

School of Politics and International Relations

Post-graduate **Dissertation** Coversheet

1. Use your 9 digit student number only: do NOT use your name anywhere on your work
2. You must hand in TWO bound copies of assessed work
3. Work must be submitted by the deadline given
4. By submission of this coversheet, you:
 - a. declare that the writing-up of this **dissertation** is your own unaided work and that where you have quoted or referred to the opinions or writings of others this has been fully and clearly acknowledged. You understand that plagiarism is the use or presentation of the work of another person, including another student, without acknowledging the source;
 - b. permit the piece of work to be electronically submitted to the anti-plagiarism software TurnItIn.

STUDENT NUMBER:	120538045		
PROGRAMME:	MA International Relations		
MODULE TITLE & No.:	POLM017 Dissertation		
NO OF WORDS:	11,996	DATE SUBMITTED:	30/08/2013

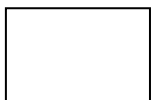
Late Submission only	New Date of Submission:
Module Tutor:	Have you submitted an EC Form for an extension? YES /NO

See the School's postgraduate marking criteria for detailed explanation of these categories

Task fulfilment/addressing the question	Distinction 70-100% Merit 65-69% Pass 50-64% Fail 0-49%
Knowledge and understanding	
Argument, analysis and discussion	
Structure, communication and presentation	
Use of sources	

Comments:

Agreed Mark



Acknowledgments

The whole MA programme that culminated with this project was, at all levels, a very enriching and productive experience. It was always a project of a collective nature that involved moving into a new country, a new city and a new university. This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and support of a number of people. Therefore, I would like to thank:

– Dr. Bryan Mabee, my personal adviser throughout the year and specifically for this project. His knowledge and guidance were key in the direction my research took;

– The four kind souls that proofread my dissertation on such a short time: my grandparents, Lara