which sometimes regarded unilateral journalists as an awkward nuisance, the view seemed more mindful of their commitment to unilateral journalists - and all non-combatants (ibid).

The MoD guidelines, for example, explicitly state that unilaterals are to be afforded the same consideration as civilians, as is their status under the rules of the Geneva Convention (embedded journalists are deemed to have officer status if taken prisoner), but the military has no obligation to provide the same level of protection as for embeds. The Pentagon’s guidelines, by contrast, do not discuss the issue (ibid).

Adding significantly to this, according to Paterson (2003: 55), the former BBC reporter Kate Adie revealed that US forces had threatened to launch missiles at any media organisation transmitting information out of Baghdad.

However, after the attacks on journalists on 8th April 2003 in two different incidents, one when a US air strike damaged Al-Jazeera’s office in Baghdad, killing its correspondent Tariq Ayoub, and the other when a US tank opened fire on the Palestine Hotel, the main base for journalists in Baghdad, killing Taras Protsyuk, a Reuters cameraman, and Jose Couso, a cameraman for the Spanish television channel Tele 5, Michel Massing noted that the attacks

sent shock waves through the media centre. Yet Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, in his press briefing that day, insisted that the US did not target journalists, and stated that “coalition forces operating near the Palestine Hotel had come under fire from its lobby and that a tactical decision had been made to fire back” (Brooks cited in Massing 2003: 34). Conversely, Massing mentioned that when Brooks was asked if the coalition forces could be ordered not to fire on journalists’ strongholds, he replied: “We do not know every place a journalist is operating on the battlefield. We only know those journalists that are operating with us”, which Massing interpreted as those “who were embedded” (Massing 2003: 34).

Nevertheless, Brooks reply recapitulated the general attitude of the US military towards unilateral journalists during this conflict, especially when he added that any other journalists on the field of battle “were putting themselves at risk” (ibid). This statement led Massing to declare that the US military believed that the only reporters who were officially embedded had the right to protection “Everyone else was at risk and expendable” (ibid).

In agreement with Massing, John Donovan of ABC News, who was a unilateral journalist, pointed out that “In this war if you were not an embed, you were, like it or not, a unilateral – a term the Pentagon came up with and emblazoned across your military-issued press card” (Donvan 2003: 35). According to Donvan, in other recent wars most journalists were, in fact, unembedded. “The safest thing for journalists was to shout from the rooftops that they were present at the conflict as reporters, not combatants. This time, the opposite may have been true” (ibid). Yet more forebodingly, for Donvan, the Iraqis saw journalists as part of an invading force. “And the invaders – the coalition forces – saw unilaterals as having no business on their battlefield. There was no neutral ground” (ibid).

However, for Donvan, the answer for his decision to be unilateral became clear on his first day in Safwan “The first real city the coalition rolled through”.

There was a story there that had not been told. The Iraqis of Safwan were not dancing in the streets. In what would become a pattern elsewhere in Iraq, US troops (and reporters embedded with them) would often witness a warm welcome at the front end of the coalition advance. But later, when the tanks had rolled by that would change (ibid).

According to Donvan, although Safwan was the city that gave the world that widely broadcast image of a “just-liberated Iraqi slapping Saddam Hussein’s portrait with his shoe”.

However, the situation changed only hours later, when Donovan and his team encountered hostility.

Everyone we met voiced suspicion of US intentions, outrage over civilian casualties, and scepticism over promises of US aid. The message from the people of Safwan – now voiced by many Iraqis in many places – was that the US has its work cut out for it. Just getting rid of the dictator is not enough to win the hearts and minds of the people (ibid).

Further, Donovan stated that ABC News insisted on unilateral reporting to complement its embedding coverage, as they “broadcast all this in the war’s first few days, while most television coverage stayed focused on the combat”. According to him, it was part of the story that embedded reporters could not see. And it was vital “to forming the big-picture answer to the question: how is the war going?” (ibid).

From the remarks made by these reporters, it is not difficult to argue that US military officials deliberately ignored the safety of unilateral reporters as part of controlling the message. This is implicit in the statements made by these officials regarding only taking into consideration the safety of embedded reporters, and spreading this message aimed to confine the role of unilaterals in reporting the war. This would be achieved by spreading fear and panic among these reporters that their work and presence – and lives – were thoroughly devalued. Consequently, the preponderance of messages would offer favourable story lines of events achieved by the embedded reporters (and other media management techniques discussed elsewhere).

However, this strategy to manage and control information from the battle zones through the embedding system backfired on certain occasions, when embedded journalists were able to challenge the accuracy of information provided by military briefers. According to Paul Friedman, reporters who knew how to report and write were able to use embedding to their advantage and the viewers (Friedman 2003: 30).

After three decades of tight control by the government, combat news actually was found and reported within minutes of its happening, and well before military briefers confirmed it and doled it out (ibid).

According to Friedman, a classic example of this was when an incident took place in the tented headquarters of 101st Airborne, and an embedded journalist – who was listening in on

army radio channels at the bases – was almost immediately able to dismiss initial reports of terrorism, and correctly identify the involvement of an American soldier (ibid).

This incident involved a US soldier attacking his colleagues with two grenades that he had rolled into a command tent in Camp Pennsylvania, a military base in northern Kuwait, which resulted in the death of one soldier and injuring twelve others (*BBC News Online*, 23 March 2003: np). The presence of the reporter at the scene was the major reason for the Pentagon to reveal the incident.

We are left to guess how soon, or even whether, the Pentagon would have revealed all this if there had been no reporter at the scene (Freidman 2003: 30).

Further, Friedman offered other examples in which embedded reporters managed to challenge the system by reporting, and indicating the difficulties facing the US troops. ABC's Ted Koppel, for instance, once "reported that all thirty-two Apache helicopters returning from a mission had bullet holes in them", and CNN's Martin Savidge "described a hazardous mission to refuel forward elements running dangerously low on fuel" (ibid: 31). Other embedded reporters, according to Freidman, reported shortages of food and water and cases of rationing.

The BBC's David Willis, with US Marines in central Iraq, reported that "we've got to the stage where some of the infantry here are down to one meal a day, so it's a pretty difficult situation supplying such a large and high-tech army". John Roberts of CBS was able to feed pictures of marines trying to protect convoys near Nasiriya, and raised questions about whether there were enough troops to protect the long lines of supply (ibid).

These kinds of stories were different from the initial pictures of rapid advances by US forces, and generated a swift reaction by the Pentagon.

After less than a week of war, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld complained that while the "breathtaking" minute-by-minute coverage was generally accurate, the "slices" of reported fighting lacked overall context and made people believe the fighting had been going on for weeks rather than days (ibid).

According to Friedman, Rumsfeld's argument had two problems, first, that embedded reporters were day after day gathering evidence at the scene.

It turns out, of course, that while embedding runs the risk of some journalists' getting too chummy with soldiers, it also means that some soldiers get chummy with journalists – and they talk. They talk about bad decisions, malfunctioning equipment,

dwindling supplies, and an enemy that wasn't rolling over the way it was supposed to (ibid).

The second is the observations of the war generated after the actual fighting had begun, which indicated the frustration among soldiers and that had been picked up by the embedded reporters, like the incident when a Marine sergeant talking to a reporter on camera: "The United States was planning on walking in here like it was easy and all ... It's not that easy to conquer a country, is it?" (ibid).

According to Friedman, when the administration was selling the war, most background briefings predicted a relatively quick, easy fight, and minimized worries about troop levels and long supply lines. "There were some public pronouncements – like those of some officials predicting a collapsing Iraqi 'house of cards' – that helped create an overly optimistic set of expectations" (ibid).

Nevertheless, there were clear signs that the embedding system did not always work quite as intended, as embedded reporters on several occasions provided more accurate accounts than those available from official sources, such as the Pentagon. According to a study conducted by the Cardiff School of Journalism on the role of embedded reporting during the 2003 Iraq war, it was observed that in a number of instances - such as the reporting of the battle of Um Qasr and Nasiriyah, and checkpoint shootings near Najaf - embedded reporters managed to provide more truthful accounts than those available from official sources. This point was addressed by a number of reporters who recounted incidents in which they were able to correct information coming from Central Command. For example, James Mates, a senior correspondent for ITV, related an anonymous reporter's account of "a friendly fire" incident.

The Pentagon said all casualties were actually caused by the Iraqis before the blue on blue fights started, which was complete crap. It was the other way round, all the damage had been done by other US forces. It was clearly false information. One of the advantages of being there and being embedded was that we were able absolutely to refute it straight away (cited in Lewis et al 2004: 29).

On the other hand, there were notable instances when embedded reporters "broke" stories that subsequently proved to be inaccurate (such as the Basra uprising and the Basra tank column stories) (Lewis et al 2004: 29). However, according to Lewis et al, it was suggested that, despite some attempts to apportion blame, this is indicative of a more general problem of covering war, rather than being an indictment of the embedded reporters or the embed

programme (ibid). Nevertheless, Lewis et al also argued that since the embedded journalists concerned were only passing on information from military sources, the study was interested to explore whether such information was attributed or not (ibid). It was found that “all broadcasters often failed to attribute or question information from British or US military sources” (ibid).

5.5.3. Overloading the media and source attribution

According to Schechter (2004), Information Operations (IO) operates in conflicts by providing too much information to the press, which he suggests was the key information mechanism of control during the Kosovo War (Schechter 2004: 30). Similarly, during the 2003 Iraq War, one of the greatest problems for broadcasters was, according to a Cardiff School of Journalism report “the chaotic volume of information” provided by the embedded journalists (Lewis et al 2004: 29). This was illustrated in the way that it was more difficult for broadcasters to deal with than the controlled outflow from the military briefings. “In many cases, the quality of information coming from the Central Command was often less reliable than information coming from reporters on the ground” (ibid). These observations were noticed from the reporting of battles of Umm Qasr and Nasiriyah and reporting of the checkpoint shootings near Najaf (ibid).

Further, Terence Smith (2003) stated that there were many other incidents that added to this chaos, especially in the early stages of the war:

The strategic southern city of Basra was reported taken on March 23, when in fact it took British troops another two weeks to subdue the resistance there. Scud missiles were said to be striking in Kuwait that same day, when in fact they were not. An entire Iraqi division was reported to have laid down its arms and surrendered, when in fact it had not. A fast-moving convoy of Republican Guards in 1000 armoured vehicles was repeatedly reported to be moving south from Baghdad on March 26 to confront US forces, when in fact it was busy scattering under relentless US air strikes (Smith 2003: 26).

Furthermore, on the story of Scud missiles fired into Kuwait, after watching the BBC that day, David Miller stated that the story was unequivocally reported as there was consistency in the use of the words Scud missiles, even though they were not confirmed.

BBC News 24, the globally available service, continually repeated the propaganda. Just after midnight (GMT) on the morning of 21st March BBC reporter Ben Brown

repeatedly used the word 'scud' without any qualification (Miller, *Scoop Online*, 28 March 2003: np).

Nevertheless, it is assumed that the issue of overloading the media led during certain incidents to further confusion when attribution was most likely to get lost in the abbreviated language of the headlines and summaries. With reference to the Cardiff School of Journalism study, the issue was due to "too much faith" in claims coming from military sources (Lewis et al 2004: 29). This "faith" in such information had led to additional chaos in reporting the war, or, as Kari Lydersen pointed out, "truth" became one of the major casualties of the media's unquestioning reliance on government sources (Lydersen, *Alternet.org*, 31 March 2003:np). In her article, Lydersen illustrated two such incidents:

On March 20, reporters from NBC, NPR, ABC and other outlets reported as fact the military's assertion that the Iraqis had used banned Scud Missiles. However, two days later the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported that in fact no Scud Missiles had been fired. Similarly on March 23 various media trumpeted the government's claim that a chemical weapons factory had been found near the town of Najaf, though a day later that claim was totally debunked (ibid).

According to Kumar (2006), a large part of the psychological operations was about the ability to spread misinformation; this strategy took into consideration the 24-hour news channels' constant demand for new information. Therefore the credibility associated with official sources meant that military claims would often be relayed without taking the time to check the facts. "An update from a military official would receive wide publicity, only to be retracted or modified" (Kumar 2006: 62). This was observed in many incidents, such as the "Basra uprising", which was labelled by a British forces spokesman, Group Captain Al Lockwood, a "popular uprising", and denied by the Iraqi forces. Similarly, the southern Iraqi port of Um Qasr was reported as taken "nine times", while reports on the discovery of chemical weapons at An Najaf were never confirmed (Byrne, *The Guardian*, 28 March 2003: np). Furthermore, as cited in Ciar Byrne of *The Guardian*, Richard Sambrook admitted "it was proving difficult for journalists in Iraq to distinguish truth from false reports, and that the pressure facing reporters on 24-hour news channels had led to premature or inaccurate stories" (Sambrook cited in Byrne, *The Guardian*, 28.3.2003: np). Nevertheless, one senior "BBC news source" commented, "we are absolutely sick and tired of putting things out and finding out they are not true. The misinformation in this war is far away worse than any conflict I have covered, including the first Gulf war and Kosovo" (cited in Byrne, *The Guardian*, 28 March 2003: np).

5.5.4. The strategy of keeping to the forefront of the news

Following the strategy of overloading the media and techniques of source attribution, it was also very important for the war planners to keep on top of the news, but also to have a consistent line across all government, military and coalition agencies. According to Rutherford, the daily briefings were transformed into “a powerful weapon of persuasion” (Rutherford 2004: 64-65). Washington developed this strategy from its experience of the Gulf War in 1991, when televised press conferences had proved to be so effective in delivering messages directly to the public, over the heads of the reporters (ibid: 65).

In order to demonstrate his standpoint, Rutherford quoted *The New York Times* of 20th of April 2003, in which it explained how, even before the war erupted, key communications personnel from the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, and London arranged an early morning conference call to identify “the theme of the day and who was delivering it”. Furthermore, the Office for Global Communications (OGC) sent out a daily email to embassies specifying the administration’s line. According to Rutherford, the use of this technique during the Iraq war ensured not only consistency but priority, being there first and with the right slant (ibid).

At the White House, official spokesman Ari Fleischer held three sessions a day with reporters to keep the administration line at the front of the news. At the Pentagon there was, sometimes, the incomparable Donald Rumsfeld, ready to speak his truth, field the questions of reporters, and occasionally scold some critics. The onslaught of words and images had an effect (ibid).

5.5.5. The work of the media centre at Central Command, Doha

Working in harmony with the daily briefings from Washington, the US Central Command in Doha, Qatar, was on the other hand providing the media with a daily summary of military operations. Unlike Desert Storm in 1991, when General Norman Schwarzkopf briefed reporters in a hotel ballroom using an easel and charts and a single television with VCR to show fuzzy images of smart bomb raids during the war, the military has since developed an effective style to brief the media, a style which had the impact of Hollywood touches (Charter, *Times Online*, 11 March 2003: np). According to Charter, art director George

Allison¹¹⁸ was brought into the US central command base in Qatar as part of a reputed \$1 million conversion of a storage hanger into a high-tech hub for the international media (ibid). Further, Charter stated that Allison's work in Qatar reflected the Pentagon's realisation that it needed to look good on prime-time television, especially given public disquiet about the war, which had been led by some Hollywood personalities such as Martin Sheen, Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon (ibid).

Besides looking good on television, the presentation conveyed another message: that American technology is second to none and far outclasses anything possessed by the Iraqis, who were watching the briefings on Arab broadcasters, such as Al-Jazeera. Compared with the Iraqi side, the technology gulf was part of the psychological campaign abetted by the media, which assembled at the Central Command Media Centre. In addition, US military commanders ensured that their footage would be instantly available in the eight most common video formats (ibid). The rationale for this, as Allison asserted, was about

... bringing the level of technology up from the flipchart to the modern age. It is trying to send a clear message about the technology and our use of it (Allison cited in Charter, *Times Online*, 11 March 2003: np).

However, this policy seemed to generate some criticism among journalists, as Michel Wolff of the *New York Magazine* stated: "The briefing is everything in the CENTCOM media day" (Wolff, *New York Magazine*, 7 April 2003: np), adding that "This is the job: not to cover the war but to cover the news conference about the war" (ibid). Furthermore, Steven Senne of AP provided more remarks on the construction of the media centre and its features.

The Media Centre at Camp As Sayliyah, the Persian Gulf headquarters of the Tampa, Fla.-based U.S. Central Command, is more *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* than gritty wartime command post. But it's not the only surreal scene for correspondents waiting for action in the Gulf. It competes with ice skating at the mall, poolside lounging and locally sponsored belly-dancing shows (Senne, 14 March 2003, *USA Today*: np).

Nevertheless, according to George E. Curry, the high-tech media centre had five 50-inch plasma screens, two 70-inch TV projection screens, a colour map of Iraq and an elevated platform at the back of the room for TV cameras, 350 seats for journalists and a row for public affairs officers along the side, all available for "live" television or radio feeds after the

¹¹⁸ According to Charter (2003), George Allison had designed White House backdrops for President Bush, the set for ABC's *Good morning America*, as well as Hollywood productions for MGM and Disney, such as the Kirk and Michael Douglas film, "*It runs in the family*" (Charter, *Times Online*, 11 March 2003: np).

briefing¹¹⁹ (Curry, *Black Press USA*, 2003: np). Curry quotes Col. Ray B. Shepherd, who was appointed as Director of Public Affairs for CENTCOM, based in Tampa, Florida in 2002, which shifted its headquarter temporarily to Doha, Qatar for the Iraq campaign, “It is all about framing an effective message ... It is not just the words you speak, it is also what people see that makes a difference in how they think about the message that is delivered.” (Shepherd cited in Curry, *Black Press USA*, 2003: np).

5.5.6. PR involvement: The war of techniques and ideas

The integration of public relations techniques into White House efforts to remove Saddam Hussein extended beyond the war period, and was implemented long before the military campaign started (Miller et al 2004). According to Lacey (2009) removing Saddam Hussein was seriously considered when the new Bush administration entered office in 2000:

Its defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, had proposed a startling new template for US policy in the Middle East. “Imagine what the region would look like”, he told a meeting of the National Security Council, “without Saddam and with a regime that’s aligned with the US interests. It would change everything in the region and beyond” (Lacey 2009: 287).

Lacey added that a few weeks after this event, Bush speech-writer David Frum presented an even more explicit version of this Iraq-centred strategy to the *New York Times Magazine*: “An American-led overthrow of Saddam Hussein, and the replacement of the radical Baathist dictatorship with a new government more closely aligned with the United states, would put American more wholly in charge of the region than any power since the Ottomans, or maybe even the Romans” (Frum cited in Lacey 2009: 287). Further, the events of 11 September 2001 offered, as Lacey stated, the chance to put this grandiose vision into practice:

America clearly needed to lash out at somebody sinister and Arab. Donald Rumsfeld frankly testified to the official 9/11 Commission that immediately after the attacks, on the afternoon of 11 September, “his instinct was to hit Saddam Hussein”, and the next day President Bush ordered Richard. A. Clarke, his counterterrorism tsar, to explore possible Iraqi links. Within hours the principal consequence of the Saudi-manned assault on Manhattan and Washington had been to open up the American path to war in Iraq (Lacey 2009: 287).

¹¹⁹ According to Wharton (2003), the stage was built in Chicago and sent by Federal Express to the Central Command in Qatar at additional cost of \$ 47,000. It also presented “stylized world map and glowing digital clocks” (Wharton, *Los Angeles Times*, 20 March 2003: np).

This indicates that the decision for invasion was taken even earlier than the media had anticipated. Thus, the need to benefit from PR techniques before, during and even after the course of war, aimed to reinforce the message of the American administration of the necessity to invade Iraq through more appealing and innovative messages that could serve the ambition of the American government to win the hearts and minds of the people.

According to John McArthur, it was on September 7, 2002, when “the White House propaganda drive began in earnest”, with the appearance before television cameras of George Bush and Tony Blair at Camp David citing a “new” report from the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency that allegedly stated that Iraq was “six months away” from building a nuclear weapon. “I don’t know what more evidence we need” declared President Bush (McArthur 2003: 62).

McArthur stated that there was no such new IAEA report issued, and the event itself was thus designed for public relations purposes. Interestingly, McArthur argued that no one in the media bothered to check out the story, even when the *Washington Post*’s Karen DeYoung quoted an IAEA spokesman saying, in DeYoung’s words, “that the agency has issued no new report” (in the twenty-first paragraph of her story on the press conference), she did not confront the White House with this “terribly interesting fact”. As indicated by McArthur, what mattered was the unencumbered rollout of a commercial for war – the one that the White House chief of staff and former General Motors executive Andrew Card had famously withheld earlier in the summer: “From a marketing point of view, you do not introduce new products in August” (Card cited in McArthur 2003: 62).

However, on the next day’s front page of the *Sunday New York Times*, Michael Gordon and Judith Miller offered what was supposed to be more “evidence” on the issue. According to MacArthur it clearly inflated the administration’s leak into “something resembling imminent Armageddon”.

More than a decade after Saddam Hussein agreed to give up weapons of mass destruction, Iraq has stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb, Bush administration officials said today (Gordon and Miller cited in McArthur 2003: 63).

The key to this atomic bomb, as it appeared in the article, was the attempt by Saddam Hussein to purchase “specially designed aluminium tubes, which American officials believe

were intended as components of centrifuges to enrich uranium” (ibid). Gordon and Miller attributed their information to anonymous “administration officials”, though at one point they “crossed the line” into commentary by stating:

Still, Mr. Hussein’s dogged insistence on pursuing his nuclear ambitions, along with what defectors described in interviews as Iraq’s push to improve and expand Baghdad’s chemical and biological arsenals, have brought Iraq and the United States to the brink of war (ibid).

According to Peterson, *The New York Times* engaged in a new bout of self-flagellation for permitting its “star journalist, Judith Miller, to hype the threat of Iraqi weapons which never existed, bolstering the case for war” (Paterson 2005: 54). Paterson added that Miller was also reported by “the rival *Washington Post*, to be directing operations of US troops in Iraq hunting for the elusive weapons of mass destruction” (ibid).

Interestingly, when Vice President Dick Cheney appeared on the same day (Sunday, September 8, 2002) on NBC’s *Meet the Press*, “to brandish Saddam’s supposed nuclear threat”, MacArthur commented that it was the efforts of Andrew Card’s new-product introduction moving “into higher gear”, and grippingly Cheney cited the aluminium tubes story – which “was leaked by Cheney’s White House colleagues” - by referring to the *New York Times*: “There is a story in the *New York Times* this morning” said Cheney: “and I want to attribute the *Times*” (McArthur 2003: 63).

In addition, as observed by Laura Miller, John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, several techniques used to sell the war in Iraq were familiar PR strategies. They argued that the message itself was developed to resonate with targeted audiences through the use of focus groups and other types of market research and media monitoring in order to deliver a message that was tightly controlled (Miller et al 2004: 44). In addition, “relevant” information had been sown within the media and the public through a limited number of “well-trained messengers”, including seemingly independent third parties (ibid). According to Miller et al, the war campaign was implemented by a blend of private and public money and organisations in the face of a “sinking US economy and increasing public opposition to attacking Iraq”. However, with the Republican Party controlling the American Congress and yielding corporate media, it was hard to challenge the White House agenda. Its diplomatic and political manoeuvres had been “tightly choreographed in concert with a handful of right-wing think-tanks, the newly concocted Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, and well-

connected PR and lobby firms that now dominate media coverage of US foreign policy in the Middle East” (ibid: 44-45). Symptomatic of this, the *Washington Post* reported in July 2002 that the White House had created an Office for Global Communications (OGC) to “coordinate the administration’s foreign policy message and supervise America’s image abroad” (cited in Miller et al 2004: 45). On the same subject, in September 2002, *The Times* of London reported that the OGC would spend \$200 million for a “PR blitz against Saddam Hussein” aimed “at American and foreign audiences, particularly in Arab nations sceptical of the US policy in the region”. The campaign would be using “techniques to persuade crucial target groups that the Iraqi leader must be ousted” (cited in Miller et al 2004: 45).

In agreement with Miller et al, Chris Paterson (2005) regarded “Washington’s new propagandists” as “fanatically PR-minded”; believing the manipulation of news to be proper and justified (Paterson 2005: 53). In order to achieve this, Paterson argued that the new order had no regard for independent or non-compliant journalism, nor for explanations of global affairs “which differ from those of the White House”. Traditionally, according to Paterson, US diplomats worldwide have been always ready to challenge every media report which conflicts with Washington doctrine. However, their “long-standing efforts had not been enough. Therefore the US set up additional “instant response” offices in Washington, London and Islamabad to complain to local media about unfavourable stories, offer interviews with US officials, and feed favourable stories and sources to local media (ibid: 53-54). Paterson argued that this policy was not a new effort, as some post-9/11 commentators have suggested, but a new, heavily funded, twist on the Cold War work of the US Information Service in American embassies worldwide. “Representatives of the White House have made a number of appearances in Arab media in an attempt to tell their story to the Arab world and correct perceived biases” (ibid).

According to John McArthur, these rapid response techniques are used in public relations, “something akin to James Carville’s and George Stephanopoulos’s famous ‘War Room’ ethos: never leave an accusation unanswered before the end of the news cycle” (McArthur 2003: 63). Furthermore, Paterson argued that the establishment of the “Office of Strategic Influence” by the Pentagon aimed to work independently of White House efforts, to manage, and plant, if necessary, an international agenda.

It was affiliated with the Army's Psychological Operations Command, which had conducted research on international television journalism inside CNN in 1999. The Pentagon also joined forces with influential Hollywood producers to create the 'militainment' genre - 'patriotic' reality TV series starring US troops (Paterson 2005: 54).

According to Miller et al, other efforts also contributed to advance the campaign, such as the media training of Iraqi dissidents by the State Department to "help make the Bush Administration's argument for the removal of Saddam Hussein" (*PR Week* cited in Miller et al 2004: 46), and the use of an informal "strategic communications" group of "Beltway lobbyists", PR people and Republican insiders by Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld to sharpen the Pentagon's message.

Pentagon public affairs head Victoria Clark, who used to run Hill & Knowlton's DC office, is reported to have assembled the Rumsfeld group. Participants "intermittently offer messaging advice to the Pentagon", reported *PR Week* on 26 August. One of the Rumsfeld group's projects is linking the anti-terrorism cause with efforts to convince the public "of the need to engage 'rogue states'- including Iraq - that are likely to harbour terrorists" (ibid).

Military analyst William Arkin expanded on this, saying "Rumsfeld's communication strategy was doing more than spinning a rationale for attacking Iraq". Arkin described this as "a policy shift that reaches across all armed services", as "Rumsfeld and his senior aides were revising missions and creating new agencies in order to make 'information warfare' a central element of any US war" (Arkin cited in Miller et al 2004: 46).

Thus, the Pentagon's communication strategies were carried out on this basis, even after the major combative period was over in 2003. According to Terry, in 2005 it was revealed that the US company Lincoln Green was hired by the US Defence Department for projects in Iraq to plant fictional and highly favourable articles about the successes of the US military in the Iraqi press. "Donald Rumsfeld rationalised the planting of stories as 'non-traditional means to provide accurate information'" (Fisk 2006 cited in Terry 2007: 35).

In this view, it was asserted that PR efforts were taking place in preparation for the war, and a number of front groups and pundits with close ties to the Pentagon and White House were formed as part of "the anti-Hussein" public relations campaign (Miller et al 2004: 47). The Committee for the Liberation of Iraq (CLI), for instance, was formed to be at the centre of this PR campaign, which "was coordinated with other groups that were actively promoting

the attack on Iraq, including the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the Middle East Forum, Project for a New American Century, the American Enterprise Institute, Hudson Institute, Hoover Institute, and the clients of media relations firm Benador Associates (ibid).

According to Miller et al, the CLI used meetings with newspaper editorial boards and journalists to send its messages to American citizens, thus seeking to substantially frame the debate, and “providing background materials written by a close-knit web of supporters”. It also worked with Condoleezza Rice and other administration officials to “sponsor foreign policy briefings and dinners” (ibid). According to *PR Week* on 25 November, the CLI also encouraged its members to hold lectures round the US, in order to create opportunities to penetrate “local media markets” (*PR week* cited in Miller et al 2004: 47).

Further, hiring PR groups seemed to be a key element in shaping the whole campaign, especially if these groups were hired on a non-bid basis which, as stated by Miller et al, revealed the US government’s determination to connect with firms that were “already versed in running overseas propaganda operations” (ibid: 42). One such firm was the Rendon Group, which, according to Miller et al, had provided services in the past to clients such as the “CIA, USAID, the government of Kuwait, Monsanto Chemical Company, and the official trade agencies of countries including Bulgaria, Russia and Uzbekistan” (ibid). As it boasts on their website, the Rendon Group have worked in a number of countries providing discreet and confidential strategic guidance to clients in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Their clients are “government agencies, private sector enterprises, and non-governmental organisations that face the challenge of achieving information superiority in order to impact on public opinion and outcomes” (Rendongroup.com, 2006: np).

The Rendon Group’s expertise is based on 25 years of political communications consulting experience, a proven approach to media analysts, and demonstrated success implementing imaginative and multilayered public relations initiatives.

To date, we have worked in 91 countries planning and managing strategic and tactical communications programs across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The global experience of our seasoned staff maximizes the precision of our analysis and the value of our counsel.

The Rendon Group office in Washington, DC operates a 24/7 media monitoring watch-centre in support of both clients and TRG personnel working on location worldwide (Rendongroup.com, 2006: np).

According to Miller et al (2004: 42), the Pentagon specified that the Rendon Group would be paid “\$400,000 for four months of work”. Miller and her colleagues revealed, based on a

report by the *San Jose Mercury News*, the services that the Rendon group was offering to the American administration, though the

... details are confidential, but according to the *San Jose Mercury News*, Rendon will be monitoring international news media, conducting focus groups, creating a website about the US campaign against terrorism, and recommending “ways the US military can counter disinformation and improve its own public communications” (Miller et al 2004: 42-43).

Accordingly, Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber suggested, in an article “How to sell a war”, that some of the images of the war on Iraq may have been cooked up by PR specialists and “perception managers” (Rampton and Stauber, *In These Times*, 8 April 2003: np), “visual images, are what most people would remember of conflicts” (ibid).

Poignantly, Cardiff’s School of Journalism study on coverage of the Iraq war found that the most remembered images of the war on Iraq were the toppling of Saddam’s statue at Al-Ferdaws Square, and the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch.

When asked an open-ended question about what they remembered from the coverage, people responded with a wide variety of recollections. Top of the list was the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein as US troops took Baghdad. In response to subsequent, more specific questions, 80% said they remembered this incident very well (and only 3% not at all), confirming the impact made by this moment. While it could be argued that this is simply a memorable moment, it seems likely that this high level of recall also reflects the volume of media coverage afforded it (Lewis et al 2004: 38).

The study also indicated that this incident was widely referred to in focus groups, although reactions to it were divided. Many saw it as an accurate reflection of Iraqi joy at being liberated, while others felt there was a degree of overacting for the cameras. There was also some concern at the tightness of the camera focus on the crowd, and whether this painted an accurate picture of Baghdad, and Iraq as a whole (ibid). This is perhaps what led Rampton and Stauber to pose the question as to whether the toppling of Saddam was as spontaneous as it was made to appear, or if there was a reason for this scene to be “a bit too picture-perfect” by hinting at the role of the PR machine in constructing it (Rampton and Stauber, *In These Times*, 8 April 2003: np).

With regard to Private Jessica Lynch, the Cardiff study indicated that the second most recalled incident was her ‘rescue’, which was remembered by 44% of respondents. In

addition, among focus groups, the story was discussed with a healthy dose of scepticism. Strong statements of distaste and disbelief were expressed. “More significantly, this incident was linked to the “unreality” of the action images, with the comparison to Hollywood movies again being drawn” (Lewis et al 2004: 38-39).

On the other hand, in an interview with the author, Ibrahim Helal, the Head of News at Al-Jazeera during the war on Iraq, expressed his scepticism about the images of the toppling of Saddam’s statue, while he stated that the images of Jessica’s rescue seemed more convincing.

In both cases, we had to broadcast the stories. I remember I was in the newsroom during the toppling of Saddam’s statue, and we felt it was staged, especially when an American soldier took the American flag from his pocket to cover the face of the statue. The Jessica Lynch story was more convincing; it could happen during the course of any war. We did not have time to check the credibility of the story - remember we were functioning around the clock, so in this matter we had to cope with the speed of the incidents as they came in, otherwise we would be outdated (Helal 2003 interview with author).

This fast flow of incidents during the war is normally one of the key elements that many media strategists took into consideration in the 24-hour news environment. It would normally put huge pressure on the media to keep their presence in the field and keep up with the sequence of events. During the war on Iraq, many “facts” and pieces of evidence were stated as truth, only to be recanted later “when their veracity was called into question” (Kumar 2006: 52).

According to John MacArthur, this technique is familiar to politicians and PR people who “know all too well the propaganda dictum related nearly twenty years ago by Peter Teeley, press secretary to then Vice President George H. W. Bush”. Teeley “was responding to complaints that the elder Bush, during a televised debate, had grossly distorted the words of his and Ronald Regan’s opponents, the Democratic candidates Walter Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro” (MacArthur 2003: 63). In the words of McArthur, Teeley explained this technique “to *The New York Times* in October 1984”, by stating that, “You can say anything you want during a debate, and 80 million people hear it”. If “anything” turns out be false and journalists correct it, “So what. Maybe 200 people read it, or 2,000 or 20,000” (Teeley cited in MacArthur 2003: 63).

Cardiff's study also underlined this issue by suggesting that people are much more likely to remember the original, incorrect story than the subsequent retraction. The report demonstrated public perceptions of other stories, besides the Saddam statue and Private Lynch stories, in order to underline this statement:

So, for example, 81% remembered Tony Blair's condemnation of the execution of two British prisoners of war, but, of those, only 13% recalled that this accusation turned out to be untrue. Similarly, 25% were able to recall Iraq being reported as firing Scuds missiles into Kuwait, but only 15% of these recalled that these claims turned out to be unfounded (Lewis et al 2004: 39).

5.5.6.1. The Jessica Lynch story

It could be said that the Private Jessica Lynch story was among the remarkable lessons of "perception management" during the war on Iraq. It provided a close insight into the Pentagon's media strategy to win the hearts and minds of the American public. Therefore, establishing the scene in order to create the story was a key element to spread it successfully, and it also revealed another technique used by media strategists: manufacturing an event in order to sell a story and gain support. Remarking on this event, Rampton and Stauber point to the idea that the Pentagon offered "combatants-as-journalists" with their own film crew, called the "combat camera". According to them, the dramatic rescue of Private Lynch was one of the biggest media scoops of the war, it was "a combat camera exclusive" (Rampton and Stauber 2003:187).

Rampton and Stauber cite the *Baltimore Sun* correspondent Ariel Sabar, who watched what was done with the results of combat camera teams at work:

A dozen employees at computer stations sift through the 600 to 800 photographs and 25 to 50 video clips beamed in each day from the front lines. About 80% are made available to the news media and the public (Sabar cited in Rampton and Stauber 2003: 187).

As Sabar witnessed, the mechanisms in which it operates worked like this:

The images glisten from big screens at the news briefings in the Pentagon and the US Central Command in Qatar. A gallery on the Defence Department Web site gets 75,000 hits a day, triple the number before the war, Combat Camera [team] is emailing a daily batch of photographs to major news organisations ... In the battlefield of public opinion ... images are as potent as bullets ... Photos of sleek fighter jets, rescued POWs, and smiling Iraqis cheering the arrival of US troops are

easy to find among Combat Camera's public images. Photos of bombed out Baghdad neighbourhoods and so-called 'collateral damages' are not (ibid: 187-188).

Fully conscious of this, Lieutenant Jane Laroque, the officer in charge of combat camera soldiers in Iraq stated: "A lot of our imagery will have a big impact on world opinion" (Laroque cited in Rampton and Stauber 2003: 188). Further, Douglas Kellner stated that the dramatic story of "Saving Private Lynch" was one of the more spectacular human-interest stories of the war that revealed the constructed nature of the event and the ways the Pentagon created mythologies to be replicated by television networks (Kellner 2004: 73). According to Kellner, vital elements were taken into consideration while constructing this story, such as that Private Jessica Lynch was one of the first American POWs shown on Iraqi television, besides being a young attractive female. Elements such as this enabled Jessica's fate to become a topic of intense interest (ibid). Consequently, stories circulated that she was shot and stabbed and then tortured by the Iraqis holding her in captivity. However, eight days after her capture, US media broadcast footage of her dramatic rescue, which, according to Kellner, was staged like a spectacle on reality television. The footage of the operation captured how "soldiers stormed the hospital, found Lynch, and claimed a dramatic rescue under fire from Iraqis" (ibid). However, when the BBC interviewed the doctors in the hospital, they declared that the Iraqi troops had left the hospital a day before the "rescue operation". Furthermore, doctors stated that "there was no sign of shooting, no bullet inside her body, no stab wound - only a road traffic accident". Dr. Harith al-Houssona, who had looked after her, told the BBC: "I examined her, I saw she had a broken arm, a broken thigh and dislocated ankle" (al-Houssona cited in Kampfner, *BBC News Online*, 15 May 2003: np). Moreover, hospital staff tried to take Jessica to the Americans in an ambulance, but as it approached a checkpoint American troops opened fire on them. As for the 'rescue operation' itself, the US troops created further danger when they attacked the hospital by terrorizing doctors and patients with their guns and the use of the "sounds of explosions" which could have resulted in other deaths, all simply to get some dramatic 'rescue' footage for television audiences (ibid).

As stated, the footage itself was taken by a military cameraman, and it was a race against time for the video to be edited and broadcast. According to Kampfner, the video presentation was ready only a few hours after the first brief announcement. When it was shown, General Vincent Brooks, the US spokesman in Doha, declared: "Some brave souls put their lives on the line to make it happen, loyal to a creed that they know that they will never leave a fallen comrade" (Brooks cited in Kampfner, *BBC News Online*, 15 May 2003: np). According to

Kampfner, the Private Lynch rescue will go down as one of the most “stunning pieces of news management yet conceived”. It provided a significant insight into the real influence of Hollywood producers on the Pentagon’s media managers, and it could be said that it also produced a template from which America hopes to present its future wars (Kampfner, *The Guardian*, 15 May 2003: np).

As a poignant postscript, in an interview with ABC television a few months later, Private Jessica Lynch accused the military of using her for propaganda purposes. “They used me as a way to symbolize all this stuff. It is wrong” (*BBC News Online*, 7 November 2003: np).

5.5.6.2. The toppling of Saddam’s statue

It is assumed that if there was an image that could symbolise the 2003 Iraq war, it would indeed be the toppling of Saddam’s statue at Al-Ferdaws Square in Baghdad on 9th April 2003. The significance of this event was the media attention it received as a symbol of the fall of the Saddam regime - and it is no wonder that this particular statue of Saddam received such media attention: its location was a few meters away from the Palestine Hotel - the home for many journalists who were covering the Iraq war - and at the centre of Baghdad, which reinforced that the American troops had defeated the Iraqi army and reached the heart of the capital. For Mathew Gilbert and Suzanne C. Ryan of *The Boston Globe*, the toppling of Saddam’s statue was irresistible for a media that remained hungry for what they described as “iconic image-moments” that freeze time and eliminate shadows of complexity (Gilbert and Ryan, *The Boston Globe*, 10 April 2003:np).

Every detail of the toppling dripped with upbeat, telegenic symbolism: Marines draping an American flag on the statue, then replacing it with an Iraqi flag; the giant avuncular-looking Hussein revealed to be hollow; Saddam taking a final bow as the statue fell; a gang pulling the statue’s head chariot-like through Baghdad while its boots stood empty. It did not hurt that, unlike most of the footage from the war so far, the scene in the centre of Baghdad was bathed in warm, early-evening daylight (ibid).

As Gilbert and Ryan stated, footage of crowds cheering in the streets, hand waving in unison, the defacing of old symbols, which was described as “liberation” footage, were almost a panoply of conventions of television war imagery, which pushed US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to note on 9th April 2003 (and newscasters elsewhere) that scenes of the statue’s fall recalled similarly high-profile moments after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union (ibid). Similarly, according to Kellner (2004), the destruction of the statue of Saddam Hussein on live global television provided precisely the images desired

by the Pentagon and the Bush administration. However, closer analysis of the event revealed that rather than display a mass uprising of Iraqis against the Ba'ath regime, there were actually very few people assaulting the statue, and Kellner pointed out that "analysis of the pictures in the square revealed that there was only a relatively small crowd around the statue of Saddam Hussein, while most of the square was empty" (Kellner 2004: 335). Paul Wood of the BBC also emphasised the presence of so few people in the square. He stated that the wide-angle shot from the roof of the Palestine Hotel, which was only 150 meters from Al-Ferdaws Square, showed it was almost empty. Wood declared that "It is true that the crowd was just a few hundred strong", adding that "Some see this as an early sign of Iraqi ambivalence towards the Americans" (Wood, *BBC News Online*, 9 April 2004: np). Kellner, on the other hand, asserted that those who attacked the statue were largely members of the US-supported Iraqi National Congress, one of whose members shown in the crowd "attempted to pass himself off as the "mayor" of Baghdad, until the US military forces restrained him" (Kellner 2004: 335).

Nonetheless, it could be said that another metaphoric aspect during the event was when the Iraqis who attacked the statue were unable to bring it down, until some US marines on the scene used their tank and a cable to pull it down. As indicated by Kellner "In a semiotic slip, one soldier briefly put the US flag on the top of Hussein's head, providing an iconic image for Arab networks and others of a US occupation and takeover of Iraq" (ibid).

Connecting the toppling of Saddam's statue and the role of PR in constructing the scene for the media, Rampton and Stauber recalled remarks made by John Rendon who, during the past decade, had worked extensively on Iraq for the Pentagon and CIA. On February 29, 1996, he spoke to an audience of cadets at the US Air Force Academy, explaining the role of PR during armed conflict.

I am not a national security strategist or military tactician. I am a politician, and a person who uses communication to meet public policy or corporate policy objectives. In fact I am an information warrior and a perception manager (Rendon cited in Rampton and Stauber, *In These Times*, 8 April 2003: np).

Rampton and Stauber compared the scene of the toppling of Saddam's statue with that of hundreds of Kuwaitis waving small American flags as the American troops rolled into Kuwait city at the end of the first Gulf War in 1991, and which flashed around the world on television screens, sending the message that US Marines were being welcomed in Kuwait as

liberating heroes. Rendon was the designer of the scene, preparing public opinion in the US, Kuwait and even internationally, to endorse the message it revealed.

Did you ever stop to wonder how the people of Kuwait city, after being held hostage for seven long and painful months, were able to get hand-held American flags, and for that matter, the flags of other coalition countries? Well, you now know the answer. That was one of my jobs then (ibid).

According to David Zucchino of the *Los Angeles Times*, a US Army internal study criticised some efforts by its own psychological operation units, including parts of the event of toppling Saddam's statue, which revealed that it was a Marine colonel who decided to topple the statue, not joyous Iraqi civilians, as was widely assumed from the television images (Zucchino, *Los Angeles Times*, 3 July 2004: np). The Army report also revealed that it was a quick thinking Army psychological operations team that made it appear to be a spontaneous Iraqi undertaking (ibid). According to Zucchino, after the un-named colonel selected the statue as a "target of opportunity", the psychological team used loudspeakers to encourage Iraqi civilians to assist (ibid). In describing the move in which a marine had draped an American flag over the statue's face, a member of the psychological unit said: "We did not want to look like an occupation force, and some of the Iraqis were saying 'No, we want an Iraqi flag'". Once an Iraqi flag was produced, a sergeant in the psychological operation unit quickly replaced the American flag (ibid). According to Jon Elmer of *The New Standard*, when the crowd reacted negatively to the gesture of draping an American flag on the face of the statue, a sergeant from the psychological unit replaced it with a pre-1990 Iraqi flag, missing the words "God is Great" (Elmer, *The New Standard*, 3 July 2004: np). Nevertheless, it was a Marine recovery vehicle that toppled the statue with a chain, but in an effort to make it appear to be Iraqi-inspired the psychological team had managed to pack the vehicle with cheering Iraqi children in order to make the scene appear more authentic (Zucchino, *Los Angeles Times*, 3 July 2004: np).

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the central position of propaganda during the 2003 Iraq war, illustrating the major features that shaped the media campaign to remove Saddam Hussein. I have argued that one of the significant aspects of the war was the particular ways used to integrate the media into the war effort, as never seen in any other conflict before. The use of sophisticated technologies during this war and hence the implementation of advanced

techniques in communication strategies elevated the discussion on the role of media in modern conflicts, whether through information management, information technology and information concepts that were used in order to advance the messages and create a supportive public opinion for the war, domestically in the US, UK and elsewhere worldwide. These concepts were part of the work of sophisticated media strategists who benefited from modern technologies to build a strong campaign aiming to support the military attack on Iraq in order to remove Saddam Hussein's regime. Therefore it was argued in this chapter that the media were weaponised by war planners to become an essential element in winning the war, or, in other words, the media had been "militarised" by effective and powerful media strategies aimed at controlling the way the war was seen.

As part of these strategies, it was asserted that the embedding policy during the Iraq war proved to be working to ensure favourable reporting of the military. The aim of the policy was to allow journalists to embed with the military in order to control the flow of information coming from the battlefields, and to provide one side of the story, that of the coalition. It becomes clear that the military had understood the lessons from previous conflicts and had therefore developed a more sophisticated system to control information during the war in Iraq. This, in addition, promoted self-censorship among embedded journalists through psychological effects based on the bonding between the reporters and the units they were travelling with, as they used to eat, sleep and work with them. However, it was argued that this policy sometimes backfired when reporters challenged the units through reports that proved to disqualify the military sources, as with such incidents as the checkpoint shootings and the Basra uprising.

Another remarkable propaganda aspect during the Iraq war was the role of media moguls, who contributed to the official media strategies drawn up by the White House and the Pentagon. It was argued that their common interests with the US government shaped this relationship and this was reflected in the output of certain media in the US, such that they were devoted to project the war in a supportive manner without critically questioning motives, consequences or outcomes.

Further, it was observed that the remarkable involvement of the PR industry in the war contributed in some cases to the misinformation techniques adopted by the White House and the Pentagon for economic, political, military and security reasons. Stories like the saving of

Private Jessica Lynch proved to be cooked up by PR specialists, just as the toppling of Saddam's statue proved to be orchestrated by PR and Public Affairs officers. In addition, the media centre at the Central Command in Doha was another PR project that aimed to impress journalists and yet was an added approach to contain journalism by providing press releases and updates on information of the battlefronts. Coordinating its message with Washington and the Pentagon, the media centre contributed to the techniques of overloading the media with information and keeping to the forefront of the news. This systematic coordination seemed to have provided media organisations with a variety of sources, though these sources were all – including the embedded reporters – serving as essential parts of the American media strategy to achieve favourable coverage during the war.

Another important aspect examined in this chapter was the use of language and terminology, which revealed that this was carefully planned and treated in addressing the public and the media. Phrases like the “coalition of the willing”, “friendly fire” “old Europe” and “surgical strikes” were all echoed by the media and served to shape a supportive public opinion.

In concluding, it is assumed that, from the techniques and methods within the media strategies implemented in the Iraq war, information technology will continue to play a prime role in wartime propaganda, and that this will become even more sophisticated, employing other technologies as they advance. It is also believed that media professionals will face greater challenges because of the concentration of ownership of media organisations, where commercial and economic agendas become intertwined with political aims to control public perceptions of conflicts. It is, however, the journalists' experiences and awareness of future challenges what could create a window for professional progress in serving the public's right to know other dimensions of the news about such wars and conflicts.

Chapter Six: Covering the 2003 Iraq War on Al-Jazeera

6.1. Introduction

Examination of the reporting of the 2003 Iraq war has enriched the discussion on war coverage, especially given the rise of new elements, such as the remarkable rise of Arab news media and the embedding strategy which was adopted by the Pentagon to accommodate reporters with the coalition troops during battles.

Nord and Strömbäck (2006) state that, in examining the coverage of conflicts, it is essential to ask questions about *where* journalists were working, *when* journalists were publishing the results of their work, and perhaps most importantly, *how* journalists were reporting conflicts for their media organisation (Nord and Strömbäck 2006: 87-88). These questions are helpful in exploring such issues as impartiality, objectivity and balanced reporting, as well as querying the quality of news and credibility of information in such a rapidly changing environment. There is no doubt that military restrictions since the Vietnam War have increasingly regulated media activities, such that journalists have been obliged to follow press conferences away from the war zones, or join supervised tours to the frontline. However, by introducing the embedding system during the 2003 Iraq war, journalists were able to witness events with their own eyes, yet the more time journalists spent with the troops the possibility of identifying with them became higher (ibid: 87). According to David Miller (2004), the embedding system aimed at “building up and protecting “friendly” information” (Miller 2004: 10). For this reason, Nord and Strömbäck (2006), argued that journalism could be marked less by independence and a critical stance and more by patriotism and a sense of solidarity with the troops¹²⁰ (Nord and Strömbäck 2006: 87).

On the other hand, there were important exceptions to the role of embedded journalism, as indicated by Nord and Strömbäck. These exceptions included unilateral journalists operating on their own, journalists placed in Baghdad, and the reporting by the Arab satellite broadcasters (ibid: 87). Thus, in this chapter, the discussion about the role of media during

¹²⁰ For further information on the embedding policy, see earlier chapter on media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war. Embedding is also discussed later in this chapter, as part of Al-Jazeera’s experience in covering the 2003 Iraq war.

the 2003 Iraq war will extend to examine the way in which this conflict was covered and reported, especially on Al-Jazeera news channel.

The narrative of the conflict on Arab media channels forms an alternative perspective to the war and its consequences, and therefore contributes to the construction of a more critical public discourse on US policies in the Middle East. Reporting of the 2003 Iraq war on Arab channels, especially Al-Jazeera, is believed to have two major indications: first, Arab broadcasters clearly halted western media dominance over information regarding the region and its conflicts, most notably CNN, which was *the* keystone in reporting the 1991 Gulf War. Second was the ability of Arab media to produce effective journalism that was able to cover all sides of the conflict, driven by an understanding of their audiences' desire and even hunger for information.

What Al-Jazeera did during this war and other conflicts, such as Afghanistan in 2001, Lebanon in 2006, the Palestinian Intifada in 2000 and the ongoing violence and occupation of the Palestinian territories, is clearly giving other versions of the "truth" by focusing on civilian casualties and their devastation during such conflicts. It can therefore readily be argued that without Al-Jazeera many incidents would not have been extensively reported or shown on Western television screens. No one would have imagined the scale of damage and destruction of Iraqi cities during the war, without the footage shown on Al-Jazeera and other Arab channels, which clearly revealed the human cost and suffering during this war.

This chapter aims to explore how Al-Jazeera's coverage of the war differed from Western broadcasters, and how the channel critically addressed the issues of accuracy, objectivity and impartiality during the course of the war. This is done by examining Al-Jazeera's coverage, and focussing on particular incidents, such as the Fall of Um Qasr, the Basra uprising, the Basra Tank Column, the surrender of the 51st Iraqi Division, and the supposed firing of Scud missiles on Kuwait.

Choosing these particular incidents was a result of extensive archival research aimed to illustrate the differences between Al-Jazeera and Western broadcasters in covering the war. In addition, it is argued that these incidents demonstrate clear examples of the challenges that face reporters and broadcasters during the coverage from the fronts. Further, these particular incidents are argued as appropriate as they were selected in earlier research by Lewis et al

(2006), which examined the Western media coverage of the 2003 Iraq war. However, this chapter focuses on Al-Jazeera's coverage of these incidents in order to explore the differences that marked the channel's coverage of the war.

Additionally, this chapter discusses the issue of broadcasting the footage of American and British POWs and that of civilian casualties and the language used by Al-Jazeera to report such events. It also examines the event in which Al-Jazeera's Bureau in Baghdad was attacked by the coalition troops with a missile fired from a jet fighter, causing the death of one of Al-Jazeera's reporters (Tareq Ayoub) in the Iraqi capital, who happened to be on the roof of the building at the time of the attack.

Further, interviews were undertaken with key figures working for Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war, such as Ibrahim Helal, the editor-in-chief at that time; Amr El-Kahki, Al-Jazeera's only embedded reporter with the coalition forces; Mohammed Khair Al-Bourini, Al-Jazeera's reporter in north Iraq; Arar El-Shareh, Senior Producer in the Al-Jazeera newsroom, and Aktham Suliman, Al-Jazeera's Bureau Chief in Germany. These helped to clarify Al-Jazeera's role in covering the conflict and benefitted from such elements as their personal experiences on the ground and inside Al-Jazeera's newsroom, which all contributed to explore the channel's role in covering the war.¹²¹ In addition, access to original materials was also gained, such as to internal memos written during the war. These materials - which are all in Arabic and have been translated by the author - were part of archival and documentary research conducted during a field trip to Al-Jazeera's headquarters in Doha. Such access is argued to have enabled triangulation of information from multiple sources, enriching the questions asked.

6.2. Arab Media and the Narrative of the Victims

There is no doubt that Arab media outlets have provided a significant contribution to the coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, focusing on angles commonly ignored by Western media during the conflict (and which therefore become controversial), such as the mass of material devastation experienced by Iraqi citizens, and indeed as war casualties - which occupied a substantial part of the war imagery on Arab transnational media. This coverage has enriched discussions on bias and balance within war reporting, and perhaps provides a further

¹²¹ These interviews were conducted in Arabic and translated by the author. Translations from Arabic newspapers and books used in this study were also conducted by the author.

interpretation to the notions of objectivity and neutrality during the course of war. However, the most important aspect which could be clearly observed during the 2003 Iraq war was the role of Al-Jazeera, which very notably provided an alternative narrative to the war.

According to Seib (2004), the Iraq war gave Arab news media an opportunity to engage in critical reporting and to cover events in the Arab world from a broader perspective and within the global context (Seib 2004: 113). This view is shared with Hoskins (2004), who believes that the broadcasting landscape has been transformed since 1991, with the fragmenting of the previously-dominant American-Western template, where CNN had provided the only established globally-available satellite television news operation at the time. Hoskins further argued that “2003 audiences” became comprised of very different cultures (in the West as well as in the Arab world) and watched Al-Jazeera, Abu-Dhabi or any one of a number of relatively new Arab-based satellite channels (Hoskins 2004: 66).

Their [Arab satellite channels] journalists possessed different histories and different motivations and so constructed different templates through which to frame the Iraq war (ibid).

Nevertheless, Zayani and Ayish (2006) added that as far as Arab media are concerned the comprehensive live coverage of the 2003 Iraq war stood in marked contrast to the coverage of the 1991 Gulf War, which was not much more than a decade earlier. According to Zayani and Ayish, this is due to various elements, some of which are political while others were influenced by technological advances, particularly improvements to telecommunication technologies.

The ongoing information revolution in the Arab world, the advent of multi-channel satellite television, the displacement of state sponsored media apparatuses, the launching of a few Arab news channels, the politicized nature of the Arab viewer, the geographical changes in the Middle East started to undergo in light of the ubiquity of democratic rhetoric after September 11 – all these factors have given war reporting by Arab channels an added significance (Zayani and Ayish 2006: 478).

Accordingly, Charlene Gubash (2003) pointed out that the most obvious difference in the way Arab networks covered the war was the emphasis placed on civilian and military casualties.

Rare are the sanitized images of war so common on US networks – the black and white cockpit video of successful coalition bombing and state-of-the-art military machines in action (Gubash, *NBC News Online*, 31 March 2003: np).

Gubash stated that Arab networks were less concerned with the weight of the bombs, and more concerned with the damage caused by them, and frequently broadcast shocking images of the aftermath of the war, such as:

... a wounded man being carried in bloody blankets to a hospital, two toddlers sharing one metal shelf in a morgue, a little boy with a blood-soaked T-shirt swathed in bandages and a charred corpse next to a burned car (ibid).

These images, according to Gubash, resonated among the Arab public, who were strongly opposed to a war they deemed unjust and were deeply sympathetic to the Iraqi people, whom many consider “Arab brothers” (ibid).

Furthermore, Hussein Amin (2003) observed that Arab transnational television coverage of the war played an important role in the conflict, increasing public anger towards America and Britain.

From the beginning, all Arab transnational television looked at the American troops and coalition as invaders and not as liberators. Arab satellite news channels used nearly the same perspective and approach in describing the American military (Amin 2003: np).

This anger, according to Amin, arose from the reports which appeared on the Arab transnational channels, which gave viewers a feeling of immediacy with the people of Um Qasr, Basra, and Baghdad, and contributed to building a sense of solidarity and unity with the Iraqi people and negative sentiments against the Americans and the British (ibid).

Nevertheless, Amin considered that, since the war in Afghanistan in 2001, Arab audiences started to watch this uncompromising or real war coverage, and had become accustomed to watching pictures of the dead and wounded through the coverage of the Palestinian Intifada (ibid).

In agreement with Amin, Susan Sachs (2003) assumed that the biggest influence over much of the media coverage had come from Al-Jazeera satellite channel, which, according to Sachs, had made its name with the on-the-spot coverage of the Palestinian uprising, which gave viewers an “unblinking look at bloody and broken bodies” (Sachs, *New York Times*, 5 April 2003: np). Susan Sachs also argued that even for those accustomed to seeing such images from Arab coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the daily barrage of war

coverage in newspapers and hourly television reports “has left many Arabs beside themselves with anger” (Sachs, *New York Times*, 5 April 2003: np).

The rage against the United States is fed by this steady diet of close-up colour photographs and television footage of the dead and wounded Iraqis, invariably described as victims of the US bombs (ibid).

Abdel Moneim Said, director of the Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo, stated that the media were playing a very dangerous game in the conflict.

When you see the vocabulary and the images used, it is actually bringing everybody to the worst nightmare - the clash of civilizations (Said cited in ibid).

According to Wax (2003), Arabs and Americans were therefore interpreting what they were seeing of the war in vastly different ways. However, Wax argued that mistrusting the United States was fuelled by the barrage from the Arab satellite television stations, which in all cases were simply appealing to their audiences in a similar way the American networks were doing.

Just as American media produce moving stories about missing and wounded US soldiers, their Arab counterparts run in-depth stories on the victims of US and British attacks (Wax, *Washington Post*, 28 March 2003: np).

Furthermore, Jamal Ghitany, editor-in-chief of *Akhbar El-Adab* (Literature News), a weekly cultural newspaper in Egypt, revealed the role of Arab television channels in enhancing mistrust among Arab publics regarding the American motivations for the war.

I do not think many people here believe that [President] Bush wants to bring democracy to the Middle East. That would be laughable. So we watch on television what is happening to Arabs and that stirs the pot even more (Ghitany cited in Wax, *Washington Post*, 28 March 2003: np).

6.3. More than Reporting, Less than Propaganda

On examining the outcome of the media coverage, Danny Schechter (2003) argued that the war on Iraq showed not only different views and perceptions of the war itself, but also showed a remarkable distinction in the way the conflict was reported, especially when comparing CNN to Al-Jazeera.

This contrast of images is also seen on TV when you compare CNN’s antiseptic and sanitized coverage to Al-Jazeera’s depiction of a far bloodier conflict (Schechter 2003: np).

Emily Nelson of the *Wall Street Journal* stated that differences between the two channels could be seen as dramatic and subtle.

The two networks [CNN and Al-Jazeera], with unprecedented access to the battlefields of Iraq, are playing a powerful role in shaping perceptions of the war. The Gulf between the two views could even have an impact on US policy in the Middle East. A look at 24 consecutive hours of programming on CNN and Al-Jazeera reveals the many differences, both dramatic and subtle (Nelson cited in Schechter 2003: np).

Some of these differences, according to Nelson, could be clearly seen in the style of reporting and use of language.

CNN offers human-interest features with the families of US POWs. Al-Jazeera keeps updating the war's death toll. CNN refers to "coalition forces," Al-Jazeera to "invading Americans." CNN viewers expect the latest technology, such as lipstick cameras and night vision, and they get it. Al-Jazeera has had unusual access in places such as Baghdad and Basra, so it could offer its audience a street level view of the war's impact on Iraqis. CNN's correspondents were all either pulled out or kicked out of Baghdad (ibid).

In addition, Nelson argued that many Arabs and Americans believed the other audience was being fed propaganda:

But there is more than ideology at work at the two networks [CNN and Al-Jazeera]. Both are business operations competing for viewers and advertisers against increasingly aggressive rivals and avidly seeking to please their target audiences (ibid).

On the other hand, Amin stated that the contrast between CNN and the Arab media was highlighted by their approach to photos of war casualties.

CNN rarely showed photos of the dead and the wounded, focusing instead on military movements and strategies. The Arab transnational media were running a gruelling competition to choose the most spine-chilling pictures of torn faces and chests. US governments condemned the Arab media for using these images, and the Arab media condemned the US for refusing to broadcast the images, saying that the American looked at the war as video game and needed to see the result of their choice to invade (Amin 2003: np).

Nevertheless, Chouliaraki (2006) commented on the footage of the Iraq war on Western television from March to April 2003 by describing it as a "paradoxical event." That is to say it was the most transparent footage "ever", but at the same time it was also condemned as the most manipulative (Chouliaraki 2006: 261). Chouliaraki argued that war footage was transparent in its first-time use of embedded journalists and in the concentration of an

international pool of reporting journalists in Baghdad itself, yet, on the other hand, it was manipulative in that this unprecedented proliferation of information and imagery intensified the process of news regulation and censorship, “opening the footage to criticism of a heavy bias in favour of the coalition troops” (ibid: 262).

Yet it is perhaps vital to notice that, despite differences in editorial choices between Arab and Western media outlets of what and how to run images of war casualties, Arab media channels were still following similar professional styles in their coverage to the Western media outlets. Hashem (2004) stated that Arab media imitated the western modes of representation by using “war rooms” staffed with retired generals who discussed the war and how it should proceed (Hashem 2004: 161). In addition, Hashem argued that many Arab reporters and producers, like their Western counterparts, knew what their listeners and readers wanted to see and read, and they gave it to them (ibid).

Similarly, James Poniewozik (2003) considered that Arab networks were functioning like US TV, by showing briefings, sound bites from George W Bush and Tony Blair, allied advances and even interviews with coalition troops. However, as Poniewozik pointed out, Arab media also showed

... charred bodies lying beside gutted cars. Cameras linger over dead allied soldiers and bandaged Iraqi children. Mourning families wail, and hospitals choke with bleeding and burned civilians... If the war on American TV has been a splendid fireworks display and tank parade punctuated by press conferences, on Al-Jazeera et al, war is hell (Poniewozik, *Time Magazine*, 30 March 2003: np).

Further, Arab news media also constantly covered the anti-war rallies and campaigns that stormed the streets of many cities and capitals around the globe. According to Wax (2003), Al-Jazeera dedicated part of its coverage to provide in-depth coverage of this (Wax, *Washington Post*, 28 March 2003: np). This could be readily viewed as an attempt to provide a wider perspective on the conflict and responses to controversy. According to Aday et al (2005), all American networks largely ignored any anti-war sentiment, especially in the form of protests and dissenters. “Al-Jazeera, by contrast, devoted more coverage to protests and diplomacy than did its US counterparts” (Aday et al 2005: 17).

Furthermore, Kellner (2004) stated that the US networks tended to ignore certain aspects of the conflict, such as Iraqi casualties, Arab outrage about the war, global anti-war and anti-US

protests, and the negative features of the war, whereas the BBC and Canadian CBC often featured these more critical themes (Kellner 2004: 334). Kellner also asserted that the war was framed differently by various countries and networks, and in Arab countries it was noted that the war was presented “as an invasion of Iraq, slaughter of its people, and destruction of the country” (ibid).

On the whole, US broadcasting networks tend to present a sanitized view of the war, whereas Canadian, British, other European, and Arab broadcasting presented copious images of civilian casualties and the horrors of war (ibid).

In the US, Rushing (2007) stated that the media’s role in the United State’s disconnect between the romanticism and the realities of war was evidenced during the first Gulf war in 1991, or Desert Storm in 1998.

Most Americans, however, have no memory of the battle scenes and war dead because the US media had already begun its sanitization of war ... Images of the carnage have gone largely unseen in the US media even though some of the burned-out trucks and tanks that coalition forces bombed on what came to be known as the Highway of Death in Kuwait are still there. (For months after the war ended, charred remains of Iraqi soldiers could be seen still inside those vehicles) (Rushing 2007: 76-77).

In addition, Rushing believed that American media continued to adopt this policy thirteen years later, during the 2003 Iraq war. For Rushing, when the media withheld images that chronicle the “true” human cost of war, it was in fact running the risk of infantilizing its audience and “sugar-coating a harsh truth” (ibid: 78).

The Pentagon barred photographs of flag-draped coffins returning from Iraq, but the media censored itself when it came to showing images of war-wounded civilians and soldiers alike. Reporters in Iraq told me that their networks regularly refused to run the grisly images they sent in, saying their audience did not want to see them (ibid).

Nevertheless, according to a *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting* (FAIR) report (2007), some examples were noted which could outline the ways in which the 2003 Iraq war was reported and how American media framed the issue of civilian casualties on screen, where one of the examples was from the coverage of NBC Nightly News, just on the second day of the war, on 22nd March 2003.

NBC Nightly News spells out the difference between American and Arab war coverage: “For days now with armoured tank convoys dominating American TV, both the BBC and the Arab network Al-Jazeera have devoted significant time to what Iraq suggested were innocent victims targeted in the bombing (FAIR, 19 March 2007: np).

Another example that appeared on *FAIR* report was chosen from CNN. This example would possibly indicate an alliance between the network and the official line of the American government and perhaps quite neatly illustrates the issue of credibility, especially when such an alliance could affect the network's integrity and performance during the war.

CNN anchor Carol Costello cuts short a live press conference in Baghdad with the Iraqi information minister: "All right, we're going to interrupt this press briefing right now because, of course, the U.S. government would disagree with most of what he is saying (ibid).

Such examples help to illustrate the wide variations in the war coverage and differences in the narratives that appeared on Arab and Western televisions. Yet it could be said that, for Arab audiences, who had direct access to Western media such as CNN and the BBC, following the news could be far more comprehensive as a significant part of the Arab audiences were able to follow the coverage of the war from more than one angle, such as those on European and American networks, in addition to Arab satellite channels.¹²² Yet, if considering American or British audiences, it would be extremely hard for them to benefit from the output of Arab transnational television due to the language barrier, unless this coverage is translated, though such a process is assumed to be subject to editing and selection of particular footage over others in order to match a particular perspective of the war, depending on the Western channels editorial policies.

In this regard, Amin asserted that Arab audiences - as opposed to Western ones - had the benefit of being able to hear both the Arab side and the American side, given the ease of access to American satellite channels in the Middle East; "most Americans do not have ease of access and delivery to Arab transnational television coverage" (Amin 2003: np).

¹²² The ability of many Arabs to follow the news on Western channels would mainly be due to educational and social developments in the Arab world, which, as Jon Alterman (1998), described, led to an emergence of a substantial class of Arab professionals who studied and sometimes worked in the West before returning to their countries of origin (Alterman 1998: 16).

Those from the Gulf countries especially benefitted from sharp increases in levels of education, literacy, and prosperity following the oil boom of the 1970s. They are also products of the jet age, when a trip to Paris or London is a voyage of merely a few hours. Some 200,000 Saudis have studied in the United States since the early 1960s, and tens of thousands of others have studied in Europe. Other Saudis have lived in Western countries for extended periods for other reasons. And Saudi Arabia is not alone; in country after country around the Gulf and throughout the Arab world, a dramatic increase in foreign travel occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with an increase in educational opportunities, literacy, and wealth (ibid: 16-17).

Similarly, Seib (2004) stated that, unlike most of the Western audiences, Arab news consumers were able to make comparisons and shop for news, because they had access to American and other Western media as well as their own (Seib 2004: 111). Even among Arab satellite channels, Seib asserted that satellite news channels – with their pan-Arab approach – were preferred over the more parochial national television stations during the Iraq war (ibid).

This pushed stations such as Egypt's Nile News to adopt a sharper-edged journalism in order to compete with Al-Jazeera and other pan-Arab news stations. The satellite channels were being seen not only by those who could afford their own dishes, but also by large numbers of Arabs from all levels of society who gathered in neighbourhood coffee shops to watch (ibid).

Nevertheless, Rami Khouri (2003) stated that in order to fully understand the Iraq war and its consequences, it was necessary to watch both Arab and American television. For this reason, Khouri assumed that Arab audiences who had a better chance to access both media were able to gain a wider view of the war.

We in the Arab World are slightly better off than most Americans, because we can see and hear both sides, given the easy availability of American satellite channels throughout the region; most Americans do not have easy access to Arab television reports, and even if they did they would need to know Arabic to grasp the full picture (Khouri 2003: np).

In addition, Poniewozik also argued that straight news on Arab networks in many ways offered viewers a more complete and inside look at the war than US TV did.

They are given greater access by Baghdad, which sees them - as it saw CNN in 1991 - as a conduit to the outside world. With more reporters and cameras in Iraqi cities, Arab networks often have better camera positions on aerial attacks and show much more of what those pretty explosions wreak bloodily on the street. US TV tends to treat civilian victims in the context of showing allied medics helping them, and some of its coverage of the war's effects on civilians is insultingly picturesque (Poniewozik, *Time Magazine*, 30 March 2003: np).

Further, Marc Lynch (2006) considered that the performance of Arab media outlets was a result of yet another significant factor, which was the competition among Arab channels to win over Arab audiences. Such a factor, according to Lynch, required an essential awareness of the marketplace; therefore Lynch argued that the Arab media struggled to find an appropriate balance between an emotional response to traumatic events, the generic pressures of covering a war in progress, and the relentless pressure of the marketplace (Lynch 2006: 190).

The increasingly competitive Arab media market played an important role in shaping news coverage. Just as CNN tailored the domestic version of its broadcast to be more “patriotic” in response to its losing market share to Fox News, Arab satellite television stations increasingly took market pressure into account (ibid: 192).

In this regard, Lynch assumed that if Al-Jazeera chose to abstain from broadcasting sensational images, it had to take into consideration that it would lose market share to other Arab broadcasters which might be in this case less abstemious in their choices. Al-Arabia, for instance, battled during the war with Al-Jazeera by competitive outflanking, raising the ante for Al-Jazeera and all other channels (ibid).

This market competition, according to Lynch, was based on frank evaluation of what would draw Arab audiences, and therefore, had as much to do with broadcasting choices as political preferences or identity.

Arab channel surfing was the reality of the war, as satellite television viewers – both at home and in public spaces such as cafes – voraciously consumed and compared not only the Arab stations but also CNN, Fox, BBC and more (ibid).

However, Lynch suggested that Al-Jazeera was considered to be the most credible news source and remained the most-watched station by Arab audiences (ibid). Further, Amin considered that the overall performance of the Arab transnational broadcasting media during the 2003 Iraq war succeeded in building television viewership throughout the region, creating new demand for news analysis and discussion, “and establishing a reputation of credibility never before experienced in the history of broadcasting in the Middle East” (Amin 2003: np).

6.4. Al-Jazeera: A Battle for Credibility

There is no doubt that the 2003 Iraq war was another battle for Al-Jazeera channel - after the war in Afghanistan in 2001 - to provide an alternative perspective to the course of the conflict and yet, competing with other global broadcasters in the US and Britain for a credible presence and transparent reporting of the war. According to Seib (2008), by 2003 and the beginning of the Iraq war, Al-Jazeera’s successes had encouraged other Arab broadcasters, such as Al-Arabiya and Abu Dhabi TV, to emphasize live, comprehensive coverage.

For the first time, many Arabs did not have to rely on the BBC, CNN, or other outside news sources when a big story broke. They could instead find news presented from an Arab perspective (Seib 2008: 143).

Seib further argued that one of Al-Jazeera's strengths has been its introduction of energetic and sometimes continuous debate into an Arab news business "that was previously known for its Arab docility" (ibid).

The high production values of the channel's newscasts and the lively exchanges in its talk shows have expanded the news audience and changed the nature of political discourse within the Arab public sphere (ibid).

However, Seib added that critics of Al-Jazeera, particularly in the West, often challenge the channel's objectivity. Yet such criticism, according to Seib, misses the point in terms of understanding the channel's baseline strength; Al-Jazeera's audiences believe that one of the main advantages of the channel is its credibility which engages them through its coverage.

Rather than judging the news product they receive according to standards prescribed by outsiders, most of Al-Jazeera's viewers consider *credibility* to be a news provider's most important attribute, and these viewers want news that is gathered independently for Arabs by Arabs and that sees events through their eyes (ibid).

Additionally, Seib stated that in the new era of proliferating satellite television channels, state-controlled and Western broadcasters have found that they are at a significant competitive disadvantage in the Arab world, because they are not perceived as credible as Al-Jazeera.

Furthermore, the presentation of news on Al-Jazeera reflects a passion that is well suited for an audience that feels passionately about many of the issues and events that the channel covers (ibid: 144).

Accordingly, Al-Jazeera's coverage of the 2003 Iraq war is believed to have followed the same patterns, though Helal (2008) asserted that this particular conflict formed a greater challenge for Al-Jazeera - in terms of maintaining credibility among its audiences - than reporting the war in Afghanistan in 2001. This challenge was due to two essential elements: first, the widespread international attention and debate around this particular conflict and, second, the competition with other broadcasters.

The 2003 Iraq war was a much bigger challenge than the Palestinian uprising or war in Afghanistan. With the international focus on the events that were unfolding, we were concerned about the logistics, though equally about the editorial side, simply because in the Palestinian Intifada and Afghanistan we enjoyed exclusive access to

the story, while we did not expect such privileges in Iraq (Helal 2008 interview with author).

In addition, Helal stated that Al-Jazeera was aware of the upcoming challenges, whether from neighbouring countries which would ban Al-Jazeera from operating on their soil, such as Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, or from the American side, which could possibly “black out Al-Jazeera”. Therefore the plan to cover the war was to maintain the focus on reporting comprehensively from inside Iraq. To achieve this, the channel decided to deploy a number of reporters to cover the all major areas in Iraq, from Kurdistan in the north to Basra in the South.

With the restriction we knew in covering from many neighbouring countries and the expected black out from the Anglo-American military side, we decided that our selling point will be showing more from within Iraq. That was why we invested in a lot of transmission equipments, to be deployed and put on standby in many locations in Iraq. We depended also on our first hand sources among the Iraqi people because we expected to face attempts to censor our coverage from the Anglo-American side and the government of Iraq equally. We advised our editorial teams in Iraq – who consisted of different Arab nationalities ... Syrians, Jordanians, Palestinians, Algerians and Egyptians – to be extremely cautious in their on-air reporting in order to report the story as accurately as possible, but at the same time not in any way that could result in committing legal violations that might trigger them being kicked out of Iraq. So they should stick to reporting only what they could see and know first-hand, and when they report events they are not 100% sure about they should only attribute the information to its sources. This also applied to the correspondents working from the Anglo-American side in Iraq and elsewhere (the UK, USA and CENTCOM) (Helal 2008 interview with author).

The measures taken by Al-Jazeera in its preparation to cover the war went back to February 2003, when the likelihood of war looked highly predictable. Helal revealed how the channel started to arrange to report the upcoming war by structuring its coverage plan editorially and logistically.

In mid-February 2003, when the attack looked inevitable, we had an editorial and management meeting to discuss the editorial and logistical side of the coming coverage. On the logistics side, we agreed that once the war started we would stop all programmes and start a rolling news screen, and we drew up contingency plans for newsroom routines to achieve that. All heads of department were informed about this. On the ground, we decided to immediately start the following deployments: A team in northern Iraq (Kurdistan which was not under Iraqi government control) led by our then roving correspondent Waddah Khanfar; a team in Mosul led by our Doha-based correspondent, Muhammad Khair Al-Bourini; a team in Basra in the south of Iraq consisted of two correspondents, Abdel-Haq Saddah and Mohammed Abdullah. Additionally, there was a strong team in Baghdad that consisted of correspondents Tayseer Allouni, Majid Abdel-Hadi and Maher Abuballah, in addition to the

Baghdad-based reporter Deyar Al- Omari. Each team was given a sufficient budget and transmitting and communication facilities – an SNJ satellite news gathering machine, a fly away (a small up-linking machine) video phones and satellite telephones (ibid).

Equally important, Al-Jazeera assigned reporters to cover Central Command in Doha and appointed a stand-by team in Jordan to report on the expected outflow of Iraqi citizens fleeing the country due to war.

Outside Iraq, we deployed three correspondents at the Central Command based in Doha CENTCOM, their duty was to gather information and analyse press conferences of the Anglo- American officials. In Jordan we had a standby team near to the Iraqi border as we expected an influx of refugees crossing the border to Jordan. We were not able at that time to operate in Syria, Kuwait, Bahrain or Saudi Arabia due to their governments' discontent with Al-Jazeera's editorial line (ibid).

Furthermore, Al-Jazeera was keen to establish a network of military experts and analysts in order to provide an inclusive input to Al-Jazeera's coverage.

Also we made agreements with a group of military and political analysts to be ready exclusively for Al-Jazeera in Doha and other locations like London, Cairo and Washington (ibid).

In the US and Europe, notable attention was directed to Washington and London to ensure that the American and British perspectives would be presented, especially in the US, where Al-Jazeera succeeded in placing reporters in key strategic places:

We strengthened our correspondents in London by moving two programme presenters back to the field (Yosri Foda, and Malik Triki) to help our existing team in the British capital to report the British side of the story. In Washington DC we rented a dedicated satellite space segment to transmit material directly from Washington to Doha as we planned to have dedicated news shows presented from our DC studios daily. Our DC Bureau Chief Hafez Al-Mirazi also secured a plan to guarantee having Al-Jazeera correspondents in the main departments in the US such as the State Department, White House, and the Pentagon (ibid).

In identifying the importance of its Washington bureau, and other offices in Europe and Asia, Helal pointed out their imperative of getting a wider perspective to the war with an international dimension.

Our decision to give significant daily air-time to our DC bureau aimed at getting coverage from the American perspective. In addition to that we put our teams in Europe, around the Arab world, and in Asia on alert; therefore, they were to be operational 24/7 to get governmental and public reactions. I communicated this plan early in March [2003] to all concerned parties (ibid).

Editorially, Helal stressed achieving two targets by Al-Jazeera's coverage of the war - impartiality and accuracy.

Editorially, we decided to communicate two main things to our editorial teams in Doha and elsewhere: Aljazeera is not taking any side, and that we must maintain the maximum accuracy and balance in the coming coverage (ibid).

Further, according to the minutes of the first editorial meeting held at Al-Jazeera headquarters on 15th February 2003, involving editor-in-chief Ibrahim Helal and other journalists, producers and reporters at Al-Jazeera, the aim of the meeting was to discuss the coverage plan for the war; few fundamental issues were discussed by those attending, who were called "The Iraq crisis team". Among those issues was the expected start of the war, which was believed by those attending to be around the second half of March 2003. In this meeting, Helal suggested the preparation of one or two daily special "timeless" reports on the "crisis" to be used in special coverage or during the war. These reports, as suggested by Helal, aimed at having a different style than the regular news reports and could last for three to four minutes, as each report could tackle a certain issue that could serve in providing a more panoramic perspective of the conflict. The subjects that had been agreed upon at the meeting were:

Profiles for Iraqi and American officials who were directly involved in the "crisis", Iraq's relationships with its neighbours (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Jordan, Syria and Turkey, in addition to Egypt and Yemen as former allies of Iraq in Arab Cooperation Council),¹²³ Iraqi opposition in Iran and Iranian opposition in Iraq, the oppression of

¹²³ The Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) was announced in Baghdad on 16 February 1989, consisting of Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and Yemen (United Nation-Treaty Series No. 26558, 1989: 418). It was established to promote and boost coordination, cooperation, economic integration and solidarity among its member states (ibid: 419-420). Membership of the council, as stated in Article 4.1 of the agreement, was to be open "to every Arab state which wishes to join it". However, the approval of accession to membership, as it appeared in Article 4.2, was left to the "unanimity of the Member-States" (ibid: 420). The General Secretariat of the ACC with its headquarters was agreed to be in Amman-Jordan (ibid: 422)

According to Ryan (1998), the ACC emerged in the context of major changes in the regional strategic balance of power, and came into being by the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, which led to "considerable anxiety in the Gulf regarding future Iraqi intentions" (Ryan 1998: 389). This was especially the case as Iraq had been left out of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which was formed in 1981, and included Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Thus, the end of hostilities in the Gulf in 1988 "marked a major strategic change in the regional system, in favor of Iraq" (ibid). However, the onset of the crises in the Gulf region, which began in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait and followed by the 1991 Gulf War, the ACC came into immediate "deadlock, as its two most powerful members – Iraq and Egypt – shifted overnight from ACC allies to military adversaries" (ibid: 398-399).

... after the crises, when the smoke had cleared from Operation "Desert Storm", few noticed that the deadline for renewal of the ACC charter had come and gone. The ACC was, for all intents and purposes, dead (ibid: 399).

the Iraqi Baath regime by the Sunni Muslims in Iraq, the political map in northern Iraq (Kurdish factions, Armenians, the Ansar El Islam Group), the current and previous inspection operations in Iraq [for weapons of mass destruction] and its relationship with INSCOM¹²⁴ and UNMOVIC,¹²⁵ weapons of mass destruction in the region and the possible Israeli connection to the war on Iraq and its benefits, the countries that helped Iraq to own internationally banned weapons, the tactical nuclear weapon and the new weaponry that would be used by the US and the types of fighting jets, with emphasis on the new ones (Al-Jazeera, First editorial meeting for the Iraq crisis team, 15 February 2003).

The meeting concluded with emphasis on the necessity to keep an accurate, and impartial approach in narrating events, and to get reporters and journalists to check each other's reports, in case of mistakes or inaccurate information (ibid).

Poignantly, a few days later, three of those attending were on the ground reporting the war for Al-Jazeera, while the remaining five were operating from the newsroom as producers and journalists. The reporters were Tayseer Allouni (based in Baghdad), Jawad Al-Omari (based at Assylih CENTCOM) and Mohammed Khair Al-Bourini (based in Mosel in north Iraq). The latter said the channel sent him two weeks before the major conflict started.

I arrived in Baghdad in the first week of March 2003, and went through Damascus airport to Baghdad airport, which used to be called Saddam International before the war. I stayed in Baghdad till the beginning of the war and then headed to Northern Iraq and stayed there until the war was over. During the first two weeks in Baghdad I

According to Makhadma (2004), although, the Gulf War had practically put an end to the ACC, the Jordanian government had officially terminated the ACC, on 1 August 1992. This decision came after almost 17 months of the establishment of the ACC. The Egyptian Parliament had also agreed to cancel the ACC agreement in February 1994, marking the official cessation of the ACC (Makhadma, *Al-Jazeera Online*, 3 October 2004: np).

¹²⁴ As it appeared on its home page, the United States Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) is an "Army major command that conducts intelligence, security, and information operations for military commanders and national decision makers" (INSCOM Online, 2010: np).

Headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, INSCOM is a global command with major subordinate command and variety of smaller units with personnel dispersed over 180 locations worldwide (ibid).

Further, the formation of INCOM on January 1, 1977 provided the US army "with single instrument to conduct multi-discipline intelligence and security operations and electronic warfare "at the level above corps and to produce finished intelligence tailored to the Army's needs" (ibid).

¹²⁵ As it appeared on its home page, UNMOVIC is the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission:

[It] was created through the adoption of Security Council resolution 1284 of 17 December 1999. UNMOVIC replaced the former UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) and continued with the mandate to verify Iraq's compliance with its obligation to be rid of its weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological weapons and missiles with a range of more than 150 km), and to operate a system of ongoing monitoring and verification to ascertain that Iraq did not reacquire the same weapons prohibited to it by the Security Council (UNMOVIC.org 2008: np).

was reporting on the developments of the situation, as it seemed that war was unavoidable. On the first day of the war, I went to the city of Mosel in northern Iraq and stayed there covering events - the air raids and the shelling - till after the fall of Baghdad (Al-Bourini 2003 interview with author).

As for Al-Jazeera's Baghdad office, an internal memo was sent to Al-Jazeera's staff, based on another editorial meeting on 1st March 2003, in which it outlined the major duties for the senior news producer at the Baghdad office. These included conducting daily evening meetings to discuss the coverage on the next day, and a morning meeting to emphasise what would be done. He also had to check the schedules and timetables and to make sure that at least one reporter would be based in the office round the clock. Further duties consisted of coordinating activities with the newsroom regarding sending news stories, preparing guest commentators and appointing available reporters to appear on-air in live coverage (Al-Jazeera internal memo, 1 March 2003).

Further, the memo also pointed out that in urgent matters, the senior news producer in Baghdad office could work as a reporter if needed. Additional duties to be carried out by the programme and administrative producer involved appointing a reporter and cameraman with a phone to accompany UN inspection teams, and also setting up timetables for reporters to cover both days and nights in order to be used extensively in news bulletins and current affairs programmes, besides being creative in choosing and selecting non-political topics on a daily basis and to discuss these with the head of the Baghdad office and the senior producer, to reveal a "civilised image" of the Iraqi people during this critical period (ibid).

Furthermore, in terms of language and terminology to be used during the war, Helal asserted that constant instructions were given to reporters, anchors and journalists from day one of the war, particularly regarding what to say in describing the warring parties, and any victims, while other directions were concerned with the American and British troops.

The instructions regarding terminology we were going to use were as follows:

The War on Iraq will be the main title. There was no place for any emotional expression like liberating or aggression.

Invasion or **Incursion**, are the terms we are going to use ONLY when the forces come inside the Iraqi soil. Before this we should stick to the term **Attack**.

Aggression is NOT a term we can use without attribution and only in quotes.

Anglo-American forces or Anglo-American campaign NOT the coalition forces, because the vast majority of the forces and the political decisions were made by these two governments.

Any resistance or counter-attacks that would be carried out by militant Iraqis against the invading forces will NOT be described as martyr attacks, we should only use guerrilla operations or **Fedayeen attacks** (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Nevertheless, in another internal memo sent by Helal to Al-Jazeera's staff on 24th March 2003 through Talk Back - a communication system linking Al-Jazeera staff in a mailing network - Helal pointed out a few crucial notes that would reinforce the image of Al-Jazeera as an essential news source inside Iraq. These tips, written by Helal, could perhaps also reveal how much Al-Jazeera's management was keen to show a confident and credible image to its audience.

For anchors:

- Don't use the words 'Thank you' at the end of each interview with the reporters, instead use for example 'our reporter in Baghdad will stay with us. We might come to you at any time to follow what is going on'. The use of this expression would give our audience the impression that we are offering a constant coverage, not separate stories.
- Don't use the expression 'we now go to Baghdad or Mosel', because it gives the feeling that we were out of contact and not knowing what has happened and we just returned to it. Instead we use 'Now to Baghdad' or 'Now again to Baghdad', or 'Now we return to Baghdad'.
- For live images, we have to let our audience feel that we clearly understand the situation and therefore we are telling them what is happening through commenting on the live images on the screen for a few seconds, till we secure the presence of our reporter who is at the scene.
- In the case of loud sounds of bombardments the anchor must keep silent and ask his guest (analyst or reporter) to listen to the live sound of the bombardment. This is very important as not paying attention to a single raid could cost us a big part of our coverage.

As for the control room team:

- We can use live images from Baghdad and put them on air. It is preferred to end the hourly bulletins with these images and by the anchor saying: "We leave you now with these live images from the Iraqi capital".
- It is preferred to use as many windows as possible for our reporters and let them speak to each other from their locations. We have to be careful in writing the right name and location under the right person.
- It is preferred to use live images from Baghdad when we have a guest at the studios. The layout could then be a big window for Baghdad with its live images, with the smaller one for the guest.
- We have to remove the news bar when we have live coverage, because it might hide an essential part of the picture.

For producers and journalists:

- We have to call attention to breaking news by writing on-screen 'breaking news' even if the story is different. In other words, we do not wait to write the full story, and by doing this we could finish writing the story and pass it to the anchor to read (Helal, internal memo, 24 March 2003).

In keeping with the channel's desire to reach its audiences as a credible source of news, a further internal memo, titled "Accuracy ... Accuracy ... Accuracy", was sent by Helal to Al-Jazeera's staff to draw their attention to the importance of accurate translation from Western sources to Arabic, in order to maintain an accurate approach in their reporting of war incidents.

All our huge efforts could collapse by a mis-translation of a word or expression, or an exaggeration in describing an event or not being accurate in naming a place or a city or a person. Please seek great accuracy in translation and check news bulletins twice and three times before broadcasting, and some stories perhaps need to be modified (Helal, internal memo, 25 March 2003).

In addition, Helal asserted that Al-Jazeera's strength was to be able to broadcast from Iraq, to access wide areas that other broadcasters would find difficult to reach, and to cover the human cost of the war, which would be absent on western media outlets.

Our strength was mainly the Iraqi society. In other words our strength was our network of reporters who operated unilaterally inside Iraq. Our cameras we deployed to destroyed sites to get the immediate reactions of Iraqi people, to film human casualties, also in hospitals to show the suffering and lack of medical support. This side of the story was extremely difficult for Western media to report, and many other Arab media preferred to invest most of its work force with the invading side, like Abu Dhabi TV. Working from within Iraq was extremely dangerous and an unpredictable process, as our teams were always in danger of being in the wrong place at the wrong time. We ended up losing one of our correspondents who was unfortunately killed when American shrapnel hit him while an American jet was bombing a site close to our bureau¹²⁶ (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Furthermore, the presence of Al-Jazeera inside Iraq had allowed the channel to extensively report the bombardment of civilian areas and thus to be able to challenge military claims of accuracy in targeting Iraqi military locations. It could also be said that Al-Jazeera's presence perhaps managed to put pressure on the coalition forces by revealing the human cost of the indiscriminate shelling. The civilians killed are normally referred to as "collateral damage" in military-speak, used to indicate the death of non-combatant civilians and the destruction of houses, schools, and hospitals that were not targeted but hit in error (Ravi 2005: 51). According to Ravi (2005), the Iraqi use of accounts of civilian deaths, along with images that were widely publicised (particularly by Arab media), was effective in fuelling anti-American sentiment (ibid: 59).

¹²⁶ Hitting Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad will be discussed later in this chapter.

On the other hand, the American military insisted it did not keep a count of civilian deaths in Iraq (ibid: 51). However, as stated by Steele and Goldenberg (2008), even though the Americans were not counting, people were dying, and every victim had a name and a family.

Wedding parties were bombed by US planes, couples driving home at night were shot at checkpoints because they missed a flashlight warning them to stop, and hundreds of other unarmed civilians were killed for no legitimate reason¹²⁷ (Steele and Goldenberg, *The Guardian*, 19 March 2008: np).

Nevertheless, it was widely reported since the end of the major combat period in Iraq in April 2003 that the death toll of Iraqi civilians during this conflict was in the thousands.

According to a 2003 Times survey of Baghdad hospitals, at least 1700 civilians died in the capital just in the five weeks after the war began. An analysis by Iraqi Body Count, a nongovernmental group that tracks civilian death by tallying media reports, estimated that 5630 to 10000 Iraqi civilians were killed nationwide from March 19 through April 2003 (Roug and Smith, *Los Angeles Times*, 25 June 2006: np).

It is believed that, for Al-Jazeera to focus on the human cost of the war, the channel was expecting that reporting civilian casualties would be one of the critical issues in this conflict for its emotional impact and perceived importance to viewers. Consequently, it is assumed that the channel expected some military restrictions or perhaps boundaries from the coalition side on revealing the actual death toll of civilian casualties, in order not to be used as part of the propaganda war with the Iraqi regime, as this would seriously affect public opinion and stir more anger, especially in the Arab world. Therefore the decision to send its camera crews and reporters to cover the major cities and areas in Iraq can be recognised not only as part of the channel's plan to report the war but also as a well thought out approach to tackling a critical issue in a professional manner by reporting and presenting some of the real horrors of the war, which obviously could be seen as challenging the coalition's information management plans to control information coming from the battlefields.

According to Helal (2008), Al-Jazeera's cameras and reporters were deliberately deployed in and around the Iraqi cities in order to report the attacks of the American and British troops on these areas.

¹²⁷ For further information on civilian casualties during the war, see Civilian Casualties in the 2003 Iraq War: A compendium of accounts and reports compiled by Melissa Murphy and Carl Conetta, Project on Defense Alternatives (PDA) Commonwealth Institute, 2003 Cambridge, Massachusetts. Also see Iraq death toll 'soared post-war' (*BBC News Online* 29 October 2004: np).

There were several incidents of the bombardment of targets in and around Baghdad and Basra and different cities like Mosel when the official line from the Americans and British was there were military targets. Yet when our cameras managed to be on the scene of these bombardments we discovered that they were not accurate in many cases, and we showed shots of civilians casualties and civilian sites destroyed - which impacted both on how accurate were the bombardments and the reporting of them (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Further outlining Al-Jazeera's mission to cover as much of Iraq as they could, Al-Bourini stated that there were no other Arab reporters in Mosel in northern Iraq apart of him (Al-Bourini 2003 interview with author), which could indicate that Al-Jazeera would be the main source of news to report on attacks targeting Iraqi positions or civilian constructions.

What made our coverage distinguished was that I was the only Arab reporter, covering from Mosel and its surroundings in north Iraq (ibid).

In addition, Al-Bourini revealed how he constructed his plan to cover the war from this particular area in Iraq, depending mostly on Iraqi non-governmental and local sources such as hospitals and the tribes in order to get information on the shillings and the casualties, rather than depending on Iraqi official who were as stated by Al-Bourini not helpful.

On the first day I arrived in Mosel, I contacted Iraqi tribes, I got their phone numbers, and visited all hospitals in Mosel, giving them our international and local phone numbers in Mosel and asked them to inform us of any injured or killed people they received. So if they tell us we had five injured from certain areas, we would take the camera and go to this area to shoot. I would say that I had established a good network of contacts, although I was disappointed with the cold welcome by Iraqi officials who, from day one of my arrival in the city, promised to help us but never did. That is why I decided to rely on my own local sources in Mosel (ibid).

It could therefore be said that, by focusing on civilian stories and their responses to the war, Al-Jazeera was aiming to substitute the lack of an exclusive presence which it had in Afghanistan by a constant, steady and condensed coverage of this war, in which could reveal a powerful presence through a challenging, critical and controversial performance. This was clearly noticed in the substantial coverage of Al-Jazeera during the war. Nevertheless, according to El-Shareh (2003), a senior producer at Al-Jazeera, being inside Iraq was a keystone for Al-Jazeera's coverage.

Honestly, the most important element in our coverage that distinguished our reporting was that we were inside Iraq (El-Shareh 2003 interview with author).

In addition, El-Shareh argued that while the “world media” were focusing on the war from the angle of the “liberation of the Iraqi people from dictatorship, and the question of Weapons of Mass Destruction”, Al-Jazeera was focusing on other, just as germane issues arising from the conflict: “that there is a nation being subjected to a destructive war, and a country [the US] that has an interest in attacking Iraq”¹²⁸ (El-Shareh 2003 interview with author). Nonetheless, El-Shareh stated that Al-Jazeera provided equal opportunities to the Iraqi and American perspectives of the war to be presented.

We at Al-Jazeera had a message that truth should be revealed as it is. To be influenced by any opinion that rejected or agreed with the war, that did not happen on Al-Jazeera’s screen. We never said in our news that this war is not justified or has been imposed; if you listen to our news bulletins, you won’t hear these words. We were reporting news and within this frame we had to report all opinions, so, for instance, when there were official opinions opposing the war or when there were mass rallies against the war in Germany, Britain, France or any other country, we were reporting them as part of our coverage, but we never said in our coverage that we were with or against the war (ibid).

On the other hand, according to Jeff Lewis (2005), the US communication strategies have contributed to a more general dislocation of the fourth estate idea. Lewis argues that their direct involvement in media production and management, along with a powerful strategy of unsettling ‘truth’ through a propagated perspective, leaves the ‘public’ in an uncertain reading position.

As the public generates its own meanings around terrorism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, it will certainly be drawing on a range of cultural and semiotic resources, including the ideals of freedom and democracy as they are being propagated by the Washington administration. But since these resources are themselves disjunctive and incomplete and as the media continues to supplement their meanings through unceasing volition of further instalments, publics in the media sphere will themselves seek to overcome the deficit (Lewis 2005: 162).

Lewis also argued that Al-Jazeera’s approach seriously challenged the highly managed information model supported by the US government and mainstream media corporations. However, Lewis stated that this approach is based on a refurbished fourth state paradigm which seeks “to return responsibility for decision-making and the agency of warfare back to those citizens who, by ignorance or active assent, are necessarily engaged in the conflict” (ibid: 163).

¹²⁸ Perhaps it could be said, that Al-Jazeera followed similar patterns in its coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, to its coverage of the war in Afghanistan in 2001 by focusing on civilian casualties and the human cost of the war. (For further on Al-Jazeera in Afghanistan see Bessaiso in Zayani 2005: 153-170).

Al-Jazeera conflates the ideal of information with the volition and cultural ubiquity of televisualization. In its view, the people of all nations are accountable for the actions of their governments and military, at least inasmuch as they must know as much as possible about these actions. Within the global media sphere, Al-Jazeera is seeking, that is, to refurbish the fourth estate principle, allowing publics to make informed decisions about policy, political violence and government (Lewis 2005: 163).

Further, as asserted by Lewis, during the invasion, both US and Iraqi officials were somewhat confused about the role and the status of Al-Jazeera, since, at various stages of the war, the reporting provided for the predominately Arab audiences was both “sympathetic and critical reports on the respective sides and their legitimacy” (ibid).

Simpson (2003) adds to this, stating that Al-Jazeera’s entire tone and approach during the war showed that its editors and correspondents knew they were broadcasting to people who believed the American and British invasion of Iraq was unjustified aggression (Simpson 2003: 243).

According to Miles (2005), never once in the twenty one days of the conflict - 20th March-9th April 2003 - did Al-Jazeera acknowledge that invading Iraq had anything to do with democratization. For Al-Jazeera, this was not about liberation: it was “a colonial conflict”.

From the first day to the last day of the war, Al-Jazeera would end its news bulletins with the anchor saying: “We leave you now with live pictures from Baghdad.” Then coverage would cut to a camera overlooking the city, all commentary would cease and the tagline ‘Baghdad is burning’ would appear on the screen. For a few minutes viewers would just watch the flames and the smoke rise up from the city (Miles 2005: 242).

In agreement with Miles, it can be argued that showing Baghdad like this was underlying the idea that the city itself was a casualty of war; such images were indeed hugely powerful emotional statements (ibid), which presumably contributed to the overall sense that Al-Jazeera’s coverage enhanced the notion that the 2003 Iraq war was an unjustified aggression led by the US to occupy an Arab land. In addition, this outlook was clear even in the style of the on-air promotions of Al-Jazeera, which Joe Khalil and Dureen Abu Ghaida (2004) assert revealed the channel’s attitudes and perspectives during the Iraq war (Khalil and Abu Ghaida 2004: np). According to Khalil and Abu Ghaida, on-air promotions are considered to be the cheapest and most straightforward way to promote a channel. However, in the case of news channels, on-air promotions tend to focus on the channel’s mission, position, its well-known presenters, and achievements (ibid).

For Khalil and Abu Ghaida, Al-Jazeera's on-air promotions, during the Iraq war, seemed to repeat the same visuals used during the Palestinian Intifada and the war in Afghanistan.

Best described as a series of fast-paced montage sequences with color enhancement, these promotions carefully juxtapose American might with Iraqi resilience and resistance. They focus on both players (Bush and Saddam) and victims (Iraqi women and children). The American army is portrayed as well armed, hi-tech units, in comparison to Iraq's primitive, undeveloped army. In brief, the on-air promotion was an extension of the on-air coverage that focused on the people, victimised or victorious (Khalil and Abu Ghaida 2004: np).

In agreement with Khalil and Abu Ghaida, Abbas Al-Tonsi (2003) had also illustrated that, among other Arab broadcasters, Al-Jazeera was distinguished for its expressive promos of the war (Al-Tonsi 2003: np). In addition, Al-Tonsi stated that Al-Jazeera was more dynamic than other Arab broadcasters, moving between Iraq, Washington, London, etc., due to its financial position, which enabled viewers to follow different scenes (ibid). This vibrant performance of Al-Jazeera was, according to Jamal Abdel-hai (2006), devoted to war coverage.

It has employed reporters on the ground in most of Iraq's major cities. News anchors usually follow up live reports with a series of questions in a lively conversational style, much like the one used in American media. The network interviews a wide range of experts from various fields and countries, including the US. Like the American media, Al-Jazeera has a stable of retired military men from Arab militaries to provide analysis (Abdel-hai 2006: 106).

Nevertheless, Philip Seib (2004) considered that the Iraq war enhanced Al-Jazeera's international standing as an alternative to Western media.

Al-Jazeera provides news for Arabs by Arabs, with built-in cultural biases that are easy for outsiders to criticize but win the targeted audience's allegiance. This is *their* news (Seib 2004: xv).

This journalistic performance, consistent with Seib, ended Western news hegemony led by the American media, the BBC and Reuters, which consequently became an important issue for Western governments (particularly the US) as they courted global public opinion. "The din of many media voices - among them loud opposition voices - complicates politics" (ibid). According to Marc Lynch (2006) the Arab media posed a serious challenge to the American strategic objective of maintaining information control.

In stark contrast to the 1991 Gulf War, when the coalition forces did manage to maintain near-complete control over information and imagery, in 2003 the Arab

media simply made this impossible. With correspondents on the ground and a vast audience, Arab television stations complicated American efforts at information dominance (Lynch 2006: 189).

By airing graphic videos of civilian casualties and thoroughly reporting anti-war protests in the Arab world and elsewhere. This coverage by Al-Jazeera and other Arab media appeared to have a substantial impact on Arab public opinion, which, according to Seib, has made American public diplomacy - the delivery of US messages about its policies - more important and more difficult (Seib 2004: 16).

In a report published by *Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting* (FAIR) on the media during the Iraq war, it was noted that on 2nd April 2003, NBC's Brian Williams reported:

They [American Administration] are calling it the cleanest war in all of military history. They stress they're fighting a regime and not the people, using smart bombs, not dumb, older munitions. But there have been and will be accidents ... and there is a new weapon in this war: Arab media, especially Al-Jazeera. It's on all the time, and unlike American media, it hardly reflects the Pentagon line. Its critics say it accentuates civilian casualties and provokes outrage on the Arab street (Williams cited in *FAIR*, 19 March 2007: np).

Unlike the Gulf War in 1991, it is believed that the rise of many transnational networks, especially in the Arab world, have contributed to shape Arab public opinion towards conflicts in the region, especially after the rise of Al-Jazeera in 1996 and its remarkable coverage of the war in Afghanistan in 2001. According to Marie Gillespie (2006), the increasing array of transnational media, and growing uses of the internet, makes it much harder for governments to get their policy messages across and so to secure legitimacy (Gillespie 2006: 470).

Through comparing and contrasting different sources (e.g. the BBC, Al-Jazeera and CNN), they construct their own narratives, which often contest and resist those put on the agenda by politicians and spin doctors (ibid).

Gillespie, however, argued that with the increasing number of transnational networks, it becomes much easier for news audiences to forge 'macro-public spheres', in which one hears and sees only what conforms to, and confirms, a pre-existing world view (ibid). This observation was also discussed by Nisbet et al (2004), who stated that most individuals, regardless of their location in the world, rely on their pre-existing views and the information most readily available to them in the news media as the mutable material from which to mold their opinions (Nisbet et al 2004: 20).

We can expect that most individuals living in Muslim countries, like their Western counterparts, are “cognitive misers,” employing information shortcuts as a means to process new information, form attitudes and reach decisions (Downs 1957, Popkin 1991 cited in Nisbet et al 2004: 20).

According to Mamoun Fandy (2003), some American commentators have dismissively attributed the violence of Arab television coverage to the nature of the culture. However, Fandy argued that the “truth” is more complicated, as, in order to understand the coverage, “one must take into account the narratives that have shaped the Arab worldview” (Fandy, *Washington Post*, 30 March 2003: np).

I recognise the references that shape the Arab coverage of this war. They span historical events from the Crusades to the Mongol invasions of Baghdad to the colonial experience and recent Arab-Israeli wars (ibid).

Furthermore, Fandy draws attention to the role of the Arabic language and its rich metaphoric impact on the coverage and consequently the news audience.

In the Arab world, language is full of images, which cannot be separated from narrative. Arabic is a metaphorical language, rich in shades of meaning. The image-based style of the Arabic language acts as an excellent interface with the picture. Thus television is terribly important. Consider the effect achieved, for example, when Majid Abdul Hadi, an Al-Jazeera reporter in Baghdad, shows a picture of a coalition bombing while referring to Baghdad as the pulsing heart of the Muslim caliphate, a pulsing heart engulfed in flame (ibid).

6.5. Patriotism, Culture and Journalistic Objectivity

Many scholars noticed that patriotism was one of the main features of the media output during the 2003 Iraq war. As stated by Ayish (2004), even though extended exposure to media outlets would reinforce audiences’ perceptions of credibility, it was observed the coverage of the Iraqi conflict invoked considerable patriotic feelings in both Arab and Western media organisations (Ayish 2004: np). Ayish argued that, when US TV network logos were “draped in red-white-and-blue bunting” and when “anti-war voices were subdued”, such attitudes would be perceived in the Arab world as a government/media front to promote the cause for the war. Consequently, Arab audiences would prefer to switch to Arab channels, such as Al-Jazeera and Abu Dhabi, to follow the news of the war (ibid).

Given this Arab World perception of US media as propaganda machines in Pentagon hands, they had no choice but to fall back on the Arab World media that possessed

professional news standards. It was in this context that Arabs rated a TV network like Al-Jazeera as the most credible among all media (ibid).

Furthermore, Ayish asserted that, for many Arabs, Al-Jazeera and Abu Dhabi satellite channels were powerful matches during the war for Western networks like CNN and the BBC (ibid).

Arab broadcasters were lauded for their insightful reporting of issues independent of government influence. JSC's [Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel] reporters who were killed, injured, or roughed up by US forces were viewed as heroes with legitimate professional and patriotic causes (ibid).

Meanwhile, Helal (2008) argued that any inculcation of patriotism was not intentional by Al-Jazeera, certainly not as it appeared on most American channels. For him, the situation was different on Arab news media, as for Al-Jazeera, it was an emotional engagement with what was happening to their fellow Arabs, rather than a deliberate strategy to influence the audience.

You cannot deny this factor [patriotism]. From Al-Jazeera's side we did our best to avoid sentimental feelings that were expressed by our journalists in the field and our presenters in Doha in the studios while they were watching their fellow Arabs being killed indiscriminately, paying a heavy unfair price for political differences and then while they were watching one of the Arab capitals - Baghdad, the capital of the Islamic empire in the olden times - being occupied by Western troops, I can say confidently that although Al-Jazeera's screens reflected those feelings on many occasions, but that was very limited and did not affect the accuracy of our narrative (Helal 2008 interview with author).

However, Helal clarified that broadcasting to Arab audiences was certainly different to broadcasting to American audiences. As for Arabs, there was an existing anger about US policies in the region, especially after its decision to launch a war against an Arab country (ibid). This sentiment could be clearly viewed as a result of the US policies in the Middle East, which, as indicated by Edward Said (2004), were based on two principles: "The defence of Israel and the free flow of Arab oil" (Said 2004: 275).

According to Chevallier¹²⁹ (2008), Israel managed to avoid any sanctions being imposed by the international community for not "respecting" and implementing Security Council resolutions issued by the United Nations regarding its withdrawal from territories it occupied

¹²⁹ This book by Dominique Chevallier was originally published in French in 2003 by ACTES SUD- Sindbad, and called "Orient d'encre: ENTRE GUERRES ET POUVOIRS. It was translated to Arabic by Jamal Al-Shalabi in 2008 and published by the Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, Beirut.

in the 1967 war. Meanwhile Iraq, on the other hand, did not enjoy similar treatment by the international community after the Gulf War in 1991 which was a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. International resolutions against Iraq were mandatory and were accompanied by political and military pressures. These variations in treatment by the international community were of concern to a wide spectrum of Arab public opinion, according to Chevallier (2008: 26), who saw the two issues as being broadly similar in principle.

Therefore, it could be said that the Arab world widely viewed the war as a result of the double standards that were maintained by the international community during the 1990s. Nevertheless, Said expressed his doubts that Arabs opposed the war on Iraq due to sympathy with Saddam Hussein's regime.

I cannot imagine that there is single Arab or Iraqi who would not like to see Saddam Hussein removed (Said 2004: 225).

In fact, Said believed that opposing the war was a result of regarding it as part of the US strategy to redraw the map of the Middle East according to its own interests.

Just as the French, British, Israeli and American campaign against Gamal Abdel Nasser was designed to bring down a force that openly stated as its ambition the unification of the Arabs into a very powerful independent political force, the American goal today is to redraw the map of the Arab world to suit American, and not Arab, interests. U.S. policy thrives on Arab fragmentation, collective inaction, and military and economic weakness (Said 2004: 274).

Furthermore, it is believed that Arab solidarity about the Iraqi issue began to take shape in the 1990s due to the sanctions on Iraq, which had a severe impact on Iraqi citizens.¹³⁰ This situation, according to Lynch (2006), generated both a clear sense of commitment to a collectively shared "Arab" issue and intense disagreements in the new Arab media. However, as Lynch indicated, arguments about the Iraqi sanctions "allowed Arabs to rebuild the sense of sharing a community of fate, as Iraqi suffering under the sanctions became a potent symbol of the suffering of all Arabs" (Lynch 2006: 10).

Just as the Palestinian issue became a part of personal identity for many Arabs, so did the Iraqi situation. The "suffering of Iraqi people" became a vital touchstone for all Arab debate, a starting point of consensus rather than a point to be established. Indeed, concern for the Iraqi people became, in a very real sense, part of what it

¹³⁰ See *Iraq under Siege: The Deadly impact of Sanctions and Iraq*, edited by Anthony Arnone (2003) Pluto Press, London

meant to be Arab in the late 1990s. Even Iraq's fiercest enemies found themselves forced to justify their support for the sanctions or for American military efforts in terms of their concern to "liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's regime." And for growing numbers of Arabs, those responsible for the suffering of the Iraqi people dovetailed with those responsible for the suffering of Palestinians: not only Israel, but also the United States and the Arab regimes that either actively supported or did nothing to overturn the pernicious policies (ibid: 11).

Lynch added that the hostility to the American campaign against Iraq arises out of this particular conception of identity, "a narrative of solidarity and enmity that has shaped the meaning of all that happened. And the new Arab public sphere was a primary source of this identity and this narrative" (ibid). Besides Arab solidarity with the Iraqi people, other assumptions took into consideration Arab local worries about American possible inference in their countries in a similar manner to inference in Iraq. Mellor (2007) asserted that Arab public concern about issues such as the Iraq war was motivated by local concerns before regional solidarity, and, according to Mellor, this was illustrated in the slogans of the public demonstrations in Cairo prior to and during the war in 2003.

Here, the public was chanting "Today they enter Iraq; tomorrow it will be Warraq" (a popular quarter in greater Cairo). Thus, the Egyptian public expressed their fear that Egypt would be the next target (Mellor 2007: 81).¹³¹

Although this assumption illustrated the local concerns regarding the war - which is believed to be a crucial factor in explaining the public response to the conflict - it is still believed that the Arab sentiment of solidarity with the Iraqi people was the major driving force that motivated the public, not only in Egypt but also in other Arab countries, which also witnessed similar demonstrations against the war. Therefore, it could be said that the Arab public opposition to the war could be seen as a result of cumulative reactions which involved local concerns and that sense of solidarity with the Iraqi people. These reactions, as stated earlier, began to take shape in the 1990s with the sanctions on Iraq. So, by 2003, Arab public reactions are assumed to have developed increased anger and frustration over US policies in the region, especially the invasion of an Arab country by the American led forces - and they equally developed notable concerns that, if this happens to Iraq, it could happen to any other

¹³¹ This sentiment was also revealed in the Egyptian cinema, most notably in a comedy film called *The Night Baghdad Fell* (2005). The film addressed a fictional question: What if the Americans invade Egypt in a similar way to Iraq, and discussed how Egyptians could possibly defend the country against such an invasion. Although the film tackled the issue of American interference in the region through a comedic approach, it is still believed that it revealed the sentiments of solidarity with the Iraqi people, in addition to the local worries about American interference in the region (author's note).

Arab country. Thus, it could be said that the 2003 Iraq war was perceived as a humiliation for all Arab countries.

This perception of the war was very challenging and equally sensitive for Arab media, which obviously had to seriously take it into consideration by focusing on reporting the war in a balanced and objective manner rather than with a visibly patriotic approach. Accordingly, Helal stated that, regarding Al-Jazeera's coverage, there was no deliberate intention in the channel's editorial policy to appear patriotic in its reporting of the conflict. Consolidating this idea, Helal affirmed that the channel was focusing on appearing accurate and objective.

We made sure that even if a scene of patriotism appeared on screen, this would not affect our aim of accurate reporting. After all, we were broadcasting to Arab audiences, who without a doubt felt so angry about the war, but I can guarantee that any scenes evoking patriotism that appeared on Al-Jazeera were not deliberate or designed to reveal a certain message. Rather it might have been spontaneous reactions to the scenes of the war, which have obviously affected our reporters and anchors. There was no editorial policy to appear patriotic, like Fox News, for instance, which was heavily patriotic, or even CNN. We were trying to proactively maintain our professional practice and not to fall into the trap of patriotic strictures but to be accurate and objective (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Nevertheless, Helal considered that patriotism was more vivid on Western television stations, even with the use of language like "our boys" to describe the American and British troops. This use of language perhaps was crucial for Al-Jazeera as they were more careful in choosing the right terminology to describe both sides, whether "Iraqi forces" to describe the Iraqi army, or "invading forces" or "Anglo-American troops" to describe the American and British side. It is also assumed that the language adopted by Al-Jazeera revealed a substantial understanding of the importance to earn its audiences' confidence as a credible and objective source of news.

In addition, it could be also said that for Al-Jazeera not to use terms such as "coalition forces" or "Operation Iraqi Freedom", the channel was revealing its critical position in reporting the war and also its determination to not upset the majority of its Arab audience, who were most evidently opposing the war. Nevertheless, looking at the patriotism within American media outlets could certainly indicate not only the difference between Arab and American perspectives, but also indicated a major difference in the way the war was reported. According to Helal, this difference was particularly evident in the American approach to covering the war.

On the Western side, patriotism played a more vivid role. On many occasions we witnessed American and British reporters in the war fields describing the invading forces as ‘our forces’ or “our boys” and describing the Iraqi side as the “enemy”, and we witnessed the celebratory atmosphere during the pre-orchestrated scene of toppling the Saddam Hussein statue at Al-Ferdaws Square in central Baghdad. For us at Al-Jazeera the situation was different, we had to maintain the trust of our audience by seeking balanced language in describing the troops, and thus achieve accurate reporting (ibid).

Further, regarding the notion of patriotism as it appeared on American television, Rami Khouri interestingly stated that American television stations tended to heavily signal the symbols of patriotism in order to gain the audience’s support for the war.

American flags flutter as part of on-screen logos or backdrops, while emotional collages of war photos are used liberally as transitions between live reporting and advertising breaks. American TV tends to reflect the pro-war sentiments of the government and many in the society. You see it and hear it in the tone of most anchors and hosts; the endless showcasing of America’s weapons technology; the preponderance of ex-military men and women guests; the choice to rarely show Iraqi civilian casualties, but highlight US troops’ humanitarian assistance to Iraqis; and reporters’, and hosts’, use of value-laden and simplistic expressions like “the good guys” to refer to the American troops (Khouri 2003: np).

Nevertheless, according to a *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting* (FAIR) report (2007), the *Washington Post* reported that the broadcast news consultants were “advising news and talk stations across the nation to wave the flag and downplay protest against the war”. Advice included patriotic music, avoiding “polarizing discussions,” and ignoring protests, which “may be harmful to a station’s bottom line” (FAIR, 19 March 2007: np).

According to tests conducted by one firm, the same firm “advised clients to find experts in some 30 categories—including ‘veterans of Desert Storm,’ ‘Former G Men,’ ‘Military Recruiting Offices’—most of whom would be unlikely to offer harsh criticism of the war” (ibid).

Therefore, it is believed that patriotism could certainly affect objectivity and impartiality, which consequently could lead to a one-sided view of the war and ignore others. Interestingly, Aday et al (2005) considered that the notion of journalistic objectivity has been a matter of frequent controversy, not only during the 2003 Iraq war, but since September 11 and the war in Afghanistan in 2001.

Everything from whether anchors should wear patriotic lapel pins to how much network should show civilian casualties has been an issue. Not just administration officials but journalists themselves have berated news organisations deemed not

patriotic enough, with some suggesting that there is no place for detachment in wartime (Aday et al 2005: 6).

Eric Alterman (2003) believed that for many US journalists to display a patriotic bias, it revealed sensitivity to Vietnam-era charges that the media were anti-American. In this war Alterman stated that Fox and CNN have “warned their reporters against seeming unpatriotic” (Alterman, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2003: np).

On the other hand, Amina El-Bendary (2003) stated that, just as the US media has its Vietnam complex, so the Arab world has its 1967 complex (El-Bendary, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 April 2003: np). This, according to Miles (2005), is based on the way Arab media reported the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, in which Arabs were glued to Sawt Al-Arab (*Voice of the Arabs*) radio station,¹³² listening to announcer Ahmad Said who declared constantly that the Arab armies had crushed the Israeli army and that Israeli planes were ‘falling from the skies like flies’ (Miles 2005: 26). Miles added that the rest of the Arab media went on to repeat this message until a week later, when Arabs found out from foreign sources that they had, in fact, been utterly defeated (ibid). According to Laura James (2006), following the Israeli attacks at dawn on 5th June 1967, the *Voice of the Arabs* continued to boast of great victories, although the Egyptian air force lay in ruins on its runways, and Arab armies had retreated on every front; Israel had taken the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights (James 2006: np). It was the Western media that had made the scale of the defeat quite apparent (ibid). This exaggeration and deception used by the *Voice of the Arabs* made the radio station lose its credibility. Thus, Zayani (2004) called this phenomenon, in which the Arab media played a significant role in deceiving the public, the “Ahmed Said media” (Zayani 2004: 109). In agreement with Zayani, James (2004) also asserted that after this war, the *Voice of the Arabs* was no longer the voice of the Arab people, nor even the Voice of Nasser. “It was no more than the mellifluous, discredited voice of Ahmed Said” (James 2006: np).

Therefore, as stated by Miles, since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Arab trust in the media was shattered and the media ‘had done little to win it back’. This was noticeable during the Iraqi

¹³² *Voice of the Arabs* radio station was founded by the Egyptian government in 1953, to promote the ideas of Arab nationalism and Arab unity - which was adopted by Jamal Abdel Nasser regime - across the Arab world (see Chapter Two) on, media strategies of international conflicts, the section on the Suez Canal War.

invasion of Kuwait in 1990, when the Saudi media delayed telling the people about the Iraqi invasion for two days (Miles 2005: 26).

On the other hand, Tlais (2003) considered that the 2003 Iraq war was an opportunity for Arab media (print and broadcast) to regain the trust of the Arab publics, “as well as the trust of Western publics, in particular the Americans” (Tlais, *Al-Hayat*, 9 April 2003: 21). Tlais, however, added that it was also an opportunity for Arab media to compete with Western media by providing “The Arab voice and image” (ibid).

Further, Laura James (2006), stated that there is a clear analogy between the far-flung effects of the *Voice of the Arabs* and the way in which the Arab world is once more being brought together by new transnational media (such as Al-Jazeera), ranging from satellite television to the internet.

Phrases such as “the Arab street” are again becoming commonplace, as changing structures of communication allow a shared language and a reawakened sense of common identity to translate into a collective stance on the issues of the day (James 2006: np).

Thus, it could be argued that this stance allowed for an alternative narrative of news - to the Western media - providing a critical approach to the war. Such a performance supported Arab transnational media, like Al-Jazeera, to gain the attention of the Western broadcasters and consequently Western audiences. In other words, this meant that Arab satellite channels were advancing their reputation, not only as reliable sources of news, offering alternative accounts of events, but also as competitors to their Western counterparts. Such a status is assumed to have hardly existed before the advent of satellite technology and especially with the establishment of Al-Jazeera.

In addition, according to Al-Hassan Bin Talal (the former Crown Prince of Jordan) (2003), Arab audiences during the 2003 Iraq war witnessed that most Arab media were avoiding propaganda and exaggeration, which had hitherto dominated Arab media over the last few decades (Bin Talal, *Al-Hayat*, 8 April 2003: 13). Bin Talal asserted that the successes of Arab media, especially television channels in reporting the war, put Arab media on the international media stage.

We witnessed a degree of news exchange between Arab and Western media that only existed in the past with Arab media [taking news from western media] (ibid).

Therefore, it is believed that the 2003 Iraq war formed a huge challenge for Arab media, one of gaining Arab audiences' shattered trust. Credibility and accuracy were thus crucial parameters in reporting the war, according to El-Bendary (2003), as most commentators were conscious of not repeating the kind of state-sponsored coverage of the June 1967 war, which ended in defeat but had initially been reported as victory (El-Bendary, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 April 2003: np).

However, it is also believed that Arab media channels during this war, especially Al-Jazeera, were keen to provide Arab audiences with an alternative narrative of the war that would be different from what appeared on the American channels, which clearly were perceived as presenting an American perspective.

In addition, the significant role of Arab media in covering of the war had increasingly persuaded non-Arab broadcasters in different parts of the world to consider this particular perspective into their coverage, in order to reach a more balanced coverage. For example, according to Al-Jazeera's reporter in Germany, Aktham Suliman (2008), Al-Jazeera was a major source of much "exclusive footage" of the war, witnessed by the many German media outlets that signed agreements with Al-Jazeera.

The German TV ZDF reinforced the agreement on footage exchange, which has been signed with Al-Jazeera in 2002, by a new agreement allowing Al-Jazeera in Germany to use facilities for the ZDF with about 150 thousand US dollars (as I remember). The new agreement also restricted Al-Jazeera from not sharing footage with any other German broadcasters before six hours had elapsed, allowing ZDF an 'exclusivity' for that time (Suliman 2008 interview with author).

Furthermore, it was reported by the London-based pan-Arabic newspaper *Al-Hayat* (2003) that, since the beginning of the war, TV stations in Peru were using news from Arab channels in order to "present other perspectives of the war on Iraq", which *Al-Hayat* says were hidden by the American media that constantly maintained a biased approach by presenting only the American-British perspective (*Al-Hayat*, 2 April 2003: 9). TV stations such as *Frecuncia Latina* used information from Al-Jazeera and the Iraqi state TV. This approach, according to Gilberto Hu-me, the news director at *Frecuncia Latina* TV, was made to balance the information presented by the CNN (cited in *Al-Hayat*, 2 April 2003: 9). Other media outlets

in Peru were doing the same such as *Canal N*, owned by *El Comercio* (the leading newspaper in Peru), which was taking images and comments broadcast by Al-Jazeera and translated into Spanish. Another Peruvian TV station *America Television* was translating news from Al-Manar TV, the channel that is affiliated to Hezbollah in Lebanon, in order to balance information presented by CNN (ibid). Nevertheless, as *Al-Hayat* asserted, Peruvian media outlets used information and translated news from Arab channels as well as European broadcasters such as the BBC, TV5, France 2 and France 3 in order to achieve a balanced coverage of the war (ibid).

According to Chris Suellentrop (2003), American TV news always presented an American perspective, just as Al-Jazeera presents an Arab perspective. However, in wartime, Suellentrop argued that the American slant becomes more obvious, and, as a result, “Al-Jazeera’s Arab slant has become less objectionable” (Suellentrop, *Slate*, 2 April 2003: np).

Helal clarified that one of the major challenges for Al-Jazeera during the war was how to deal with the vast amount of information – and which was often contradictory, depending on where it came from. Helal stated that the channel therefore decided to deal with information coming from all sides with care in order as far as possible to maintain objectivity. Additionally, carefully attributing information to its sources was an essential pattern for Al-Jazeera to avoid appearing biased or taking sides with any of the warring parties by adopting their version of events.

It goes without saying that when you depend on different sources you end up with different outputs. Aljazeera dealt equally with sources of information from inside and outside Iraq, judging each on its merits. Concomitantly, the Western media preferred to deal mainly with information given by the invading forces, which was not inaccurate most of the time, but one sided. Thus, Al-Jazeera dealt with both sides with scrutiny (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Another factor that contributed to the significant performance of Al-Jazeera during the war was the cultural background of the people working at Al-Jazeera, which clearly gave them a deeper understanding of the region and its conflicts, history and social and cultural heritage and backgrounds, than their Western counterparts.

Al-Jazeera’s editorial teams came from various backgrounds, but mainly from the Middle East. This helped them massively to understand the Iraqi story inside out. The similarity between the invasion of Iraq and the military conflicts that had taken place

in Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon and elsewhere had given our journalists an advantage over their Western colleagues (Helal 2008 interview with author).

However, Helal believed that the “cultural element” played a negative role in the western media narrative, in a way that revealed a limited understanding of the complex situation in the region, even with Iraqi responses to the war itself.

Most of the time, I found western journalists trying to portray the warriors in any conflict as either good or evil; good guys or bad guys. I.e., the Western media culture, especially the American one, used to categorise the conflicting parties clearly as either black or white, without any consideration of the fact that the reality is more complex. Al-Jazeera, with its middle eastern experience, was more able to see that societies that had lived under authoritarian regimes could have had different opinions than the regimes, yet these societies would prefer to see the changes coming from inside, rather than outside. The Iraqi society was clearly one of those societies. The Iraqi people wanted a wider margin of freedom and democracy, but it was equally right to say that not all of the Iraqi people would be ready to welcome the changes imposed by western invaders.

This misperception about Middle Eastern societies was clearly reported in the American plans to govern Iraq after Saddam, and I believe the American politicians and decision makers and the journalists all came from a similar cultural understanding (ibid).

On the other hand, according to Helal, Al-Jazeera did not treat the American side with similar merit. Rather the channel gave considerable attention to the human side of the American people by interviewing the families of soldiers who had lost their lives in the Iraq war and also covered the many campaigns organised by American people against the war (ibid).

It was impossible in such an environment, unfortunately, to reach American soldiers on the ground, yet on the first day of the fall of Baghdad we interviewed live one of the first soldiers to arrive in the Iraqi capital. Yet let me also remind you of the hostility facing the only embedded reporter by this American unit and the intimidation he used to face by the troops. Although he was officially a British citizen, he was always perceived as an Arab working for Al-Jazeera and by that definition he was treated as a possible spy rather than a journalist. Only when he was moved to a British unit behind the lines was he dealt with properly (ibid).

It is therefore understandable that, given the issues of knowledge, patriotism and culture, Arab audiences shifted to Arab media such as Al-Jazeera in order to obtain deeper accounts of the war than the Western media offered, which for Arab audiences felt less critical of the American-led troops and more distant in reporting the Iraqi human cost of the war.

Tanya Goudsouzian and Shadia Abdullah (2003) asserted that Arab viewers preferred to switch on Arab news networks for what they felt were uncensored images of “atrocities

committed by US forces” during the Iraq war. For Goudsouzian and Abdullah, “the shocking image of a baby with half her face burnt off, and another child with his brains blown out” were played by the Arab media, but the Western media, particularly CNN and the BBC, continued to project “a sanitised Hollywood-like version of war - spectacular explosion, billowing smoke, and shaky camera [shots]” (Goudsouzian and Shadiah 2003: np).

Western channels, notably CNN, have come under fire for not only following, but also promoting American policy, serving as “apologists” for a unilateral war on Iraq without a UN mandate, and censoring graphic images of the civilian carnage (ibid).

As for the dead bodies, Simpson (2003) explained that neither British nor American television stations would have wanted to show the pictures of the dead soldiers, because both countries share a cultural dislike of graphic close-up images of death and injury. However, this was not the case when it came to showing images of captured Iraqi soldiers (Simpson 2003: 343).²⁹⁵

Discreet pictures of dead Iraqi soldiers had certainly appeared on American television, and we had seen Iraqi prisoners being herded around, humiliated and screamed at by British and American soldiers; neither Donald Rumsfeld nor Tony Blair had felt called upon to come out and complain about it (ibid).²⁹⁵

These elements, help in understanding not only the variations in the coverage of the war between different Western and Arab transnational channels, but also recognizing the motivations and professional frameworks which shaped the work of many reporters and consequently media output. Thus, to understand the reasons which led to such a diverse coverage, Adel Iskandar and Mohammed El Nawawy offered the concept of “contextual objectivity”, which, according to them, is an attempt to articulate and capture the electric discourse and epistemological tensions between the relativism of message receivers and the empirical positivist attempts of message builders (El-Nawawy and Iskandar in Allan and Zelizer 2004: 321).

The theory of contextual objectivity – the necessity of television and media to present stories in a fashion that is ... impartial yet sensitive to local sensibilities – is at work (ibid).

Therefore, as explained by El-Nawawy and Iskandar, contextual objectivity can be witnessed within virtually every news bulletin of the war on every media outlet in the world today, not least on CNN and Al-Jazeera. It permeates every story, and has become increasingly emblematic of the struggle for the construction of mediated messages (ibid).

Furthermore, El Nawawy and Iskandar argued that when the concept of contextual objectivity is applied to Al-Jazeera, it is obvious that the network faces two major dilemmas: “making the news comprehensive and placing the stories within a meaningful historical account”. However, Al Nawawy and Iskandar asserted that the inclusion of context and analysis almost inevitably leads to the encroachment of opinion:

For instance, while the network labours to bring forth multiple perspectives on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the Arab public opposition to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories is a prevailing context that permeates Al-Jazeera’s coverage (ibid: 322).

As for the Iraq war, the challenge that faced Al-Jazeera was how to provide a balanced view in reporting the conflict. Al- Nawawy and Iskandar believed that Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the Iraq war and its aftermath displayed a struggle to find a balance that provided its audience with the “truth” that fits its context - the same struggle that other networks experience, Arab and non-Arab, in covering any major conflict.

For instance, while the American media showcased US state-of-the-art military machines in action and the high morale of the US troops in what was described as a “war of liberation”, Al-Jazeera focused on Iraqi civilian casualties and damage to Iraqi cities in a “war of occupation” (ibid: 323).

Nevertheless, it is assumed that, due to its network of non-embedded correspondents reporting on the ground from the major Iraqi cities, Al-Jazeera had the ability to investigate information and claims that were coming from American and British official sources. This could certainly be seen as an advantage for the channel, to be able to correct these claims, especially those regarding the advances of the coalition troops, accurate bombing of Iraqi targets and Iraqi civilian casualties. Such an advantage was not available for many of the Western news media, since the presence of Western correspondents were almost non-existent (ibid).

On many occasions, Al-Jazeera’s on-the-ground, non-embedded correspondents did provide a corrective to the American official line that the military campaign was, barring occasional resistance, going according to plan (ibid).

Moreover, according to Al-Nawawy and Iskandar, Al-Jazeera broadcast images reflecting the horror of the bombing campaign on Iraq and demonstrations of Arab people angry about the US decision to launch the war. But on the other hand, it also aired documentaries showing the

tough living conditions inside Iraqi prisons and the brutality of Saddam's regime, and its reporters also went out of their way to interview members of the Iraqi opposition who lived overseas and supported the war (ibid: 324). Further, on reporting Iraqi opposition activities overseas, Suliman (2008) pointed out that one of the important reports revealed the Iraqi oppositions' preparations in Europe.

The biggest achievement was on 26 March 2003 through a report on a NATO military camp in Hungary that was training members of the Iraqi opposition. This report was repeated 14 times on Al-Jazeera, which indicates its importance and our breadth and successes in reporting from Europe, especially that these trainees were supposed to be supporters of the US troops during and after the occupation of Iraq (Suliman 2008 interview with author).

Other incidents occurred in Germany even before the war had started, and were extensively reported by Al-Jazeera, such as "occupying the Iraqi embassy in Berlin on 20 August 2002, which ended in the raiding of the embassy by German Special Forces and freeing the consul and the other captured hostages, as well as arresting the kidnappers" (ibid). On this particular incident, Suliman stated that Al-Jazeera was leading in reporting the incident from the beginning and it was the source of news for many news agencies (except the announcement about occupying the embassy where it seemed that the kidnappers contacted one of the news agencies).

In detail, we were the first to arrive at the scene, which was surrounded by the German police; we immediately started our live coverage. I tried from the front of the embassy to contact Iraqi colleagues and other sources to know the identity of the kidnappers, which was not revealed. However, the constant live coverage allowed us to follow the details of the operation. I still remember that just seconds before my last live [broadcast], I had the information that the embassy was being raided by the [German] Special Forces, so we were the first to confirm that. Nevertheless, I was constantly trying to call the embassy on the phone, hoping that one of the kidnappers would answer, and this then really happened, as one of the kidnappers answered the phone and when I asked him about their identity, he replied saying that he 'is one the Sons of the Iraqi nation'. I obviously sent the phone number to Al-Jazeera headquarters, where they called the kidnappers from the newsroom and interviewed them live. Obviously that coverage angered the Iraqi authorities in Baghdad, as I heard after the incident (ibid).

Other reports from Germany revealed, as Suliman stated, the general atmosphere in the country, despite the fact that attention was shifting to the Arab region and to Washington and London, yet covering Europe was seen as essential for the channel – in order to provide a wider perspective of the conflict to its audiences.

On 8 and 9 February there was an exceptional event, the security conference in Munich, which witnessed the remarkable argument between Yoshka Fischer, the German Foreign Minister and Donald Rumsfeld, the American Defence minister. In this conference, Fischer said that he needed evidence to launch the war that could convince the Germans. This argument between the two high officials in front of the cameras inspired two reports by Al-Jazeera over two days, using interviews with various experts and officials to explain and analyse the dispute. No one had expected what happened, yet such a conference was exceptionally important to report the developments from around the world on the issue. Besides the conference, there were big demonstrations against the war in general and on Iraq specifically...

... On 6 March we did a report on Berlusconi's visit to Germany and his meeting with Schroeder. That report focused on the European disputes regarding the war, and on 13 March there was a report on the dispute in the German media between those who were against the war and those who were not. On 14 March there was "an important report" on American military bases in Germany and the possibility of moving them to the "countries of new Europe" and the presence of a centre near the city of Heidelberg to help AWOL American soldiers, who were fearing being sent to Iraq. In addition, other reports covered various demonstrations against the war (ibid).

Thus, there were clearly important aspects to be reported from Germany during the war, especially taking into consideration that the country hosted American military bases. As Suliman stated, although Germany was "giving a clear message of opposition to the war, and that it would not be part of it, but at the same time it wouldn't impede the Americans from using the military bases on its soil" (ibid). This would indicate that Germany was clearly an important place to follow regarding the consequences of the war and its developments, especially any possible operations to send American soldiers to or from Iraq.

When the war started, as all broadcasters including Al-Jazeera focused on the frontline, therefore our relationship with Al-Jazeera's newsroom in Doha was subject to the occurrence of any exceptional incidents. Until 9 April, the date that marked the fall of Baghdad, our activities included following the German media and sometimes doing live reporting, like on 24 March on the Ramstein Air Base or the arrival of injured American soldiers on 29 March (ibid).

Nevertheless, the expansion of Al-Jazeera's coverage of the conflict in America, Europe and the Middle East, in addition to that from the front lines in Iraq can with some certainty have contributed to the channel's overall credibility and reputation for an objective approach. Through this network of reporters in various places in the world, Al-Jazeera managed to provide the Arab audiences with a variety of official perspectives and public reactions to the war. These are assumed to have strongly contributed to the channel's credibility, certainly in the eyes of its perceived prime target audiences. Yet, by broadcasting footage of Iraqi war casualties and American and British dead and captured soldiers, the question of credibility was again at the centre of discussion and criticism regarding Al-Jazeera's coverage.

6.6. War Casualties: A Question of Broadcast

One of the major issues associated with Al-Jazeera's coverage of the war was its focus on civilian casualties, in addition to the showing of close-up images of captured and dead American and British soldiers, which have been described by Tatham (2006) as a "defining moment of the war's coverage" (Tatham 2006: 130).

Broadcasting these images triggered enormous anger at the White House and No. 10 Downing Street, as Simpson (2003) stressed. The American and British governments both professed themselves horrified when Al-Jazeera broadcast pictures it had obtained from Iraqi television of dead and captured American soldiers, which elicited Donald Rumsfeld's claim that broadcasting footage of American prisoners "contravened the Hague convention" (Simpson 2003: 343).

Further, according to Charlene Gubash of *NBC News*, after Al-Jazeera showed pictures of US war dead and POWs, it was accused by American officials of broadcasting Iraqi propaganda. Rumsfeld told CBS News that Al-Jazeera was "obviously part of Iraqi propaganda and responding to Iraqi propaganda" (Gubash, *NBC News*, 31 March 2003: np). It is assumed that the story started when the Iraqi vice president - at that time - Taha Yassin Ramadan, said on 23rd March 2003 at a news conference in Baghdad that Iraq was holding US prisoners of war, and that it would show them on television soon. Ramadan added that the American soldiers were taken during fighting in the southern city of Nassiriyah (*Global Security Online*, 23 March 2003: np). In an immediate response, the Central Command in Doha (CENTCOM) categorically denied the Iraqi claims. A spokesman for the US Marines, Captain Stewart Upton, said the claims were "more lies from the Iraqis" (ibid).

However, it is believed that the broadcasting of footage of the dead and captured soldiers on Al-Jazeera initially surprised military commanders and officers at CENTCOM. According to De Long¹³³ (2004), there was a lack of information on where the images of the soldiers were taken in Iraq, as well as confusion on how to react to this incident without specific information on their location.

¹³³ Lt. General Michel De Long, deputy Commander of the US Central Command, the co-author of *Inside CENTCOM*, Washington, 2004.

Shortly afterwards, the Arab television network Al-Jazeera aired footage of captured American troops. We could see that they had been severely mistreated; there were dead bodies in the background, with bullets in their heads, wearing US uniforms. We knew we had to move quickly if we wanted to save the rest. But we had no idea where they were. We had to keep emotions out of it, but this hit us hard. Franks [General Tommy Franks, the Commander of the US Central Command] put out a statement to all of the troops: “I want to execute a quick, well thought out plan to repatriate surviving US military personnel. The plan will be executed on short order once we have a location” (De Long 2004: 108).

As an impact of the broadcast of the footage, American official responses started to shift from denial to admitting the death and capture of American soldiers. According to Andrew Tully (2003), US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld acknowledged that unspecified numbers of allied troops were missing. Nevertheless, in Washington, General Richard Myers, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff was more specific:

I think there are some Americans that are missing, we think it's less than 10. Central Command is doing the investigation to find out exactly where they might be and what might be the circumstances around that (Myers cited in Tully, *Global Security Online*, 23 March 2003: np).

According to Cohn and Postlewaite (2003), the footage drew the ire of US officials. For instance, the “No. 2 at the Central Command” in Doha, Lieutenant General John Abizaid, was so upset that he chastised an Al-Jazeera reporter at a press briefing the day the footage aired, saying: “I am very disappointed that you would portray those pictures of our servicemen, and I would ask others not to” (Cohn and Postlewaite, *Business Week Online*, 26 March 2003: np). Nevertheless, Josh Rushing¹³⁴ (2007) stated that when Al-Jazeera broadcast the video of the captured US soldiers, all eyes were on it. Even though Al-Jazeera's anchor apologised before broadcasting the images, the coalition forces were not buying the network's excuse that the footage was aired “in the interest of objectivity” (Rushing 2007: 98).

It was at this stage that Donald Rumsfeld and other American officials accused the channel of violating the Geneva Convention “for showing prisoners of war [being treated] in a humiliating manner” by the Iraqis (ibid). The British prime minister - at that time - Tony Blair, also agreed with the American accusations against Al-Jazeera. According to Miles (2005) Tony Blair concurred, speaking of Al-Jazeera's “flagrant violation” of Geneva

¹³⁴ Josh Rushing served as Media Officer at CENTCOM in Doha during the 2003 Iraq war, and later became a correspondent for Al-Jazeera's International Service (author's note).

Conventions. Article 13 of the Conventions stipulates that “prisoners of war must at all times be protected against insults and public curiosity” (Miles 2005: 249). A similar position was also declared against Al-Jazeera by Australia’s Department of Defence (ibid: 248).

However, Rushing argued that “the night before” broadcasting this footage of American soldiers, Al-Jazeera also showed footage of bloodied and mangled Iraqis being rushed to hospitals after a bombing in Basra. “The scenes [were] as gory as the footage of fallen US soldiers”, and they “should have been equally upsetting, but they had not been” (Rushing 2007: 99).

Nevertheless, in response to the broadcast of the footage of the US soldiers, coalition forces disabled embedded reporters on the ground from using their satellite phones. According to Alter (2003), many embedded reporters found their satellite phones blocked “for unexplained reasons ... for 72 hours” (Alter, *Newsweek Online*, 7 April 2003: np). Alter added that the prohibition on identifying dead American soldiers “to allow for notification of kin” had been informally extended even to pictures of unidentifiable bodies, “where time to contact the families is not an issue” (ibid).

This is part of a larger debate within the American news media. “Any time you show dead bodies, it is simply disrespectful in my opinion”, Charles Gibson of ABC News said to Ted Koppel on air. Koppel, embedded with US forces in southern Iraq, disagreed: “I feel we do have an obligation to remind people in the most graphic way that war is a dreadful thing” (ibid).

Alter argued that the rest of the world would agree with Koppel, and therefore many media outlets aired “unsparing images of dead American POWs and Iraqi civilians” (ibid).

Coverage of the still-elusive truth behind last week’s marketplace attacks¹³⁵ runs the gamut from Iraqi TV, which calls them international US war crimes, to Fox, which speculates that the damage may have been caused by Iraqi bombs targeted on Iraqis so as to blame Americans. Everyone else - from Al-Jazeera to other US networks – is somewhere in the middle (ibid).

¹³⁵ The attack on a Baghdad market was widely reported by news media. According to *BBC News Online* (on 29 March 2003, 55 people were killed and more than 47 wounded (as Dr. Osama Sakhari from Al-Noor Hospital told Reuters news agency).

Graphic television pictures showed people scrabbling through rubble to reach the dead and injured amid the wreckage of al-Nasser market in the Shula residential area in the city (*BBC News Online*, 29 March 2003: np).

In addition *BBC News Online* stated that Arab broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera and Abu Dhabi were showing pictures “of what they said were victims of the attack”, mainly women, children and old people, as well as shots of mothers slapping themselves in grief (ibid).

Nevertheless, “following the use on Iraqi television of the pictures of American prisoners of war and the constant appearance of Saddam Hussein himself to rally his followers”, Reynolds (2003) argued that the bombing of the Iraqi television station by the Americans did not come as a surprise, adding that the US Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, was enraged by the use of the POW pictures and said: “It would be highly desirable to have completely, totally ended their ability to communicate” (Reynolds, *BBC News Online*, 26 March 2003: np). According to Simpson (2003), on 26 March 2003, the seventh day of the war, a joint US/UK bombing mission targeted the Iraqi television station, “maintaining that it was ‘part of a command and control centre’ and that the station was housed in ‘a key telecommunications vault’ for satellite communications” (Simpson 2003: 314). In addition, Simpson stated that the television station was in a residential area, and several civilians were killed. On the other hand, Iraqi authorities were expecting an attack, therefore, after the bombardment, Iraqi TV was broadcasting again very quickly, as the Serbian state television did after Nato attacked it in 1999 (ibid).

It was certainly true that by allowing the Iraqi television to continue broadcasting, the coalition gave the impression that Saddam Hussein was still in firm control, and perhaps even that that was how the Americans wanted it. But there were plenty of ways to disrupt the broadcasts,¹³⁶ as they found in Belgrade. There was no need to destroy the building and the people working inside it, especially since it only knocked Iraqi TV off the air for a short while. Both attacks were ineffectual (ibid: 315).

According to Cordone and Gidron (2000), in the early morning of 23 April 1999 Nato aircraft bombed the headquarters and studios of Serbian state television and radio (RTS) in central Belgrade, “at least 16 civilians were killed and a further 16 were wounded”. A news broadcast was blacked out as a result of the attack, however RTS resumed broadcasting “three hours after the bombing” (Cordone and Gidron, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 3 July 2000: np). It appeared that Nato realised that attacking the RTS would only interrupt broadcasting for a brief period. General Wesley Clarke, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe at the time of the Operation Allied Forces stated:

We knew when we struck that there would be alternate means of getting the Serb Television. There is no single switch to turn off everything but we thought it was a

¹³⁶ According to Knowlton (1997), the Pentagon stated on 11 September 1997 that it was sending three specialized airplanes to Bosnia during the municipal elections in order to broadcast messages in support of peace and possibly disrupt some pro-Serbian radio and television programmes (Knowlton, *International Herald Tribune*, 12 September 1997: np).

good move to strike it and the political leadership agreed with us (Clark cited in Cordone and Fidron, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 3 July 2000: np).

Thus, it seems that military and political justifications for the attacks were similar in Belgrade 1999 and Baghdad 2003, and simply revealed that the targeted stations were carrying propaganda messages against the allied forces. As stated by Cordone and Gidron, the US Defence Department justified the bombing of the Serbian television by characterising the RTS studios as “a facility used for propaganda purposes” (ibid). Further, in a BBC interview, the British Prime Minister at that time, Tony Blair, appeared to be hinting that one of the reasons that Serbian TV was targeted was because its video footage of the human toll of the Nato mistakes, such as the bombing of the civilian convoy at Djakovica, was being re-broadcast by Western media outlets and was thereby undermining support for the war within the alliance (ibid).

This is one of the problems about waging a conflict in a modern communications and news world ... we were aware that those pictures would come back and there would be an instinctive sympathy for the victims of the campaign (Blair cited in Cordone and Fidron, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 3 July 2000: np).

Therefore, it could be argued that, by attacking the Iraqi state television, the American-led forces deliberately used military power to respond to Iraqi broadcasts of pictures of dead and captured allied troops, which predictably were identified as Iraqi propaganda. Thus, the aims of the bombardment of the Iraqi television station went beyond silencing the Iraqi media (which as mentioned resumed broadcasting after the attack) but unequivocally sent the message that broadcasting such footage would not be militarily acceptable by the allied forces because of its impact, which could certainly influence public opinion in the US and elsewhere. Additionally, it could be also said that the attack on the Iraqi television station meant to alarm the remaining Iraqi media and any other broadcasters not to televise or transmit similar materials that would be perceived as propaganda and could affect the confidence of the coalition troops.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ According to *Al-Jazeera Online* (2003), the Iraqi state television and radio officially stopped broadcasting on 8th April 2003 (one day before the toppling of Saddam Statue at centre of Baghdad). The Iraqi 3rd channel, Telfeyon El-Shabab “Television of the Youth”, which was managed by Saddam’s elder son, Udai, stopped broadcasting following the targeting of the Iraqi Ministry of Information at the end of March 2003 (Ghanayim, *Al-Jazeera Online*, 9 April 2003: np).

Interestingly, Iraqi television stopped broadcasting on the same day that Al-Jazeera’s Baghdad office was targeted by American fighter jets. The incident that destroyed the office also caused the death of one of Al-Jazeera’s reporters in Baghdad, Tareq Ayoub, who was initially critically injured by shrapnel (see ‘Hitting Al-Jazeera’ later in this chapter) (author’s note).

However, in spite of the military intentions of this attack, it was widely denounced, as asserted by Simpson, since many international organisations condemned this attack on the Iraqi television station, affirming that it violated international conventions.

The International Press Institute declared that the attack was a violation of the Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Amnesty International questioned whether it might constitute a war crime; Human Rights Watch and Reporters Sans Frontieres [Reporters Without Borders] both condemned it outright (Simpson 2003: 314-315).

Yet by recalling the attack on Serbian TV in Belgrade in April 1999, Reynolds asserted that the bombing of Iraqi television raised again the issue of whether a radio or television station in a country at war can be seen as a military target or whether it is purely civilian.

Does a station mainly given over to propaganda on behalf of a dictatorship lose its right not to be regarded as civilian target? (Reynolds, *BBC News Online*, 26 March 2003: np).

Nevertheless, according to Amnesty International, in a press release issued after the attack on the Iraqi television station, the organisation said:

The bombing of a television station because it is used for the purpose of propaganda, cannot be condoned. It is a civilian object and thus protected under international humanitarian law¹³⁸ (Press Release, Amnesty International, 26 March 2003: np).

As for Al-Jazeera, the question of whether broadcasting the images of the captured and dead American and British soldiers would be perceived as propaganda or a form of transparency to reveal another side of the war's awfulness was critically discussed in various contributions to evaluate the role of the media during the 2003 Iraq war. For Lane (2003), the footage of captured soldiers can either be unsensational reporting of a war's progress or it can be distressing propaganda. "There is a fine line between the two". However, Lane stated that Western media outlets have also covered the surrender of Iraqi troops, "showing kneeling men with their hands bound in duct tape and others being given water at gunpoint". As a result, Lane argued that the treatment of POWs, and how they are portrayed in the media, "is a delicate issue with much at stake - not least the competing efforts to secure the moral high ground" (Lane, *BBC News Online*, 26 March 2003: np).

¹³⁸ Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions, Article 52 (2) states: "Attacks shall be limited strictly to military objectives. In so far as objects are concerned, military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralization, in circumstances ruling at the time, offers a definite military advantage" (Press Release, Amnesty International 26 March 2003: np).

Nevertheless, Miles (2005) asserted that the American press had not always been so sensitive about showing horrific images of dead soldiers when reporting conflicts.

In 1993 CNN had broadcast pictures of dead US troops being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by Somalia militia, but now all the Western news networks had tightened their editorial policy, especially with regard to showing the images of the dead (Miles 2005: 252).

Yet considering Al-Jazeera's footage of the American and British POWs as propaganda was the common thought among British officials and military commanders, who, according to *BBC News Online* (2003), condemned showing pictures of two British soldiers and two British prisoners of war on Al-Jazeera, and also believed that the channel was breaching the Geneva conventions. The commander of the UK forces in the Gulf, Air Marshall Brian Burridge, described Al-Jazeera's broadcast as "flagrant and disgraceful breach of the Geneva conventions" (*BBC News Online*, 27 March 2003: np).

We deplore the decision by Al-Jazeera to broadcast such material and call on them to desist immediately ... All media must be aware of the limits of taste and decency (Burridge cited in *BBC News Online*, 27 March 2003: np).

On the other hand, Yosri Fouda - one of the main presenters on Al-Jazeera - stated that the reason behind this criticism was the negative impact of such images on public opinion back in the US and Britain.

I can see why American and British politicians and military leaders don't like us showing these pictures. They show a side of the war that they do not want projected because it may affect public opinion in their country negatively ... In these things, the Western media is highly sanitised. You are not seeing what war, this war, is actually like... As for the Geneva Convention, there are double standards here. We and other broadcasters were not criticised for showing pictures of Iraqi dead and captured, or those famous pictures from Guantanamo Bay (Fouda cited in Kafala, *BBC News Online*, 29 March 2003: np).

In addition, Helal denied that broadcasting these images was meant to humiliate or show disrespect to the dead or captured soldiers. Rather, he asserted that it was part of revealing the human cost and suffering of the war by reporting the "dark side" of the conflict. Nonetheless, Helal agreed when contacted by the Pentagon to stop airing the images for a few hours, till notifying the families of the soldiers:

As for the humiliation of the dead or captured soldiers, I believe that there is a fine line between revealing the suffering of a human being or being deliberately humiliating or participating in the humiliation of humankind. What we did at Al-Jazeera was simply show the dark side of the war. We were also concerned about the families of the captured soldiers, and when we were contacted by the Pentagon to stop showing these images until they had informed their families, I personally ordered my newsroom to stop showing them. I promised the American official who contacted me to give him some time in order to inform the soldiers families, then we resumed showing the images as part of the bigger story of the war, otherwise we would have missed a newsworthy element, especially when some American channels started to broadcast the images and revealing the names of the dead and captured soldiers, like CNN (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Nevertheless, in an internal memo sent by Helal to Al-Jazeera staff, the editor-in-chief revealed the necessity to focus on factual reporting and avoiding any use of sensationalism and emotionalism by applying any terminologies or using language that could offend its audiences, especially if their use would be associated with events of “humiliation, degradation, aggression, ugliness, cruelty, American claims, martyrdom operations, martyrs and deliberate killing of civilians” (Helal, internal memo, 5 April 2003: np).

The use of such a language would impede our impartial reporting that has characterised our coverage since the establishment of Al-Jazeera (ibid).

Yet the images of dead and captured British soldiers were still at the centre of media attention, especially when British Prime Minister Tony Blair claimed that the soldiers had been executed by the Iraqis. As stated by *BBC News Online*, Blair accused Iraq of “executing” the two British soldiers whose bodies were shown on Al-Jazeera. Blair made the claims at a news conference with the President George Bush at Camp David near Washington (*BBC News Online*, 28 March 2003: np).

If anyone needed any further evidence of the depravity of Saddam’s regime, this atrocity provides it ... It is yet one more flagrant breach of all the proper conventions of war (Blair cited in ibid).

On the other hand, Iraq denied the execution of the British soldiers, as the Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf, in return, accused Tony Blair of lying “to the public” (ibid). A few days after Blair’s claim about the executions, *BBC New Online* reported that Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram had spoken of Tony Blair’s regret at the hurt he caused when he [Blair] said two British soldiers had been executed (*BBC News Online*, 7 April 2003: np). However, interestingly, Ingram denied that Blair’s words had been “for propaganda purposes” (ibid).

As a result of its decision to show painful images of the war, as it was developing, serious responses arose against Al-Jazeera, especially since broadcasting the images of dead American and British soldiers. Following this, according to *The New York Times* (2003), reporters for Al-Jazeera had been barred from the New York Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq Stock Market (*The New York Times*, 26 March 2003: np). Thomas S. Mulligan (2003) stated that this was a move that was “protested by free-speech advocates and saluted by jittery stock market traders.” Mulligan added that the Nasdaq Stock Market, following the lead of the New York Stock Exchange, refused to allow Al-Jazeera to use its facilities to broadcast live reports. However, Nasdaq in contrast to the NYSE, explicitly linked its ban to Al-Jazeera’s controversial airing of images of killed and captured American soldiers in Iraq (Milligan, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 2003: np). Nasdaq spokesman Scott Peterson clearly stated that the reason for the decision taken against Al-Jazeera was because the channel breached the Geneva Convention:

In light of Al-Jazeera’s recent conduct during the war, in which they have broadcast footage of US POWs in alleged violation of the Geneva Convention, they are not welcome to broadcast from our facility at this time (cited in *ibid*).

On the other hand, Gerald F. Lawson, chairman of the journalism department at Boston’s Emerson College argued that such a response by the NYSE and Nasdaq was encouraging further censorship.

It’s sort of an invitation to further censorship of our reporters. We are trying to say it’s a war against Iraq, not against Arabs or Muslims. But then we are going to take the television station that serves that whole world and ban them because we do not like something they ran? That’s stupid (*ibid*).

Nevertheless, adding to Al-Jazeera’s troubles, Mulligan stated that hackers attacked the channel’s Arabic and English websites, which both had posted images of the US soldiers killed in Iraq, making them inaccessible for a time.

Executives with Horizons Media & Information Services, the Qatar based company that hosts the sites, said the hacker incident was a type known as a “denial-of-service” attack. But Internet analysts noted that the site’s service had slumped as early as March 23 and attributed the slowdown to the attack. Officials with Horizons, which has an office in Costa Mesa, said only the US based servers that host the Al-Jazeera site were affected (*ibid*).

As Faisal Bodi (senior editor for Al-Jazeera website Aljazeera.net) wrote in *The Guardian* (28 March 2003) that these measures were part of the battle for hearts and minds “in the most information-controlled war in history” (Bodi, *The Guardian*, 28 March 2003: np).

One measure of the importance of those American POW pictures and the images of the dead British soldiers is surely the sustained “shock and awe” hacking campaign directed at aljazeera.net since the start of the war ... The Al-Jazeera website has been down for three days and few here doubt that the provenance of the attack is the Pentagon. Meanwhile our hosting company, the US-based DataPipe, has terminated our contract after lobbying by other clients whose websites have been brought down by hacking (ibid).

Similarly, Bodi also criticised the British media and accused it of treating images of the war with double standards:

The British media has condemned Al-Jazeera’s decision to screen a 30 second video clip of two dead British soldiers. This is simply hypocrisy. From the outset of the war, the British media has not balked at showing images of Iraqi soldiers, either dead or captured and humiliated (ibid).

In addition, it is assumed that immediate responses by American and British officials to Al-Jazeera’s broadcast was also a means of pressure on the channel to halt broadcasting any similar images of war that could affect domestic and international public opinion. According to Tatham, this outrage in Washington and London was communicated immediately to Al-Jazeera by British civil servant Simon Wren, who was described by Kampfner of *The Guardian* as: “Downing Street’s man in Doha” (Kampfner, *The Guardian*, 15 May 2003: np).

We had to show them [Al-Jazeera] in a strong way, that we thought it unacceptable. Of course, the Geneva Convention does not apply at all - they don’t even sign it. However, you refer to it because the convention is a treaty that governments sign which sets out acceptable limits or rules of war. We referred to that as it was our baseline - a benchmark of acceptable behaviour. We knew that the Fidayeen [irregular Iraqi military personnel loyal to Saddam], who were using it as a propaganda tool, filmed the material but we were objecting to it on the grounds of taste and decency. There was a potential for the families and soldiers to see them (Wren cited in Tatham 2006: 131).

Nevertheless, as stated by Tatham, Al-Jazeera was not the only Arab network to use the imagery. Abu Dhabi TV also showed the images, as well as focusing on civilian casualties (ibid: 135). In Britain, according to Tatham, Sky News also aired the images, and its correspondent in Doha similarly received an irate reaction from Simon Wren (ibid: 131).

We had a huge shouting match with Sky when they showed it. I do not think I have ever sworn so much as I did at Geoff Mead [Sky News correspondent]. I know they are good pictures but you should have more decency about them. Pixilation is irrelevant - the families know who they are (Wren cited in Tatham 2006: 131).

Whether to show these images or not extends beyond the notion of cultural differences in Arab and Western societies. The showing of war casualties could be seen in a broader journalistic and cultural frame, as it revealed a remarkable opportunity to examine the differences, not only in reporting approaches or styles, but also regarding the perceptions of transparency and ‘truth’.

Cultural differences or not, there are wider implications here for war reporting. Ever since the Vietnam War there have been criticisms that war coverage has been ‘dumbed down’. In particular the 1991 Gulf War will be remembered for images of Cruise missiles falling on road junctions but not for footage of the impact of those weapons. This is indicative of the apparent sanitisation of the effects of war - an accusation that can equally be made against governments and media outlets. There was certainly a widely-held belief in 1991 that a myth that real people—men, women and children—do not die in war but only enemy troops was being perpetuated (Tatham 2006: 133).

In addition, Helal believed that since wars are generally terrible by nature, therefore “doctoring the image is not helping change its horrific nature”, but rather concealing the reality from viewers.

We did not invent the horrendous scenes, we simply reported them, and showing the Western soldiers killed and captured in my opinion reflects to our Arab viewers a hidden side of the war, which was the victims on the invading side. These soldiers are human beings, and, at the end of the day, they have families and not all of them were happy to go to war, and consequently I believe they are victims of political decisions taken by their political leaders.

The Western hypothesis which accused Arab media in general and Al-Jazeera in particular of deliberately showing western casualties during the Iraq war to humiliate western values is absolutely baseless (Helal 2008 interview with author).

On the other hand, regarding Al-Jazeera’s focus on Iraqi civilian casualties, it is assumed that the channel was aware that this particular angle of the war would be treated with less attention on Western televisions, especially in the US, and that the news agenda there would be designed to focus on other elements of the conflict, such as the troops’ advances and the technology used. Waddah Khanfar (Al-Jazeera’s current General Manager, and a reporter for the channel during the war in north Iraq) (2006) pointed out that in covering wars and armed conflicts, the media normally tend to concentrate on issues such as warfare technologies and weapons, the advance and withdrawal of troops and the losses and gains of warring parties.

Such coverage, as Khanfar stated, often misses a very important issue, which is the coverage of the human angle, whether from the perspective of a warrior or a victim” (Khanfar 2006: 369-370).

According to Suliman (2008), by focusing on the civilian casualties and the impact of the raids on the Iraqi citizens, Al-Jazeera was complementing the role of Western media, especially by showing images of civilian casualties. Further, Suliman states that the channel filled gaps that other media could not reach, nor so comprehensively:

In other words, Al-Jazeera’s role was complementing the role of Western media, especially in terms of showing images of the victims (which is not favoured by Western media). However, most of the time, Al-Jazeera was leading in revealing the development of the war, especially that its reporters were distributed from Basra in the South, to Baghdad in the Middle and Mosul and the Kurdish area in the North (Suliman 2008 interview with author).

This meant that Al-Jazeera was aware of the patterns that would shape the Western news media’s coverage of the war. Therefore, the question for Al-Jazeera was: what elements of coverage could possibly be added to the Western patterns, or what elements would be missing from the Western news agenda, that would make Al-Jazeera appear more credible and mostly different? Therefore, by focusing on the human angle, the channel was setting a different agenda in reporting the conflict, and by doing this Al-Jazeera was clearly advancing its way as an alternative source of news, one that would provide audiences with what could be missed on western news media, which arguably would not have reported the war from the same perspective as Al-Jazeera. For instance, according to Abdel-Latif (2003), on Friday 28th March 2003 Al-Jazeera’s correspondent in Baghdad, Diyar Al-Omary, broke the news that the channel had obtained exclusive footage of the “latest attack on civilians”, which took place at Al-Shula’a district in Baghdad, when a market was hit by what was believed to be “either a US Tomahawk or Cruise missile” (Abdel-Latif, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 April 2003: np).

The report that followed carried shocking scenes of blood-spattered pavements, the remains of a body and pictures of coffins bearing the names of Musa Al-Kazem, Hussien Al-Ash’ary and others. There were scenes of men weeping and beating their chests and of women kneeling to kiss the foreheads of those they had lost (ibid).

Abdel-Latif added that Al-Jazeera was the first television to air footage of the incident, which was described by its anchor that day as “another massacre” carried out by US-led forces in

Iraq. Nevertheless, the incident was soon followed by reports on Abu Dhabi TV, which also broadcast images from the scene (ibid). On the other hand, Abdel-Latif stated that it took longer for channels such as BBC World and CNN to broadcast the incident, which observably did not receive similar attention to that shown on Al-Jazeera or any other Arab channels.

Broadcast on BBC World and CNN only 15 minutes later, the allied bombing of Al-Shula'a market was not thought sufficiently important to be put at the top of the news, signalling the differences between Arab and Western media representations of the war (ibid).

Further, Abdel-Latif asserted that as the "US-led invasion of Iraq" entered its third week, there was a growing sense among Arab viewers that "they were watching a war different to the one reported on the Western news networks" (ibid).

It therefore could be said that Al-Jazeera, by focusing on civilian casualties, was trying to drive the audiences' attention to the human cost of the war, which, in addition to its news significance, was also gripping by providing details of the casualties and their locations and the devastation caused by the bombings. This visibly revealed a wider perspective and more critical approach in reporting the war and its consequences.

According to Rushing (2007), Al-Jazeera was showing the human side of the invasion rather than focusing on the military's sophisticated technologies and America's official line in narrating the war.

The [Al-Jazeera] network was less interested in where the cruise missiles launched from than where they landed. For a force that rarely spoke of "collateral damage," the constant flow of images, from shredded bodies in the street to the bloodied, crying children in emergency rooms, was difficult to take, Rumsfeld accused Al-Jazeera of faking these, which would be laughable if the pictures weren't so sad (Rushing 2007: 145).

In the words of Hodierna (2006), there was little time to stop to see what impact all those bombs and artillery shells had on ordinary Iraqis. Or to ask the Iraqis what they thought of the US military juggernaut. "Such stories were largely left to the Arab media". However, the US military was outraged when Al-Jazeera showed footage of wounded Iraqi civilians. In the documentary film *Control Room*, Rumsfeld is seen accusing the network of faking scenes of Iraqi suffering:

We know that Al-Jazeera has a pattern of playing propaganda over and over again. What they do is when there is [a] bomb [that] goes down they grab some children and some women and pretend the bomb hit the women and children. It seems to me it's up to all of us to try to tell the truth, to say what we know, to say what we don't know and to recognise that we're dealing with people that are willing to lie to the world to attempt to further their case (Rumsfeld cited in Hodiern 2006: 418).

Yet Hodiern emphasised that there was a real absence of suffering on US television and its newspaper photographs. "The American public may have read about wounded and dead troops, but they seldom saw them during the early stages of the war [during the three weeks of the major combat period]" (ibid).

Nevertheless, Helal (2008) stated that at Al-Jazeera they have been exceptionally concerned about the human cost of the war from the beginning, and they had the feeling that the "western media will try to censor themselves as they did during the war in Afghanistan in 2001". This on its own made those at Al-Jazeera more determined to follow the same coverage plan as in Afghanistan by focusing on the human casualties, which they were sure would be un-seen in the western narrative (Helal 2008 interview with author).

When we broadcast horrific images of the war, whether for the Iraqi side or the Anglo-American side, it was always within the context of the war. The images we used to run were about civilians or the human cost, and were never used out their context, and this would answer the question of anyone who would accuse Al-Jazeera of being biased towards any side or being part of the Iraqi propaganda. Believing in the right of the audience to know what is really happening on the ground was our aim (ibid).

In addition according to *BBC News Online* (2003), Helal stated that it would have been equally misleading to Arab, American and British audiences to hide images of dead soldiers.

If I hide shots of British or American people being killed, it is misleading to the British and American audience ... It is misleading to the Arab audience if they imagine that the only victims of this war are the children and women of Iraq. They have to know that there are victims from both sides (Helal cited in *BBC News Online*, 24 May 2003: np).

Nevertheless, Peacock (2003) stated that there was an "honesty" in Al-Jazeera's televising the consequences of the war "in the form of a young child with the back of its head blown off" (Peacock, *The Independent*, 29 March 2003: np). According to Peacock, these kind of images remind "us" of what lies behind anodyne talk of "collateral damage" or "civilian casualties" (ibid).

According to Iskander and El Nawawy (2004), Al-Jazeera's frequent emphasis on Iraqi civilian casualties prompted US officials to accuse the network of inflaming the "Arab Street", of not just reporting on the war but stirring it up, and of serving as a "propaganda" tool for the Iraqi regime (Iskander and El-Nawawy 2004: 325). However, Helal (2008) argued that the aim of Al-Jazeera's reporting of civilian casualties was not to serve as a propaganda tool as much as to tell the painful truth to their audiences.

It goes without saying that reporting the amount of opposition to the war and the destruction and casualties resulting from it - which is predictable in any war - would have created a perception of rejection of this war among our viewers. This perception is far from inciting hatred. I believe telling the truth, even it is painful, is the ultimate goal of journalists (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Yet, as stated by Simpson, while the British and American military regarded Al-Jazeera "as little more than a propaganda agency for Saddam Hussein", the Iraqi's on the other side accused the channel of doing the American's work for them.

After the Ministry of Information headquarters in Baghdad was bombed, Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf [the Iraqi Minister of Information] stormed round with a gun in his hand to see the correspondent who had broadcast picture of the wreckage. He called him an American spy, and screamed that he would cut off his arms at the shoulders and throw them over the border. As for the rest of Al-Jazeera's correspondents in Iraq, Al-Sahaf threatened that their broadcasting would be strictly controlled from now on (Simpson 2003: 344).

In keeping with Simpson, the Iraqi Ministry of Information withdrew its threats two days later, when Al-Jazeera management in Qatar said that they would withdraw from the country altogether if its correspondents could not operate properly in Iraq (ibid). According to Ibrahim Helal (2008), Al-Jazeera was subjected to several incidents of intimidation by the Iraqi authorities, aiming to influence the channel's reporting of the war. These incidents also revealed the determination of the channel to challenge these means of pressure in order to achieve accurate and credible coverage.

During the war we were threatened twice by the Iraqi government to stop our work. The first time was about two months before the actual invasion when they tried to impose using certain terminology like the leader Saddam Hussein, and the like. They stopped Deyar Al-Omari, our Iraqi correspondent's accreditation though he is an Iraqi national and has been resident reporter for Al-Jazeera in Iraq since 2000. We reacted to the decision by suspending our operations in Iraq and in 24 hours the Iraqi government retreated.

The second time was during the war, when they stopped accreditation of Deyar again and ordered another reporter, Tayseer Allouni, to leave the country as soon as possible. They did not clarify the reasons. Al-Jazeera adopted the same strategy and revealed to the Iraqi authorities that it would suspend all its operations in Iraq. It was my personal decision to react to any kind of intimidation by any government. For me, it was a gamble that they might have stuck to their guns and we could have lost the opportunity to cover from within Iraq. However, it was a matter of principle for us, although it would have been a costly decision from the operational point of view, if they did not retreat. Luckily in 24 hours again they retreated and we resumed our coverage suing the reporters who both based in Bagdad (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Helal further commented that the Iraqi officials' threats towards Al-Jazeera's reporters were aimed to impose their perceptions of the war in order to achieve favourable coverage and to influence the wider Arab public opinion. These attitudes obviously had put many of Al-Jazeera's reporters under direct threat from Iraqi officials; however, the channel seemed to continue challenging both the Iraqi and American officials by its controversial reporting and concentrating on the human cost of the war.

I still remember the intimidation shown to our reporter, Majid Abdel-Hadi, by the then Iraqi Information Minister Al-Sahaf, who pointed his machine gun at Majid's chest accusing him of misinforming the audience by reporting that two American tanks had been seen in the middle of Baghdad by him [Abdel-Hadi] and other reporters (this was one day before the collapse of Baghdad). Al-Sahaf ordered Majid to go immediately on air and deny the original report. However, our reporter just reported Al-Sahaf's denial and stopped short of denying his original reports (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Meanwhile, El-Shareh asserted that Al-Jazeera was not biased towards the Iraqi regime, though he did argue that Baghdad was a "special case". This was because, being a reporter located in Baghdad, the only source of news was from the Iraqi side and this would be almost exclusively from the Iraqi government itself. Thus, reporters were aware that if they reported something different to what the Iraqi government's sources had told them "they would be killed" (El-Shareh 2003 interview with author).

Still, we tried as much as we could to be impartial, yet we were constantly pressured by the Iraqi government (ibid).

According to El-Shareh, other reporters working for Al-Jazeera in areas outside Baghdad, such as northern Iraq, Mosel, and Basra were subjected to less pressure from the Iraqi government. However, they were hardly immune to Iraqi officials' intimidation:

Al-Sahaf threatened Majid Abdel-Hadi verbally at his office in Baghdad and said that if he got his hands on Waddah Khanfar [Al-Jazeera's reporter in North Iraq] and Amr El-Kahki [Al-Jazeera's embedded reporter with the coalition forces] he would hang them in the middle of Baghdad because they were out of the control of the Iraqi authority, reporting from the North and South of Iraq (ibid).

Understanding this working environment is vital in order to understand the wider perspective of the war and its media coverage, as well as to be able to recognise not only the direct threats facing reporters on the ground but also to be aware of this complex setting that would certainly influence the media and therefore contribute in providing different narratives of the war.

Moreover, based on the above, it becomes harder to accept that Al-Jazeera was a propaganda tool for the Iraqi regime, yet it was clear that the channel's critical coverage was perceived by the American and British officials as Iraqi propaganda, just because it was not favouring the American side of the war, and insistently reporting civilian casualties and challenging military claims. Nevertheless, being positioned inside Iraq and being subjected to direct threats from the Iraqi regime, the channel was clearly aware of its critical position, and that if it was not cautious in reporting any claims from the coalition side without attributing it to its source, it would lose its advantage of being inside Iraq, as the Iraqi authorities would respond aggressively against the channel. Such a move, if it happened, would have cost Al-Jazeera a great loss in terms of audience share. Therefore, it is understandable that the channel tried to maintain a balanced approach in dealing with war incidents and continued to focus on the human cost of the conflict.

In view of this, Simpson believed that while American reporting was concentrating exclusively on what the American forces were doing, Al-Jazeera was concentrating heavily on the effects of the coalition attacks on Iraqi civilians (Simpson 2003: 344).

For the most part, neither the British, nor the American government seemed to have suggested that Al-Jazeera broadcast phoney pictures of Iraqi casualties, and deaths; they simply found it inconvenient that the pictures were being seen around the world (ibid).

Further, according to a *Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting* (FAIR) report on the media during the Iraq war, many American media outlets decided to censor images of casualties of the Iraq war.

The website YellowTimes.org is shut down for displaying images of Iraqi civilian casualties. The company that hosted it, Vortech, pulls the plug on the basis of “inappropriate graphic material”. An email from Vortech elaborates on why the company has decided to scratch YellowTimes.org: “As ‘No’ TV station in the U.S. is allowing any dead U.S. soldiers or POWs to be displayed ... we will not either” (FAIR, 19 March 2007: np).

On the other hand, Scotti (2003) asked for the images of the Iraq war casualties to be shown on American televisions rather than to be censored, as for him Americans needed to know and see what was happening to the young men and women who were put in “harm’s way.” (Scotti, *Business Week Online*, 27 March 2003: np). Scotti argued that for many young people who had never lived through a war, the carnage of conflict is no more real than a violent video game that can be dispatched with the click of a mouse, or even for older Americans, “who have forgotten riveting images like the naked and napalmed little girl screaming down a road in Vietnam”. Therefore, the need to broadcast these images would be a way to re-confront the brutality of the war (ibid).

One further reason that we need to see those pictures that are worth a hundred of sound bytes and a ream of written words is that we Americans must not be coddled if we’re to comprehend the world in which we find ourselves-- and our image in it. If we wish we must be allowed to witness incinerated civilians and soldiers cut down in our place (ibid).

Further on the issue, Lynch (2006) considered that besides emotionalism and sensationalism, which were common accusations against Al-Jazeera, the channel’s decision to show footage of dead American soldiers and POWs, which consequently shocked and horrified many observers, was perhaps an important indication to recall that the gap between the war seen by Arab journalists and that they seen by American journalists was not simply an artefact of different mental imagery (Lynch 2006: 191). As stated by Lynch, embedded American journalists saw far less of the impact of the war than did the Arab journalists moving freely through Iraqi streets.

Arab reporters had better access to events on the ground, and regardless of their political sympathies simply had more opportunities to witness civilian casualties ... It is quite clear that many Arab reporters found it difficult to separate their coverage from their own deeply held feelings and identities (ibid: 190).

In agreement with Lynch, Bodi (2004) emphasized that reporting the 2003 Iraq war followed two tracks, the “embed” line laid by CENTCOM, and the independent line followed by news providers like Al-Jazeera.

Enjoying a greater degree of access to Iraqi towns and cities allowed Arabic media outlets to report more independently than those journalists dependant on the armed forces for their personal safety and communication equipment (Bodi 2004: 245).

6.7. Embedding, Accuracy and War Stories

At this stage it is important to be reminded that Al-Jazeera also had an embedded reporter with the coalition forces. This was alongside its wide network of reporters on the ground who were functioning unilaterally. According to Lewis et.al (2006), Al-Jazeera initially agreed with the Pentagon that four reporters and four camera operators would be embedded with the US units. However, only one reporter managed to get embedded with the American troops, while others failed to do so because they were required to join from Kuwait and Bahrain, countries that banned Al-Jazeera from operating on their soil (Lewis 2006: 106). According to Ibrahim Helal (2008), Al-Jazeera was keen to embed reporters with the American and British troops in order to get a wider picture of the war from all parties involved.

As part of our tireless effort to apply Al-Jazeera's motto, 'the opinion and the other opinion', we contacted the American and British military at an early stage, well before the war had started, in order to secure places for our war journalists to be embedded with their forces. We got an acceptance from the American side to embed four correspondents and their cameramen through the American bases in both Bahrain and Kuwait (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Helal, however, added that the Pentagon offered no help to Al-Jazeera to secure a place for these reporters and left it to Al-Jazeera itself to sort out this issue.

Knowing that Al-Jazeera's relationship with both countries was not at its best, we made it clear to the Pentagon that it would be nearly impossible for Al-Jazeera staff to get access to Bahrain or Kuwait, so we asked them to help, but the answer was negative (Helal 2008 interview with author).

What could be assumed from the Pentagon's response to Al-Jazeera's request for help was that the Pentagon was not keen to have Al-Jazeera's reporters on board, possibly because of the channel's history in reporting other conflicts - such as Afghanistan 2001- and as part of the Pentagon's desire to be able to control the flow of information during the major combative phase.

According to Rushing (2006), there was no interest among US military officials to establish connections with Al-Jazeera or engage professionally with the channel.

I was saying that (U.S. General Tommy Franks) should be on Al-Jazeera every day, but the message I was getting was the U.S. wanted to shut off all connections with Al-Jazeera ... and my response was that, if this war is to be explained (to Iraq) as more than just (weapons of mass destruction) and oil, by something motivated by moral reason, the only way to reach the people was through Al-Jazeera (Rushing cited in Leiner, *Spin Watch Online*, 1 April 2006: np).

Even at CENTCOM, Rushing stated that “there was no one on base spoke Arabic”, so when Al-Jazeera set up a crew in CENTCOM, he was “learning a few phrases” from them [Al-Jazeera staff] allowing him to establish a working relationship with them, by trying to explain US claims and giving interviews (ibid).

On the other hand, Helal revealed that there were constant attempts by Al-Jazeera to get the American military perspective. However, as mentioned above, only one reporter succeeded in joining the American troops, when he managed to “sneak” into Kuwait, while other attempts did not materialise.

In these circumstances we were only able to embed one team [a reporter and cameraman] through Kuwait, our correspondent Amr El-Kahki had to use his British passport to sneak onto Kuwaiti soil and transit to the American base. We tried other ways to embed two other correspondents under ABC and CNN, with the consent of both organisations, but they did not materialise. Only Amr El-Kahki was able to be with the advancing forces in the south of Iraq (Helal 2008 interview with author).

However, Helal expressed his disappointment about the American military treatment of their embedded reporter, which indicated that the American military was not keen to have al-Jazeera as part of its embedding programme.

By that time I felt that Al-Jazeera was not given a fair chance to cover the war from the Anglo-American side. It was easier to get what we needed through news agencies and through contracts to exchange pictures with ABC and CNN (ibid).

In addition, Al-Jazeera’s only embedded reporter, Amr El-Kahky, declared that various difficulties were visible during his experience of embedding, such as not being welcomed by the unit and always being escorted by his unit’s staff sergeant and media officer, which made it difficult for him to mingle with the troops.

The unit was not really welcoming my presence as Al-Jazeera correspondent, as I was told by Staff Sergeant Robert Knoll and Captain Jay Delarosa, who were the media officers in the unit. I was told that the troops considered Al-Jazeera as the “enemy or the potential enemy’s channel”. That in itself explains how hard it was to deal with the troops, from the top ranks down to the privates. Again, that affected my access to information at most times. The unit did sometimes understand my need to send the material to the station, though at all times the plan to move from one place to the other was the foremost priority to the troops. Our work always came second to their “safety” (El-Kahki 2003 interview with author).

Furthermore, El-Kahki verified that he was “never briefed on future operations” like other Western embedded reporters. In fact, with restrictions imposed on his movements, any sort of reporting that would be perceived by his unit as controversial, would have led to “escorting him out of the battlefield” (ibid). In addition, El-Kahki stated that he was not provided with essential information on the ongoing battles, but instead was asked to pay attention to the humanitarian assistance provided by the troops to the Iraqis.

The information was rare. I was asked to pay special attention to the humanitarian assistance [given] by the coalition forces to Iraqis. They - the troops - were very keen on showing me only the human mask, and denying me the mask of action (ibid).

These military restrictions outline the difficult environment that affected the work of embedded reporters, and clearly delineates the differences between embedded and unilateral journalists.

Al-Bourini underlined this difference, based on his experience as a reporter for Al-Jazeera operating unilaterally in Mosel, northern Iraq:

We had more freedom than the embedded reporters, although the Iraqi regime was restricting a lot of our movements; however, we had the chance to talk to the people and listen to their accounts of the events around them. This point of view was different from that gathered by embedded reporters with the American and British troops, who told us later that their movements were highly restricted [by the military] and that they were not allowed to move without a military vehicle accompanying them and leading them to places where they were told to shoot what the officers asked them to shoot, not what they [embedded reporters] wanted to shoot (Al-Bourini 2003 interview with author).

Nevertheless, El-Shareh stated that, based on his experience at Al-Jazeera’s newsroom, there were three types of reporters covering the war; inside Baghdad, outside Baghdad, and those embedded with the troops.

I had three experiences with three types of reporters: first, those who were embedded with the coalition forces, second those were located outside Baghdad, third those who were located inside Baghdad. For those outside Baghdad, they had less pressure from the Iraqi regime, yet they were still watched by the authorities; for those inside Baghdad, they were really pressured by the regime, closely watched and could not speak freely – otherwise they had the real threat that they would be killed. For those embedded with the coalition troops, they were in the heart of the battlefields, while those in Baghdad were seeing the missiles falling on the outskirts of Baghdad, but they were only allowed to visit the residential areas that were targeted (El-Shareah 2003 interview with author).

However, El-Shareah added that the role of the embedded reporters was “one sided” rather than “limited”, as they were presenting one view of the war and “serving” a purpose that aimed at improving the invaders’ image to world public opinion “as liberators” and not invaders. “The use of journalists accompanying the troops would be the proof for that image of liberators” (ibid). Nevertheless, El-Shareah also suggested that the role of embedded reporters could extend to be seen as a kind of watchdog that reminds the troops that they were watched and reported upon by the journalists (ibid).

Yet Al-Bourini considered that if embedded reporters had more freedom to move and report what they actually saw, the coverage would have been more significant.

If embedded reporter had better freedom to move and reveal the picture they see rather than what they were asked to report, the coverage would have been much better. Saying that, I would like to emphasise the importance of having embedded reporters with the military in the future. However, they have to enjoy more freedom to allow them to reveal a clear image of the war (Al-Bourini 2003 interview with author).

According to Lewis et al (2006), the attitude of the military revealed that while they could attempt to restrict journalists’ freedom of movement to report negative stories, they could also attempt to aid journalists to report stories that would represent the case for the war in a positive light. “Indeed, the ability to encourage ‘positive’ reporting is clearly part of the Pentagon’s media strategy” (Lewis et al 2006: 97). Nevertheless, one of the major obstacles that became apparent during this embedding experience for the Al-Jazeera’s reporter was when “the commander, Colonel Thomas Waldhauser of the 15th Marines unit”, which El-Kahky was embedded with, refused to guarantee protection for him, after he [El-Kahky] received death threats from members of the Free Iraqi forces (FIF) - “the military arm of the Iraqi National Congress, whose leader is Ahmed Chalabi”. The threats, as El-Kahki asserted, were because he works for Al-Jazeera, which they considered as a mouthpiece for Saddam

Hussein. Thus, and as the FIF members “were living with the unit”, the risk was potentially imminent.

I explained [to them] that Al-Jazeera has always covered their [FIF] activities in exile and their moves to co-ordinate that war with the coalition forces, as well as the London and Salahhuddin/Arbil, conferences,¹³⁹ though [Al-Jazeera] was threatened by Saddam’s regime that its offices in Baghdad would be closed. The FIF did not listen. That was a decisive factor for me to leave Iraq (El-Kahki 2003 interview with author).

Alternatively, other views assumed that embedded reporters would receive better safety from the units they were accompanying than those who were operating unilaterally. Al-Bourini indicated that unilateral journalists would face more dangers on the ground, especially in the case of occupying other countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. These dangers, as stated by Al-Bourini, could have come from the internal chaos that would erupt upon the invasion and consequently the occupation, or might be a result of indiscriminate shelling.¹⁴⁰

Embedded reporters would feel safer with the military, as long as they report what the military wants. On the other hand, the reporter who operates on the other side, facing the troops that advance to occupy Iraq, will face two possible dangers: one would be the internal chaos that could erupt upon the occupation - you could be in a great danger from the public in a country like Iraq or Afghanistan with a wide religious and sectarian diversity. The other danger is that you might be subjected to the shelling of the advancing troops. We all know what happened to Al-Jazeera’s office in Baghdad, I might have been killed like Tareq Ayoub [Al-Jazeera’s reporter who was killed by the American air raid on Al-Jazeera’s office in Baghdad]. Therefore, I would say embedding with the American or British troops inside Iraq could be safer for the reporter (Al-Bourini 2003 interview with author).

¹³⁹ The Iraqi opposition organised these conferences, which took place in London and in Salahhuddin/Arbil in Kurdistan, northern Iraq (author’s note).

¹⁴⁰ The dangers mentioned by Al-Bourini, regarding the safety of unilateral reporters, occurred in previous conflicts, more especially towards the end of the war in Afghanistan in November 2001. According to Reporters Without Borders’ annual report, on the morning of the 12th November, the US army bombed Qatari television channel Al-Jazeera’s offices in Kabul. “While the first troops of the Northern Alliance entered the city abandoned by the Taliban, American interceptors reportedly targeted the television’s offices”. Although there were no victims, the station’s equipment was totally destroyed (Reporters Without Borders, 25 April 2002: np). In addition the report also stated that, two days later, Al-Jazeera’s correspondent in Kabul, Taysser Allouni, managed to escape to Pakistan.

While fleeing the capital, Taysser Allouni was attacked and robbed. At the same time, his colleague, Youssef al-Shouli, the Al-Jazeera correspondent in Kandahar, left the Taliban stronghold for Pakistan. The Al Jazeera officials feared retribution from Afghan fighters against Arab journalists (ibid).

Furthermore, according to the report, on the 12th November, the BBC and Associated Press offices in Kabul suffered material damages after a bomb that targeted a neighbouring building exploded.

William Reeve, a BBC journalist, who was being interviewed when the explosion occurred, was not wounded. However, the journalists evacuated their offices until Northern Alliance troops arrived (ibid).

However, Al-Bourini rejected the conditions and boundaries that shaped and influenced the work of embedded reporters during the Iraq war, for the reason that embedded reporters were merely functioning under military supervision and lacked the required movement to report the war freely.

If a reporter would accompany any military units in any conflict in any country in the world [as an embedded reporter], on the grounds that were set up and designed during the invasion and occupation of Iraq which restricted journalists movements and did not respond to most of their questions and inquiries, then I would totally reject it (ibid).

Nevertheless, by understanding the military restrictions and the threats that faced Al-Jazeera's only embedded reporter, it could therefore be clearer to recognise his experience and to identify the difficulties that emerged and influenced his work, which hardened his chances to present objective, accurate and balanced view of the battles.

I always made it clear to the audience that I had no other sources of information, other than any American account that was made available (El-Kahki 2003 interview with author).

Source attribution was clearly a fundamental issue in war reporting, and it was a challenging factor for credibility. At Al-Jazeera, coordination between reporters and the newsroom received further attention. According to an internal memo sent to Al-Jazeera's staff by Ibrahim Helal, it appeared that the insistence on in-advance coordination between the newsroom and the reporters in Iraq - especially with Amr El-Kahki who was embedded with the American troops - was exceptionally addressed in order to reveal an accurate and not contradictory coverage of events.

With the rapid developments of events, the in-advance co-ordination with Al-Jazeera's reporters becomes a must. It is not logical that our correspondent in the Pentagon would be asked about statements given by the White House spokesman without previous notification or co-ordination on the subject. Similarly, it is not logical that our reporter in Baghdad would be asked about other frontlines unless we previously notify him about the subject. We could spare time to talk to the reporters off air and for limited periods of times in order to improve our field knowledge and gather more details for the anchors.

It is a must to have in-advance coordination with our only embedded reporter with the American troops, in order not to appear to contradict each other. Amr El-Kahki initially appeared reporting British and American claims as if they were 100% accurate, but then since we agreed with him to attribute information to their sources, like 'the British said to me ...', an anchor interrupted him by asking if he could confirm his information. This contradicts the principle we agreed on (the Americans

or British said to me). Therefore, it becomes essential to coordinate and talk to our reporters in advance in order to reach a better coverage (Helal, internal memo, 25 March 2003: np).

On the other hand, according to Lewis et.al, Ibrahim Helal considered that because of the restrictions El-Kahky was working under, there was no real difference between El-Kahky covering the American version of the war from the battlefield and someone covering it from CENTCOM in Qatar or from the Pentagon. (Lewis et al 2006: 106).

It is therefore believed that according to the military restrictions on El-Khaki's movements, which consequently limited his abilities to double check the information he received from the unit with other sources, the channel was still keen to benefit from his position with the military in presenting the coalition side. However, there was a constant insistence to attribute the military sources that provided information to El-Kahki, in order to avoid any contradiction of information with reports coming from Al-Jazeera's other reporters in Iraq, and, by doing this, the channel was avoiding any confusion for the audiences and losing credibility. Poignantly, Abdel-Latif (2003) noted that, on the issue of military restrictions on journalists, there were cases of double standards in the way the war was reported on Western TV channels.

When BBC World warns its viewers before presenting Baghdad-based reporters' stories that "their movements are restricted and their reports are monitored by the Iraqi authorities", a similar warning is not given when presenting stories filed by embedded reporters with the coalition forces, whose stories are also monitored, this time by western military censors (Abdel-Latif, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 April 2003: np).

It was observed that the BBC warnings were also adopted on its news website. On covering the incident of the bombing of Al-Shula'a market in Baghdad by the coalition forces, which led to the death of at least 50 Iraqi civilians, the channel quoted its reporter in Baghdad as follows:

The BBC's Paul Wood – whose reports are monitored by Iraqi officials – says the incident could be the largest single loss of life in the war (*BBC News Online*, 29 March 2003: np).

However, Wood added that the bombing would be a propaganda victory for the Iraqis, and Baghdad residents would see it as a further example of civilian lives "being taken recklessly by the US" (ibid).

Alternatively, Abdel-Latif asserted that Al-Jazeera has also stressed the point of military restrictions and censorship, “with presenter Gamal Rayan last week warning the channel’s viewers that a report by Amr El-Kahki”, Al-Jazeera’s embedded reporter with the US troops in Umm Qasr, “had been subject to censorship from US military censors” (Abdel-Latif, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 3-9 April 2003: np). Parallel to this, El-Khaki’s experience could be also viewed from another angle which might illustrate one of the major issues associated with embedded reporting: the treatment of professional journalists who are from different ethnic, national or racial backgrounds. This assumption could clearly raise fundamental questions on the overall embedding policy in reporting the 2003 Iraq war. Lewis et al pointed out that American and British units were briefing American and British correspondents with sensitive information “simply on the basis that they were American and British, they could be trusted”¹⁴¹ (Lewis et al 2006: 106).

Therefore, and based on what has just been demonstrated above, it could be said that perceptions of cultural, ethnic and even political backgrounds played a significant part in the work of various reporters and networks. These factors had also played a considerable role in shaping reporters attitudes towards the conflict and consequently affected their reported stories of incidents. However, Lynch clarified that, for all the problems of its identity-driven and emotional portrayal of events, the Arab media managed to offer more accurate portraits of some aspects of the war than did the American media, which more often relied on CENTCOM for its information (Lynch 2006: 189).

In addition, Arab media also managed to challenge information provided by the coalition. According to Mark Sayegh of *Al-Hayat* newspaper (2003), the significance of Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite channels, was at least, that their presence did not allow “the spread of lies and manipulation of news as happened during the previous Gulf war [in 1991]”, where CNN dominated the media scene, and “it took years after the war to discover some facts and reveal some lies that were told by CNN and other media outlets” (Sayegh, *Al-Hayat*, 6 April 2003: 19). In the 2003 Iraq war, Sayegh stated that the situation was different due to the presence of Al-Jazeera and other Arab media, as stories were checked constantly, and any possible “lie” could be discovered within hours rather than years, as previously happened.

¹⁴¹ Arab embedded reporters were asked to focus more on humanitarian aid stories rather than frontline battles. See El-Kahki in the section of reporting Um Qasr, later this chapter (author’s note).

In this war, lies about the death of Iraqi leaders, or the discovery of a factory for weapons of mass destruction or launching Iraqi Scud missiles, or the fall of cities, or the capture of a military official, cannot last for more than a few hours before the media outlets which broadcast them have to apologize to the world citizens for the lie they spread (ibid).

The challenging role that marked the coverage of Al-Jazeera and other Arab broadcasters could be seen in reporting events such as the apparently serial fall of Um Qasr, the Basra uprising, Basra tank column, surrender of the 51st Iraqi division, in addition to incidents of Iraqi missile attacks on Kuwait.¹⁴² Other events, which include the reporting of battles and the civilian casualties in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and other Iraqi cities, are equally important. However, the aforementioned incidents ably reveal the differences in Al-Jazeera's narrative of these events and also underline the significant role that the channel played during the three weeks of the major combat period in Iraq.

6.7.1. Um Qasr

The events at Um Qasr could be viewed as the first challenge for the media in reporting the ensuing battles. According to Simpson (2003), the pattern of the war's opening stages was set here (Simpson 2003: 306).

An American military spokesman announced within hours that the US forces had captured Um Qasr; instead, snipers hidden in private houses and old, abandoned warehouses waited until the American marines who had spearheaded the attack were past, then opened fire on them (ibid).

In addition, Miller and White (2003) stated that a pooled despatch from a reporter with the Royal Marines gave an action-packed detailed account of the British assault on the Faw peninsula and the port of Um Qasr. "The marines, the report said, had successfully secured the port" (Miller and White, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2003: np).

A couple of hours later, an advisory note was sent out by the Press Association telling news desks to hold Um Qasr copy because the taking of the town was not yet complete. By that time it was too late: most newspapers had gone to press and both Sky and BBC News 24 were reporting that Um Qasr was in British hands, reading verbatim from the pooled report (ibid).

¹⁴² These events are all discussed below in more details (author's note).

Nevertheless, the claim of “securing” Um Qasr was repeated again by US and British commanders over the next few days (ibid). Yet, according to Miles (2005) reports of how the battle for Um Qasr was going varied widely in the media.

While CNN was reporting that the town had been secured. Al-Jazeera was still reporting fighting. The MoD announced that Um Qasr was ‘secure’ three times over three days, before it fell. When an explanation was later demanded of Britain’s Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon, in the House of Commons, he blamed imprecise language: the coalition had not clearly differentiated between the port of Um Qasr and the town itself, which shares the same name (Miles 2005: 244).

On the other hand, Bodi (2004) stated that while Western news networks kept announcing that Um Qasr, the south-eastern Iraqi port, was captured “five times” in as many days, starting from the beginning of the invasion, Al-Jazeera’s correspondents in the strategic town reported fighting for at least six days after Donald Rumsfeld announced on 22 March that US forces had taken the town (Bodi 2004: 246).

Nevertheless, Amr El-Kahki, Al-Jazeera’s embedded reporter, made it clear, following the first coalition claim that they had taken Um Qasr, that there are two parts of Um Qasr.

We confirmed on 23rd March that the northern part of the port had fallen to the coalition on the third or fourth day of the war, but the southern part of the port was still disputed, as well as the city beyond the port (El-Kahki cited in Schleifer 2003: np).

Interestingly, El-Kahki added that Arab reporters were assigned to support units, “which the Americans did because they wanted Arab media to focus on humanitarian aid”.

I did do humanitarian stories but I did get access to the battle front, because the support unit I was assigned to was attacked. So invariably we would get some battlefield coverage (ibid).

Based on the above, it is assumed that the American military was considering that for an Arab embedded reporter, to cover the frontline battles, the coverage would probably be challenging to the troops rather than favouring its activities, therefore it is thought that by asking Arab embedded reporters to focus on humanitarian stories, the military would be shifting the focus of Arab media to positive news rather than “bad” news.

Nevertheless, it could be said that the absence of any unilateral reporter at the city of Um Qasr led to such a confusion in the reporting of the event. In other words, if there were

unilateral reporters positioned in south Iraq, particularly at Um Qasr, they would possibly have challenged the military claims about the fall of the port and the city. Byrne (2003) for instance, criticized the BBC for not having unilateral reporters in South Iraq, unlike other parts of the country:

The BBC does have “roving reporters” operating in northern Iraq, including John Simpson, as well as journalists in Baghdad – Regeh Omaar and Andrew Gilligan. However, the corporation does not currently have any correspondents working “unilaterally” in southern Iraq (Byrne, *The Guardian*, 31 March 2003: np).

In addition, Deans (2003) stated that Mark Damazer, the deputy director of BBC News, admitted that the reporting of the allied military claims in Iraq that later proved false, such as heralding the fall of Um Qasr at least “nine times”, had “left the public feeling less well-informed than it should be” (Deans, *The Guardian*, 28 March 2003: np). Mark Damazer also admitted that the BBC had been making mistakes “on a daily basis” during the first week of the Iraq conflict, but denied there was any deliberate bias towards either pro- or anti-war camps (ibid).

I do not deny for a moment that the accumulation of things that have happened in the first week, such as the false claims about the fall of Um Qasr and the surrender of the Iraqi 51st division, have left the public feeling that they are not as well informed as they should be (Damazer cited in Deans, *The Guardian*, 28 March 2003: np).

On the other hand, Al-Jazeera seemed to have benefited from its network of reporters who were operating unilaterally in Iraq, and this kind of reporting allowed the channel to double check the information coming from the military with their reporters on the ground, and therefore to appear more confident in their coverage. Consequently, this performance provided the channel with more chances to reinforce its narration of the war events with accurate data, which resoundingly challenged the American and British military claims. This clearly appeared in Al-Jazeera’s reporting of the fall of Um Qasr and was most notable in the following events during the three weeks of the major combative period of the war on Iraq.

6.7.2. The Basra uprising

One of the remarkable events that occurred during this war concerns claims of an uprising during the first week of the battles in Basra, and the following reporting of the story revealed hugely contradictory coverage between Al-Jazeera and the Western media outlets. According to Lawson et al (2003) there were widespread media reports on 25 March of a popular

uprising against Saddam Hussein's regime in Basra, which were believed to have originated from military sources, followed by reports from GMTV's pool reporter Richard Gaisford (Lawson et al, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2003: np). Later on the same day, British military sources said they were unable to confirm reports of any popular uprising in Basra, but reiterated that they would do anything possible to encourage and support any Iraqis planning to overthrow forces loyal to Saddam (ibid).

On the other hand, as stated by Lawson et al, Iraq's Information Minister promptly denied the reports, calling them "hallucinations". However, on 26 March, a British spokesman at the US headquarters in Qatar said it appeared that there has been an uprising:

We do not have a clear indication of its scale or scope or where it will take us. But we will want to support it to exploit its potential. It looks like this uprising is based on the resentment of the population (cited in ibid).

Nevertheless, Al-Jazeera challenged these claims by providing a different narrative to the widespread reports. Its reporter, who was stationed in Basra, stated that there had been no evidence of an uprising and that the city was "crawling with Iraqi military" and the streets were "littered with shrapnel" (ibid). Interestingly, according to Lawson et al, the British PM, Tony Blair told the House of Commons on 26 March that there was a limited uprising in Basra:

In relation to what has happened in Basra overnight, truthfully, reports are confused, but we believe there was some limited form of uprising (Blair cited in Lawson et al, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2003: np).

In contrast, Bodi considered that challenging the British official claims regarding an uprising reputed in Basra was another achievement for Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war:

On 26 March British military officials, followed by government figures including the Prime Minister, reported that "massive resentment amongst the population " had led to an uprising in Iraq's second city the day before. "We have no doubt that yesterday evening they [Iraqi forces] were exchanging fire with their own people", said the British defence minister Lewis Moonie in a calculated attempt to demonise the enemy. Yet a phone call to Al-Jazeera's correspondent in the city returned the report that the streets were quiet and there was no sign of a rebellion (Bodi 2004: 246).

Further on this issue, Miles (2005) stated that most of the British and American networks and printed press carried the rumour of the Shia uprising as if it were a fact, which indicated that critical coverage of the event was not considered and that the media decided to report the

official claims as a truthful event. Supporting this, according to Miles, Fox News anchor, Neil Cavuto, snorted to the audience, with no supporting images “Do not look now, but the Shiites have hit the fan!” (Miles 2005: 246).

In addition, Miller and White (2003) stated that it was Tuesday 25th March 2003 when BBC News 24 began broadcasting reports of an uprising against Saddam Hussein in the southern city of Basra (Miller and White, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2003: np).

This story was broken by Richard Gaisford, a GMTV correspondent embedded with the British. He cited “military intelligence” as the source, and soon television news and wire services were running reports of the British artillery hitting Iraqi mortar positions which had been firing on civilians. Pooled despatches from reporters with other British units around Basra added weight to the story (ibid).

Miller and White added that on Wednesday 26th March 2003, the *Daily Telegraph* greeted the uprising in a leader article as “the best news of the war so far for the allied forces” (ibid). On the other hand, according to Marr (2003) Iraq dismissed the reports, indicating that any uprising in Basra was an “hallucination”, while Arab television channels showed images of quiet Basra streets. “Blair later said there had been a ... ‘limited uprising’” (Marr, *Reuters*, 31 March 2003: np).

According to Miles, the story of the uprising in Basra might, in time, have turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy had not Al-Jazeera been in Basra to report the truth of the situation.

Once the bombing had stopped, the Al-Jazeera correspondent in the city reported an eerie calm on the streets. No uprising, no disturbances. Pictures were broadcast of a deserted city centre and quiet streets. ‘The streets of Basra are very calm and there are no indications of violence or riots’, Al-Jazeera’s Basra correspondent told the anchor in Doha. ‘There are no signs of the reported uprising. All we can hear are distant explosions in the south-east, and we believe fighting is going on there’ (Miles 2005: 246).

Nevertheless, Miles added that over the next few days Basra remained under siege and Al-Jazeera fed the outside world with plenty more exclusives about conditions inside the city:

The news team [of Al-Jazeera] visited the dilapidated Al-Jumhuriyah Hospital. Where Iraqi civilians lay wounded and dying. Among bloodstained bodies strewn across tiled floor, a medical worker pulled back a blanket to reveal a child with the back of its head blown off. ‘It’s a huge mass of civilians,’ one angry woman told the camera. ‘It was a massacre’ (ibid).

In agreement with Miles, Miller and White stated that since the claims of an uprising in Basra and the siege around the city, a humanitarian crisis was unfolding as many of “the 1.2 million residents” were forced to survive without water or power (Miller and White, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2003: np). Thus, without the presence of Al-Jazeera inside the city to reveal the truth about the claimed uprising or the civilian casualties, such corrections would have gone missing from the narrative of the war, or perhaps covered with no detail - and not to reveal the pain and suffering of the people in Basra.

6.7.3. The Basra tank column

In keeping with Basra, there was another incident which Al-Jazeera reported differently. According to Lewis et al (2006), reports began to emerge on 26th March of a column of up to 120 Iraqi tanks leaving Basra and preparing to engage troops in the area; in the event, the actual column numbers were reduced to just three vehicles (Lewis et al 2006: 79).

The report appears to have originated from an embedded reporter, the BBC’s Clive Myrie, with 40 Commando of the British Royal Marines, but was also corroborated, at least in part, by ITN’s Bill Neely, with 42 Commando. Bill Neely has spoken about this incident at various media forums since the war and admits that he perhaps should have been more rigorous in the sourcing of the story (ibid).

Nevertheless, once the incident was reported, it immediately spread with exaggeration. According to Miller and White (2003), on Wednesday 26th March news broke of “one of the biggest tank battles involving British forces since the second world war” (Miller and White, *The Guardian*, 29 March 2003: np).

A convoy of up to 120 Iraqi armoured vehicles had been spotted breaking out of the southern city of Basra in broad daylight, heading south towards the British-held Faw peninsula in what commanders described as an “offensive posture” (ibid).

In addition, Miller and White stated that TV news reports on Wednesday evening and newspapers on Thursday were filled with gripping accounts of the battle between British tanks and the Iraqi armoured column. For instance, the front page story of *The Guardian* said: “British artillery and jets launched a fierce attack last night on a convoy of up to 120 Iraqi tanks and armoured personnel carriers seen pouring out of the city of Basra”. The story, according to Miller and White, had come from correspondents with the British forces (ibid). Nevertheless, it was not till Friday 28th March that a press release by the MoD revealed the truth: “Rather than 120 Iraqi vehicles, there had been only three”. It additionally stated that a

contrite military admitted that the error had stemmed from an “erroneous signal” from the coalition’s electronic moving target indicators. “US Brigadier General Vince Brooks described it as a ‘classic example of the fog of war’” (ibid).

However, Lewis et al suggested that the event illustrated the difficulties that reporters faced in using military sources – whether briefing officers or battlefield combatants – whom they perhaps naturally felt “would be reliably informed” (Lewis et al 2006: 79). The event is assumed to also suggest that when the media does not scrutinize information coming from such military sources, it would then provide a distorted image of events which could possibly influence the audience.

As for Al-Jazeera on this particular story, the channel was more careful in reporting the British claims, therefore it could be said that the channel did not give any weight to the claims, though it kept reporting the briefings of the military officials. In explaining this attitude, Helal stated that Al-Jazeera was trying during the war not to broadcast any material unless it had been double checked or confirmed by their reporter on the ground. As for the Basra tank column, Helal added that their reporters did not confirm the claims, so they decided not to give any further weight to the story.

Our reporters, who were based in residential areas and at the centre of the Basra city, could not confirm or dismiss the military claims of an Iraqi tank column. The story was repeated on American media, and when we reported it, we attributed the information to the American sources without confirming or denying the claims. I think the daily press briefing at Assylich camp showed some satellite images of the alleged tanks. We were keen not to confuse our audience with information that was not double checked by us at Al-Jazeera (Helal 2008 interview with author).

By doing this, Arab audiences could readily see that Al-Jazeera’s reporting was more credible than the coalition forces’ claims, which would be perceived negatively by Arab audiences as “war propaganda” or even as “lies”. Further, it is believed that Al-Jazeera’s treatment of this particular event also revealed a level of professional responsibility towards its audiences; this policy regarding coverage gained the channel a reputation for greater reliability in covering other war incidents, even if the issue of accuracy would still be at the centre of attention, as in reporting the surrender of the Iraqi 51st division.

6.7.4. The surrender of the Iraqi 51st division

In keeping with Basra, a further incident occurred during the early days of the war that revealed another example concerning the issue of accuracy, when Al-Jazeera and other Western media gave contradictory accounts on the surrender of the Iraqi 51st division.

According to Lawson et al (2003), on Friday night, 21st March, wires, TV and radio reported official claims that the coalition commanders had accepted the surrender of the 8000-strong 51st Iraqi infantry division near Basra. However, on 23rd March, Iraqi officials denied the US claim (Lawson et al, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2003: np). The *New York Times* wire service stated the following on 24th March:

US officials were quick to announce the surrender of the commander of the 51st Division. On Sunday they discovered that the 'commander' of the surrendered group was actually a junior officer masquerading as a higher-up in an attempt to win better treatment (*New York Times* cited in Lawson et al, *The Guardian*, 11 April 2003: np).

However, according to Miles (2005), on 23rd March, Al-Jazeera's team in Basra directly contradicted the coalition claim regarding the surrender:

The American spokesman at Coalition Central Command announced that the head of Iraqi 51st division in Basra had given himself up. Al-Jazeera tracked down the officer in question and interviewed him live (Miles 2005: 246).

According to Al-Jazeera's website (2003), and, based on the interview with the commander of the Iraqi 51st division, Lieutenant General Khalid Al-Hashemi, denied any surrender and called these claims lies, indicating that his division caused the American and British troops huge losses, and added that they had captured American soldiers during the Basra battles (*Al-Jazeera Online*, 24 March 2003: np).

Nevertheless, this incident can be clearly seen as another battle for hearts and minds between the Iraqi and American authorities. Although Al-Jazeera challenged the initial claim by the American officials, by interviewing the Iraqi commander, it contributed at the same time to broadcast false information and failed to check the accuracy of some stories or even to correct them.

In some cases - although few - we were trapped by propaganda. As an example we were told by high ranking officials in the Iraqi military that the fifty fifth brigade of the Iraqi army had not withdrawn from the south. We reported this, quoting the Iraqi

source, but later on it was proved untrue. That was after the war, when our correspondent had returned to Doha from Iraq and told us that it was untrue and he was under direct intimidation and threats from the Iraqi military, which was at that time withdrawing from the South. I have to say that, even though we should have doubled checked the claim of the Iraqi officer, we did not have access to the correct information at the time, but that should not have stopped us from trying to double check whether what he was saying was true or not.

Professionally speaking, we attributed the news to its source, which lets us off the hook, but as we knew after the war that what this officer had said was untrue, yet it was too late to correct it (Helal 2008 interview with author).

This incident could also highlight one of the complex realities on the ground for war reporters, as Al-Jazeera enjoyed exclusive access inside Basra, though the ability to check and correct any false information was a huge challenge for the channel. They were predictably worried that this could cost it any further exclusives inside Iraq, particularly if the Iraqi authorities decided to restrict its reporters' movements or ban them from entering certain areas. Nevertheless, it could be said that failing to correct the story jeopardized their clear aim to maintain accuracy and would contribute to misleading the channel's audiences, who believed that the American claims on this particular event were another "lie" by their military.

6.7.5. The missile attacks on Kuwait

It was reported that the Iraqi army launched missile attacks on Kuwait in two major incidents during the war. The first was on the 20th of March 2003, while the other was on the 28th of March 2003, According to *The Guardian* (2003), concerning the former, US and Kuwaiti officials claimed that Iraqi forces had targeted the border area with northern Kuwait, where US and British troops were massed, and that the missiles fired at Kuwait were Scud missiles (*The Guardian*, 20 March 2003: np).

Colonel Youssef Al-Mulah, a spokesman for the Kuwaiti military, said that four Scud missiles had been fired at Kuwait today. However, a British spokesman at Camp As Sayliyah, Lt Col Ronnie McCourt, said that three missiles were fired by the Iraqis into Kuwait, including only one Scud, which was intercepted by a Patriot missile (ibid).

On the other hand, it was stated by *The Guardian* that Iraq's Information Minister, Mohammed Saeed Al Sahaf, denied the use of any Scud missiles, "which were banned under the terms of the 1991 Gulf war ceasefire" (ibid). Nevertheless, the second missile attack on 28th March, which targeted a shopping mall in Kuwait City, was more controversial, as US and Kuwait officials promptly accused Iraq of launching a missile attack against Kuwait.

According to *The Guardian*, “US officials said it was thought to be a Chinese-made Silkworm missile” (*The Guardian*, 29 March 2003: np). Similarly, Kuwait’s Information Minister, Ahmad Fad Al-Sabah told CNN that the missile was a Chinese-made “Silkworm”, which Iraq has used in the past (*CNN News Online*, 28 March 2003: np). Al-Sabah added that “This kind of missile usually it flies between 20 to 25 meters over the land. For that, there is no defence system that can reach it” (Al-Sabah cited in *CNN News Online*, 28 March 2003: np).

As reported by Ryan Dilley of *BBC News Online* (2003), the missile exploded near a seafront shopping centre in the heart of Kuwait city without warning, peppering the area with shrapnel and shattering windows, but causing no serious injuries (Dilley, *BBC News Online*, 29 March 2003: np). Interestingly, *PBS* (Public Broadcasting Service) (2003) reported that, after the attack, some Kuwaiti officials examined the fragments and stated that they believed the missile was an errant American cruise missile that had been fired from the Persian Gulf towards Iraq (*PBS*, 28 March 2003: np).

“It was an American cruise missile, we know from the markings and the writing on it,” said a Kuwait police colonel who did not give his name to the New York Times reporter at the scene (*ibid*).

On the other hand, Al-Jazeera’s coverage of these incidents was different to the Western media, as the channel - again - did not adopt the official American line, whether by calling the missile an Iraqi Scud or an American cruise missile, the channel preferred to call it a missile attack to avoid any possible mistakes that could lead to confusion – and immediate judgement. According to Helal, the reason why the channel was careful in describing the incident was to maintain a high level of accuracy in its reporting of the attack, and since there was no confirmation from the Iraqi sources on launching a missile attack on Kuwait or using in particular “Scud” missiles, Al-Jazeera was more balanced in reporting the event, and more careful in the use of the labels associated with the incident.

When most of the media reported a possible Iraqi Scud missile attack on a mall in Kuwait city, we did not follow the same pattern. Since we did not have a correspondent in Kuwait at the time, we preferred to be cautious, and we stuck to describing it as a missile attack without mentioning the word Scud. Later on, it was revealed that what brought the destruction in this mall was an American anti-missile rocket (Helal 2008 interview with author).

Based on the above, it is vital to indicate that besides its aim to provide accurate reporting of the events of the war, Al-Jazeera was also aware of the potential for propaganda between the warring parties and the possible manipulation of the media. Therefore, by trying to detach itself from the official line of the narrative, it would clearly gain more credibility among its audiences.

6.8. Hitting Al-Jazeera

As stated by Lynch (2006), it became clear that the bombing of Al-Jazeera's offices in Afghanistan and Baghdad was seen as direct attempts to shut down the station's reporting from the ground (Lynch 2006: 189). According to Philip Knightley (2003), the Pentagon had never forgiven Al-Jazeera for broadcasting the Osama bin Laden tapes around the world from its Kabul office during the war in Afghanistan (Knightley 2003: 10). Therefore, according to Knightley, in the 2003 Iraq war the Pentagon regarded Al-Jazeera as an enemy propaganda station, putting out devastating accounts of Iraqi civilian casualties to a vast Arab audience, "thus fuelling anti-American sentiments" (ibid).

Furthermore, Poniewozik also revealed that due to "its grisly pictures and aggressive coverage of the coalition", Al-Jazeera in particular had been treated as a fifth column in the West.

U.S. and British officials condemned it for airing footage of allied rows' corpses, and the New York Stock Exchange and NASDAC have ejected Al-Jazeera reporters. Hackers attacked its English language website, replacing it with a red-white-and-blue US map and the slogan "Let Freedom Ring" (Poniewozik, *Time Magazine*, 30 March 2003: np).

Nevertheless, Bodi revealed that the attack on Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad on the 8th of April 2003 was not the first attempt to hit Al-Jazeera in Iraq. On the 2nd April the Sheraton Hotel in Basra, being used as a base by its correspondents, was shelled, receiving four direct hits during a heavy artillery bombardment. "Luckily, the crew all escaped injury" (Bodi 2004: 249). Yet, according to Whitaker (2003), Al-Jazeera in Iraq had supplied the Americans with the geographical coordinates of its office and the code of its signal to the satellite transponder, "in the hope that its Baghdad office will not be mistaken for an Iraqi command-and-control centre" (Whitaker, *The Guardian*, 24 March 2003: np). Fisk (2003) added that Al-Jazeera gave the Pentagon the co-ordinates of its Baghdad office two months before the war and received assurances that the bureau would not be attacked (Fisk, *The*

Independent, 8 April 2003: np). Helal (2008), confirmed that the co-ordinates of the Baghdad office were given to the American side:

To the best of my knowledge, the co-ordinates of our bureau were given to the CENTCOM in Doha at least once. Also, I believe that it was not difficult for the American side – with its advanced technology – to track down the uplink signals which were coming out from our bureau constantly (Helal 2008, interview with author).

Nevertheless, Al-Jazeera's reporter in Baghdad, Maher Abdullah, explained how the office was hit by American fighter jets, killing Tareq Ayoub and injuring one of Al-Jazeera's cameramen, Zuheir Falih, who was with Ayoub on the roof of the building reporting during the raid:

The plane was flying so low that those of us downstairs thought it would land on the roof – that's how close it was. We actually heard the rocket being launched. It was a direct hit – the missile actually exploded against our electrical generator. Tariq died almost at once. Zuheir was injured (Abdullah cited in Fisk, *The Independent*, 8 April 2003: np).

Moreover, Mohammed Kreshan (2006), one of Al-Jazeera's prominent anchors, stressed that the channel's office in Baghdad was deliberately hit by American fighter jets, causing the death of one of Al-Jazeera's reporters in Iraq, Tareq Ayoub (Kreshan 2006: 30). Kreshan argued that the reason behind this attack on Al-Jazeera was to silence all the media that were perceived as "disturbing voices" to the coalition forces. Al Jazeera's voice disturbed the US by presenting footage that revealed "American's lies" and challenging the reports that were sent by many journalists who were "hiding behind American and British tanks" (ibid: 30-31). Kreshan also revealed that the location of Al-Jazeera's office and the Abu Dhabi channel, which was also hit soon after Al-Jazeera's office was attacked, were known to the coalition forces, "who had the maps and the information needed" about the presence of the journalists, whether in the Palestine Hotel (which had become the centre for journalists in Baghdad during the war) or Al-Jazeera's and Abu Dhabi offices. Additionally, Kreshan stated that there were huge billboards with bright colours on the roof of the two channels' offices, indicating that they were journalists' offices (ibid).

Consequently, the death of Tareq Ayoub was received with deep anger by his fellow reporters at Al-Jazeera in Baghdad. According to *Al-Hayat* (2003) Al-Jazeera's reporter in

Baghdad, Majid Abdel-Hadi, described the American bombardment which killed Tareq Ayoub as a “crime”, and added with visible anger:

I won't be able to be objective after this ... We were targeted because the Americans did not want the world to see the crimes they are committing against the Iraqi people (Abdel-Hadi, cited in *Al-Hayat*, 9 April 2003: 3).

It can, however, be said that whether or not hitting Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad was a deliberate act of aggression to silence the channel's voice during the war, the incident itself can still be viewed as a remarkable event, one in which media organisations clearly became military targets during a period of war. According to Al-Bourini, targeting Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad was an assault on a neutral and impartial organisation. Therefore it should raise a lot of questions regarding the reasons behind the attack.

Targeting any media premises is similar to targeting a building used for the International Committee of Red Cross. It is an assault on a neutral and impartial body. Normally TV stations and journalists are neutrals, so there was a huge condemnation of the act, whether it was done deliberately or by mistake, as it raises endless question marks about the reason behind targeting such places (Al-Bourini 2003 interview with author).

Based on the above, it is needless to mention that there could have been a chance to avoid such a tragedy, since the American side – as Whitaker, Fisk and Helal mentioned earlier – was supplied with the geographical co-ordinates of the office and the code of its signal to the satellite transponder. Nevertheless, Helal viewed this attack as part of a bigger approach to intimidate unilateral journalists, although, he did not accuse the Americans of deliberately hitting Al-Jazeera's office in Baghdad:

I did not accuse the Americans of deliberately attack our bureau, but I can comfortably accuse them of carelessness. The decision to attack the adjacent location they [the Americans] claimed was being used by the Iraqi information ministry was unneeded militarily compared to the risk of hitting journalists on duty. Similarly, the Americans decided to attack the Palestine Hotel, allegedly responding to a source of fire, while they were fully aware of the clear presence of journalists in place. This unfortunate attack [on the Palestine Hotel] resulted in killing two other journalists. I guess that this 'careless' behaviour could have been an attempt to intimidate journalists who were covering the war but not embedded with the invasion forces¹⁴³ (Helal 2008 interview with author).

¹⁴³ For more on the attack on the Palestine Hotel, see earlier chapter, on Media strategies during the 2003 Iraq war, the section on embedding strategy (author's note).

On the other hand, Suliman (2008) believed that the way Al-Jazeera was perceived by Western media and politicians during the 2003 Iraq war gives the impression that the channel was portrayed to be part of the conflict, not only sentimentally [because it is an Arab broadcaster reporting on the American-led invasion of an Arab country] but also politically, especially after the various accusations against the channel by American officials regarding its coverage of the conflict.

Certainly, launching a war on an Arab country would evoke strong feelings, especially if it also leads to the murder of colleagues; however, if you add to this Rumsfeld's statements during the war against Al-Jazeera, you would then start to feel that you were intentionally being trapped in this war, not only sentimentally but also politically (Suliman 2008 interview with author).

Nevertheless, following the war, hitting Al-Jazeera's headquarters in Qatar was discussed by President Bush with Tony Blair. According to Maguire and Lines of *The Daily Mirror* (2005), Bush expressed interest in bombing Al-Jazeera's headquarters during a meeting with the then British PM at the White House on 16 April 2004. This information was based on a "top secret No.10 memo", as described by *The Daily Mirror*, and contained a transcript of the two leaders' conversation, that was leaked to the press and revealed President Bush's intention to use force against the channel (Maguire and Lines, *The Daily Mirror*, 22 November 2005: np). The *Daily Mirror* report attributed an anonymous source as saying: "There is no doubt what Bush wanted to do - and no doubt Blair did not want him to do it" (ibid).

A governmental official suggested that the Bush threat had been "humorous, not serious". But another source declared: "Bush was deadly serious, as was Blair. That much is absolutely clear from the language used by both men" (ibid).

According to Leigh and Norton-Taylor (2006), the Bush-Blair meeting took place when Whitehall officials, intelligence officers, and British military commanders were expressing outrage at the scale of the US assault on the Iraqi city of Fallouja, in which 1000 civilians were feared to have died (Leigh and Norton-Taylor, *The Guardian*, 9 January 2006: np). Leigh and Norton-Taylor argued that pictures of the attack shown on Al-Jazeera were believed to have infuriated US generals (ibid). The meeting, however, witnessed other discussions on expanding British military involvement in Iraq.

London was also arguing with Washington about the number of extra British troops to be sent to Iraq (ibid).

On the other hand, in Washington, Sullivan and Pincus (2005) quoted the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, telling the Associated Press in an email “We are not interested in dignifying something so outlandish and inconceivable with a response” (Sullivan and Pincus, *Washington Post*, 23 November 2005: np). However, as Sullivan and Pincus stated, a former senior US intelligence official said that it was clear the “White House saw Al-Jazeera as a problem”, but that although the CIA’s clandestine service came up with plans to counteract it, such as planting people on its staff, it never received permission to proceed. The former official added “Bombing in Qatar was never contemplated” (ibid).

Nevertheless, as asserted by Maguire and Lines, the location of Al-Jazeera’s headquarters would have made an easy target for bombers, as it is sited away from residential areas, and is no more than 10 miles from the US’s desert base in Qatar, so there “would have been no danger of collateral damage” (Maguire and Lines, *The Daily Mirror*, 22 November 2005: np).

To have wiped them out would have been equivalent to bombing the BBC in London and the most spectacular foreign policy disaster since the Iraq War itself (ibid).

In addition, Maguire and Lines argued that the No 10 memo raised “fresh doubt” over US claims that previous attacks on Al-Jazeera staff were military errors (ibid). Yet this incident was hardly isolated and can be put alongside others where the military had targeted media organisations and reporters during the 2003 Iraq war - see the International Press Institute report 2003 and the Committee to Protect Journalists report 2003. These reveal the constant dangers the media face during conflicts, especially if the coverage follows critical patterns in reporting military activities and questions its claims and operations. In addition, the incident also reveals a clear image of the complex environment in which the military and the media are functioning, and perhaps it raises the issue of the need to develop further measures and regulations that would control the military activities and restrict possible actions against such civilian targets, in order to protect journalists and media organisations from any military assaults during and after conflicts.

6.9. Conclusion

The remarkable presence of Arab media in reporting the 2003 Iraq war is assumed to have two significant impacts on the world media scene; the first is that it ended the Western media’s domination when reporting conflicts in the region of the Middle East by providing equally powerful and often more comprehensive coverage of conflicts in places such as the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen and, more profoundly, the 2003 Iraq war.

Secondly, Arab media during this particular war provided Arab audiences with coverage that was sufficiently challenging to the mainstream media and of the American and British military line, which consequently enhanced the image of Arab media as credible sources of news during this war. This performance by Arab news media has proved crucial in restoring credibility in their performance. Such a lack of faith has been seen since the 1967 war, a war that generated sentiments of doubt and mistrust among the Arab public regarding the ability of Arab news media to be objective and credible. Additionally, in the 2003 Iraq war, it could be argued that media outlets such as Al-Jazeera succeeded in reaching a wide range of audiences in every house with a satellite dish and a decoder.

Nevertheless, focusing on bringing the horror of the daily combat was indeed a significant achievement for Arab media, which marked the difference in reporting the conflict with Western broadcasters. Similarly, the use of language, terminologies, the faith in military claims and source attributions, were also apparent patterns that contributed to provide different narratives by Arab and Western broadcasters. It was noticeable that Al-Jazeera, for instance, insisted throughout the three weeks of the combat period on using terms such as “invading forces” or “American and British troops” in describing what Western media were calling “coalition troops” or “our boys”. Such a difference in the use of language could clearly indicate the different perspectives of the war that were presented on the media.

Additionally, unlike the coverage of many western channels, which focused more on the military advances and the humanitarian aid stories, Arab media outlets tended to focus on rather more controversial and equally critical issues to the military by focusing on civilian casualties of the war and the high human costs of the assaults on civilian areas and neighbourhoods in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul and other cities in Iraq. This angle of coverage obviously disturbed the war planners in Washington and London, who initially were hoping that the war would be swift in toppling the Saddam regime. Such anger was expressed in the constant criticism and accusations against Arab media, particularly Al-Jazeera, of not being accurate in reporting war incidents and also of being a propaganda tool for Saddam’s regime.

Interestingly, similar accusations were thrown at Al-Jazeera regarding the Taliban regime during the war in Afghanistan in October 2001, which perhaps offered the rationale for Al-Jazeera to become a target for the American administration since its coverage of that war.

Nevertheless, by recalling the coverage of the 1991 Gulf War by Western media, most notably CNN, we could clearly notice the contribution of Arab satellites that added more depth to the coverage of the conflict in the 2003 Iraq war. In other words, the 1991 Gulf War could be likened to a video game compared to the devastation shown on television screens, such as that broadcast by Al-Jazeera, in 2003. This does not suggest that the 1991 Gulf War was less horrifying, but highlights that the 1991 war was not as controversially covered as the 2003 Iraq war. Further, the notions of objectivity, cultural differences and bias were at the centre of discussion among academics and journalists following the latter war, particularly in order to evaluate the role of Arab media and to draw out the differences with their Western counterparts. The role of the embedding policy was also another issue that was closely examined and analysed in order to be able to understand the complicated scenes of war and the influence of all these powerful factors in shaping public opinion.

This chapter illustrated the major debates on the role of Arab media, particularly Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war, and the difference it made to the coverage of Western channels, and it also critically discussed the impact of Al-Jazeera on reporting the 2003 Iraq war. It was observed that the presence of the Arab satellite channels, such as Al-Jazeera, Abu Dhabi, Al-Arabiya and others, contributed strongly to cover the war from the “victims’ perspective” rather than the military and official line. In other words, as discussed earlier, the difference between Arab and western channels in reporting the war was primarily that Arab channels were more interested to report the impact of the American and British missiles and rockets on ordinary Iraqis, while Western channels were more intent on the military technologies behind launching these missiles and rockets and the troops advances and war strategies. This could suggest that both angles looked at the war and treated its consequences with different magnitudes. In the case of Al-Jazeera, the channel focused on covering the war with emphasis on Iraqi and civilian losses during the battles. Thus, it could be said that the channel was keen to show the horror of the war by constantly showing the appalling images of dead and injured civilians that would be highly unlikely to appear on Western media. Similar images of American and British dead and captured soldiers, which generated a huge anger in the White House and Downing Street, would feature on Al-Jazeera, and such coverage was heavily criticised by US and British officials. A few measures were taken against Al-Jazeera, such as banning its business correspondents from reporting from the New York Stock Exchange and the Nasdaq stock market after the channel broadcast images of dead and captured US soldiers. In addition, hackers managed to paralyse its English language website

for a short period, and, towards the end of the third week of the major combative period, its office in Baghdad was hit by an American missile resulting in the death of one of its reporters in Baghdad.

Finally, it is argued that Al-Jazeera's experience in covering the war on Iraq could be evaluated in terms of accuracy, objectivity and professional standards, which, as discussed earlier, have succeeded in equally challenging the military line and providing the audiences with what was intended as accurate and objective reporting. Stories like the oft-reported fall of Um Qasr, the fabled Basra uprising, the supposed Basra tank column and mistakenly identified Scud missiles fired at Kuwait, were clear evidence and examples of Al-Jazeera's performance and challenges to the military claims could be seen.

Therefore it could be said that after its experience in covering the Palestinian uprising in 2000 and the war in Afghanistan in 2001, Al-Jazeera's coverage of the 2003 Iraq war profoundly enhanced its image as an alternative source of information, and yet one that deliberately sought to be professional and accurate in its description of events.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The development of media strategies during armed conflicts and the performance of media organisations during military campaigns and hostilities have been central to the discussion in this thesis. Within these developments, various techniques of media strategies and wartime propaganda became increasingly considered by governments and policy makers in the military interventions of the late twentieth century. In these conflicts, policies such as the demonization of the enemy and the use of exaggeration and fabricated stories against the targeted regimes were used, in addition to information control policies, such as the pool system, which was based on selecting certain reporters to accompany the troops to cover their activities, as well as imposing restrictions on independent reporters in the field in order to control information. These methods were all designed to sell wars and create supportive public opinion and normally were echoed in news coverage. Other aspects which influenced field reporting were the dependency of reporters on the military in terms of transportation, protection, and communications. This policy created a psychological bonding between reporters and soldiers which contributed to softening the media coverage of the troops. Such a policy was further developed in the 2003 Iraq war into “the embedding policy” where journalists were embedded with the invading military units.

In discussing military interventions during the second half of the twentieth century, the 1956 Suez Canal War, the 1991 Gulf War, the 1999 Kosovo war and the 2001 war in Afghanistan were critically discussed in terms of media strategies and coverage, since the common feature in these particular conflicts was the attempt of the military alliance to remove the regimes in the targeted countries. Media strategies in these military interventions followed similar patterns: for example, the demonization of the leader, the emphasis on the threat posed by the leader and his regime on national, regional and even international stability, whether through owning weapons of mass destruction or committing atrocities and massacres, or all of these.

With regard to the Arab world, the 1956 Suez Canal War to topple President Nasser of Egypt and the 1991 Gulf War against Saddam Hussein, which was widely reported to have the limited aim of “liberating Kuwait”, constituted events of historical, political and media significance when examining the US-led coalition to topple Saddam Hussein’s regime in 2003.

In examining the influence of governmental media strategies on the coverage of warfare, this thesis has discussed additional factors to military restrictions and information control techniques which contribute to shape the output of media organisations. These factors include political, economic and social powers, which normally overlap and influence media performance. Thus, the more the media become connected to the military and governments' institutions - especially through economic channels – the more it becomes less critical in addressing hard questions, particularly in time of war. This complex relationship causes media organisations to become more dependent on the military and on their governments for news feeds to fill their coverage time, and this in turn contributes to the aims of media strategies to establish favourable coverage of war policies and actions.

As part of the developments within this environment, the thesis argued that the emergence of new regional players, such the Al-Jazeera satellite channel, marked an important development in covering modern conflicts. This was evident in the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the 2003 Iraq war. Al-Jazeera's performance in Afghanistan contributed to establishing a new ground in the communication of wars, one in which the channel provided an alternative perspective on the conflict, allowing its news consumers in the Arab world to see a different version of war than audiences in western countries. By focusing more on civilian casualties and the horrors arising from the war machine in Afghanistan, Al-Jazeera managed to challenge the information policies of the coalition. This led both the American and British governments to try to control the imagery of Al-Jazeera by convincing heads of news in key media organisations to be careful in using materials from the Qatar-based channel, and also by trying to convince the Emir of Qatar to rein in the channel. However, Al-Jazeera continued to report the war up till the collapse of the Taliban regime and the bombing of its bureau in Kabul by an American missile.

The media war during the 2001 war in Afghanistan and the role of Al-Jazeera and other Arab broadcasters in covering the conflict was a major reason propelling the examination of communication strategies during wartime and the development of Arab media, particularly in terms of ownership, political orientation and performance, especially when Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite channels continued to expand and develop in terms of finance and performance.

It is precisely the discussion and analysis of these developments that have enabled the thesis to contribute to the literature on mediatization of conflicts, media strategies and on the role of Arab broadcasters such as Al-Jazeera in covering international conflicts. The use of documentary research was essential in order to explore contemporary policies and techniques that were used during the 2003 Iraq war, while participant observation, which took place through accessing Al-Jazeera and interviewing and talking to journalists, reporters and producers on site, as well as collecting primary qualitative materials, such as internal memos, formed a rich base for the analysis and interpretation that took place in this thesis.

The thesis suggests that by critically discussing the major developments within the Arab media, the role that Arab satellite channels played in covering modern conflicts such as the 2003 Iraq war becomes clearer. These developments reveal that Arab satellite channels have gone through various stages since the inauguration of the state-funded Egyptian Satellite Channel (ESC) in early 1991 and the establishment of the privately owned Saudi satellite channel, Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) in London in 1991. The two channels represented two different models in terms of ownership. However, the rise of Al-Jazeera in 1996 introduced a new element to these two models, since it is funded by the Qatari government but not operated as a state-run channel. Within these models, other politically motivated channels emerged as representatives of parties and movements. This was particularly noticeable in Lebanon with the establishment of channels such as Future TV, NBN, and Al-Manar. This trend continued to mark the media scene in the Arab world, especially within Iraqi media after the military incursions of the US-led coalition against Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. Other categories of Arab satellite channels appeared with the arrival of the Arab News Network (ANN) and Al-Mustakillah which were established in London, respectively in 1997 and 1999, marking another example of channels that were established outside the Arab world, and perceived as opposition channels to ruling regimes, whether the Syrian regime (as in case of the ANN) or the Tunisian regime (as in the case of Al-Mustakillah).

Subsequently, by 2000, there was a model encapsulating three types of satellite channels that shaped the Arab mediascape (Rugh 2004): the traditional terrestrial state-owned channels, in addition to state-funded and privately-owned satellite channels. However, the thesis argued that this was the case until 2003 and the establishment of the Saudi-funded Al-Arabiya, a few days before the US-led war on Iraq. Yet, by 2003, this model also witnessed an additional

trend represented by the emergence of regional and international broadcasters in Arabic, such as Al-Alam of Iran, Al-Hurra of the US, BBC Arabic Television, France 24, Deutsche Welle DW-TV Arabic, Russia Today and China Central Television CCTV-Arabic. The emergence of these channels indicates that just as the 1991 Gulf War motivated Arabs to launch their own satellite channels, the 2003 Iraq war motivated regional and Western powers (as well as the resurgent China and Russia) to expand their international broadcasting services by launching satellite channels in Arabic. These discussed examples revealed the changes in the mediascape in the Arab world which, it is argued here, could be seen as one of the outcomes of the 2003 Iraq war. The emergence of non-Arab broadcasters, broadcasting in Arabic could constitute a fourth category to be added to Rugh's model, and cannot be ignored in any full understanding of the dynamic and vibrant media scene in the Arab world.

Another development in the media milieu in the Arab world, after the 2003 Iraq war, was the expansion of the Al-Jazeera satellite channel to a network of various media services, such as Al-Jazeera Sport, Al-Jazeera Documentary, Al-Jazeera Live and Al-Jazeera Children, in addition to its Arabic and English news websites. This expansion clearly marked a new phase for Al-Jazeera.

With regard to media strategies in the 2003 Iraq war, the thesis has asserted that the significant aspects of the war were the particular ways used to integrate the media into the war efforts. The use of sophisticated technologies and hence the implementation of advanced techniques in communication strategies were used in order to advance the messages and create a supportive public opinion, domestically in the US, UK and worldwide. Therefore the media were weaponised by war planners and media strategists to become an essential element in winning the war, or, in other words, the media had been "militarised" by effective and powerful media strategies aimed at controlling the way the war was seen.

As part of these strategies, the embedding policy was engineered to ensure favourable reporting of the military. The aim of the policy was to allow journalists to embed with the military in order to control the flow of information coming from the battlefields, and to provide one side of the story, that of the coalition. This policy indicated that the military had understood the lessons from previous conflicts and had therefore developed a more sophisticated system to control information during the 2003 war in Iraq. The policy aimed at promoting self-censorship among embedded journalists through psychological effects based

on the bonding between the reporters and the units they were travelling with, as they used to eat, sleep and work with them. However, it did not necessarily promote favourable coverage all the time, as reporters sometimes challenged the units through reports that proved to disqualify the military sources, as with such incidents as the checkpoint shootings and the Basra uprising.

In addition to the embedding policy, the 2003 Iraq war witnessed the significant involvement of media moguls, who contributed to the official media strategies drawn up by the White House and the Pentagon. It was argued that their common interests with the US government shaped this relationship, and this was reflected in the output of certain media in the US, such that they were devoted to project the war in a supportive manner without critically questioning motives, consequences or outcomes.

Moreover, it was also observed that the involvement of the PR industry in managing and creating supportive images of the war contributed in some cases to the misinformation techniques adopted by the White House and the Pentagon. Stories like the saving of Private Jessica Lynch proved to be the construction of PR specialists, just as the toppling of Saddam's statue proved to be orchestrated by PR and Public Affairs officers. Furthermore, the creation of the media centre at the Central Command in Doha was another PR project, aimed to impress journalists and yet operating as an added facility to contain journalism by providing huge amounts of press releases and updates on information of the battlefronts. Thus, the media centre contributed to the techniques of overloading the media with information and keeping to the forefront of the news by coordinating its message with Washington and the Pentagon. This systematic coordination aimed at providing media organisations with a variety of sources, serving as essential components of the American media strategy to achieve favourable coverage during the war. This was also discussed in relation to the use of language and terminology, which formed a poignant part of the US media strategy. Phrases like "coalition of the willing", "friendly fire" "old Europe" and "surgical strikes" were all echoed by the media and served to shape a supportive public opinion to the US war efforts.

The conclusions of this research suggest that from the discussed techniques and methods within the media strategies implemented in the 2003 Iraq war, the role of information technology will continue to form a significant role in wartime propaganda. This role will

predictably turn to become ever more sophisticated by employing other technologies as they advance. Accordingly, covering conflicts will continue to be a challenging aspect for media organisations, especially in terms of credibility and objectivity. Having said this, the concentration of ownership of media organisations, where commercial and economic agendas become intertwined with political aims to control public perceptions of conflicts, will continue to influence the output of these organisations. This will add greater challenges to the task of media professionals in covering warfare. However, it is the journalists' experiences and awareness of future challenges which could be an inspirational driver for professional progress in serving the public's right to know other dimensions of the news about such wars and conflicts.

It was evident that the 2003 Iraq war marked a shift in the international news industry. It revealed the power of media strategies in crafting and managing information, yet also underlined the power of alternative news providers, such as the Arab satellite channels. The presence of Arab media in reporting this conflict appeared to have two significant impacts on the world media scene; the first is that it ended the Western media's domination when reporting conflicts in the region of the Arab world and the Middle East by providing equally powerful and often more comprehensive coverage of conflicts, especially in places such as the Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen. Secondly, Arab media during the 2003 Iraq war managed to provide Arab audiences with coverage that was sufficiently challenging to the US and British mainstream media and to the American and British military line, that it consequently enhanced the image of Arab media as credible sources of news during this war.

Unlike the 1967 war, which generated sentiments of doubt and mistrust among the Arab public regarding the ability of Arab news media to be objective and credible, the 2003 Iraq war contributed to a restoration of the credibility in the performance of Arab satellite channels. This was achieved by focusing on controversial and equally critical issues to the military, such as civilian casualties and the high human costs of the assaults on civilian areas and neighbourhoods in Baghdad, Basra and other cities in Iraq. This angle of the coverage disturbed the war planners in Washington and London and anger was expressed in their constant criticism and accusations against Arab media, particularly Al-Jazeera, of not being accurate in reporting war incidents and also of being a propaganda tool for Saddam's regime.

However, by focusing on civilian casualties, Arab channels such as Al-Jazeera, Abu Dhabi, Al-Arabiya and others, contributed strongly to coverage of the war from what could be described as the “victims’ perspective” rather than the military and official line. This outlined a major difference between Arab and western channels in reporting the war. In the case of Al-Jazeera, showing the appalling images of dead and injured civilians meant presenting pictures that were unlikely to appear on Western media. Similarly, when the channel showed images of American and British dead and captured soldiers, a huge anger was generated within the White House and Downing Street. These responses and criticisms towards Al-Jazeera’s coverage by US and British officials indicate the significant role the channel played in challenging the coalition’s media strategies and serve as proofs that Al-Jazeera expanded the news agenda remarkably to include the human cost of the war. However, such a challenge was not met lightly as, towards the end of the third week of the major combative period, Al-Jazeera’s office in Baghdad was hit by an American missile, although it was claimed to be hit by mistake, yet it resulted in the death of one of its reporters in Baghdad.

Finally, it could be concluded that the evaluation of Al-Jazeera’s experience in covering the war on Iraq in terms of accuracy, objectivity and professional standards, indicated that the channel has succeeded in equally challenging the military line and providing the audiences with what was intended as accurate and objective reporting. Stories like the oft-reported fall of Um Qasr, the fabled Basra uprising, the supposed Basra tank column and mistakenly identified Scud missiles fired at Kuwait, were clear evidence and examples where Al-Jazeera’s performance and challenges to the military claims could be seen.

Therefore it could be said that one of the major lessons learnt from the media experience during the 2003 Iraq war, is that the emergence of alternative news providers such as Al-Jazeera came to be of huge importance in serving news audiences with other perspectives on warfare. Such a performance widened the news agenda and also became essential to the public’s right to know and equally challenging to modern media strategies.

In addition, the expansion of Al-Jazeera into a network of multi-specialised channels (Sport, Documentary, Live, Children, etc.) and the inauguration of its English channel to be the first 24-hour Arab news channel broadcasting in English, as well as the advent of non-Arab broadcasters, by 2003, broadcasting in Arabic such as Al-Alam, Al-Hurra, BBC Arabic, France 24 Arabic, Deutsche Welle DW-TV Arabic, Russia Today Arabic and China Central

Television CCTV-Arabic, clearly reveal the importance of developing communication strategies in addressing wider audiences. For Al-Jazeera, the importance of expanding its service to English was in enhancing its international reputation as an alternative news provider and provided the network with further potential audiences by overcoming a crucial language barrier. For regional and international powers, the need to maintain and develop better communication with Arab public opinion, and the necessity to promote policies, culture and interactions, marked a clear indication in the inauguration of their channels. What is argued here is that the ongoing developments in the international mediascape - in addition to the rapid growth of the World Wide Web - are in fact critical factors in outlining and shaping the future of news coverage, not only in the Arab world and the region of the Middle East, but globally. The ability to offer news in different languages and styles, with the facility of rapidly developing communication technologies, contributed to end the hitherto virtual monopolies over information and thus challenged the means of control over such information, ever more than before. Nonetheless, the question of credibility in this evolved media environment remains valid, especially with the availability of a wide range of information on various subjects.

With regard to conflicts and political crisis, the thesis suggests that media strategies will tend, as a result of these developments, to rely more on deception techniques and allow for further involvement of the PR industry, as well as exercising further pressures on media organisations through different means, such as by exerting political and economic powers. The growing impact of all these factors was clearly seen and discussed during the 2003 Iraq war. This equally suggests that the consideration of the international dimension becomes as significant as the domestic dimension in the planning of any media and communication strategies in the future. The growing interest by governments to finance the expansion of international broadcasting services in many media organisations to air in several languages, including Arabic, is clearly important in any understanding of the parameters shaping future media strategies and international news coverage. However, credibility, as mentioned above, would remain the determining factor to measure the successes of these media organisations in reporting news.

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Amr El-Kahki, Al-Jazeera embedded reporter during the 2003 Iraq war, 22 September 2003.

Arar El-Shareh, Senior producer at Al-Jazeera, 26 September 2003.

Anonymous source at *Arab News Network* (ANN), 20 June 2009.

Hashem, A., former journalist at Al-Manar satellite channel 22 June 2009.

Ibrahim Helal, Editor-in-chief at Al-Jazeera News Channel, during the 2003 Iraq war, 12 September 2008.

Ibrahim Helal Editor-in-chief at Al-Jazeera News Channel, during the 2003 Iraq war, 20 September 2003.

Mohammed Khair Al-Bourini, Al-Jazeera's reporter in north Iraq during the 2003 Iraq war 25 September 2003.

Appendix 1: Interviews

Eight interviews were conducted with Arab media professionals; six of these interviews were conducted with journalists from Al-Jazeera, and the other two were conducted with Arab journalists in London. The qualitative interviews approach followed various styles of in-depth interviews (as discussed in the Methodology) ranging from semi-structured to narrative interviews, as well as e-mail interviews. Ibrahim Helal, editor-in-chief at Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war, was interviewed twice.

1.1. Al-Jazeera journalists during the 2003 Iraq war.

1.1.1. Aktham Suliman: Al-Jazeera Bureau Chief in Germany.

The interview aimed at investigating the role of Al-Jazeera in covering the 2003 Iraq war from Europe, and uncovering the dynamics of coverage in relation to events, editorial decisions and the newsroom. Questions included those concerned with the cooperation with the newsroom in Doha and preparations for the war; reactions to the war in Europe, particularly in Germany; the values that Al-Jazeera added to the global coverage of the war; its performance and its relation to the German media; his views on his role as a journalist; and whether he felt that he was sentimentally (as an Arab) part of this war.

1.1.2. Amr El-Kahki: Al-Jazeera's embedded reporter during the 2003 Iraq war.

The interview aimed at exploring the experience of Al-Jazeera's embedded reporter in covering the 2003 Iraq war. Thus, questions explored the logistics of being embedded with the American and British troops. Questions also tackled issues of training before his assignment, the impact of light weight enabling technology on his reporting and the ability to give an objective account while being embedded with the troops.

Further questions were on military censorship, the ability to investigate stories away from the military unit and the ability to talk to Iraqi civilians without the supervision of the troops. He was also asked about his reception and treatment as a representative of Al-Jazeera channel, and his preference to be a unilateral reporter rather than an embedded one, and why. The question of collaboration and interaction with other embedded journalists during the war was put and his evaluation regarding the differences in coverage between Al-Jazeera and other Western channels, mainly British and American channels. The interview also explored the

editorial guidelines given to him by Al-Jazeera and guidelines on language or jargon used in the coverage. In addition, El-Kahki was asked if he believed he was given misleading information by the troops and about his approach to verify the accuracy of information given to him by the military unit with whom he was embedded.

1.1.3. Arar El-Shareh: Senior producer at Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war.

Questions focused on his role as a senior producer at Al-Jazeera, the dynamics within the newsroom to produce around-the-clock news coverage of the war, and the relationship with their network of reporters in Iraq (embedded and unilateral), as well as their other reporters in Europe, the US and elsewhere.

Other questions aimed at exploring his views about media policies, such as the embedded reporting, and his views of Western media coverage compared to Al-Jazeera, and what Al-Jazeera provided that differed from other Western networks.

Questions also aimed at exploring the policies of Al-Jazeera in covering the war - for instance, covering civilian casualties, using horrific images of the war, exploring difficulties and restrictions on the ground (whether from the Iraqi authorities or the coalition forces) in addition to terminologies used by Al-Jazeera in covering the war and its parties. Questions also sought to discover how Al-Jazeera dealt with information provided by the coalition and Iraqi authorities and whether the channel questioned these sources, and how attributing information or correcting it was according to events on the grounds. All these questions were raised to understand how these variables and policies influenced the channel's coverage during the war.

1.1.4. Ibrahim Helal: Editor-in-Chief at Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war.

As Editor-in-Chief at Al-Jazeera during the 2003 Iraq war, Helal was interviewed twice, one in Arabic in 2003 and the other in English in 2008.

The main aim of these interviews was to explore plans, policies and strategies that Al-Jazeera implemented during the coverage of the war and preparations for it. Questions on how Al-Jazeera dealt with accusations from both fighting parties of bias were discussed. How did they verify sources of information from both parties? Did they take information from military sources from both sides at face value?

Helal was further asked about the strengths and weaknesses in Al-Jazeera's coverage, his evaluation of both his unilateral and embedded reporters' coverage and his comparison of the outcome of these two different approaches in covering the war. The interviews explored what Helal saw as the differences in narrative between the discourse which Al-Jazeera used in the coverage and other Western channels. In addition, questions were asked about whether competition with other channels was a factor regarding their coverage, as well as the extent that patriotism played in Al-Jazeera's coverage. The interviews with Helal investigated whether using graphic images in the coverage were applied as an element to enhance credibility. Al-Jazeera's coordination with other channels and the feedback they were getting from their correspondents around the globe on how the international public opinion perceived Al-Jazeera's coverage were also addressed in the interview.

1.1.5. Mohammed Khair Al-Bourini: Al-Jazeera's unilateral reporter in northern Iraq during the 2003 Iraq war.

The interview with Al-Bourini explored the logistics of being a unilateral reporter. Questions addressed the training he received before his assignment, and the ability to give an objective account while being monitored by the Iraqi minders. Questions were on freedom of movement in the areas he was covering from in northern Iraq, the ability to investigate stories without being watched by the Iraqi authorities and the freedom he possessed to talk to Iraqi civilians without the supervision of the authorities. In addition, questions on how was he received and treated as a representative of Al-Jazeera channel and the difference between embedded and unilateral reporters, according to his experience as a unilateral reporter, were addressed as part of his overall experience in covering the war. The question of interaction with embedded journalists during the war was put forward in addition to his evaluation to the differences in coverage between Al-Jazeera and other Western channels, mainly British and American channels. The interview with Al-Bourini also questioned editorial guidelines given to him by Al-Jazeera and guidelines on the language or the jargon used in the coverage. Al-Bourini was asked how he verified the accuracy of the information given to him by the Iraqi authorities in the areas he was covering from and if he was subjected to any intimidation from the Iraqi officials or security forces during his coverage. The interview also explored the dynamics of the coverage in relation to the reporting from the newsroom in Doha and his live coverage from Iraq.

1.2. Other Journalists

1.2.1. Ali Hashem: Former journalist at Al-Manar Satellite Channel.

As a former journalist at Al-Manar, questions addressed Al-Manar's experience, as an Arabic satellite channel, in covering the war in Afghanistan in 2001 and the 2003 Iraq war, and how the channel reported both conflicts. Further discussion considered the dynamics between the newsroom and the reporters in the warzone. The interview aimed at exploring an additional dimension within Arab media in reporting and covering international conflicts.

1.2.2. Anonymous Source at Arab News Network (ANN).

This interview aimed at exploring more information about the ANN satellite channel, particularly during the period where it, temporarily, went off-air in 2009. Questions to the insider source, who preferred to be anonymous, aimed at exploring the reasons which led to the disappearance of the channel, as well as addressing ANN's future plans, including the resumption of its broadcasting.

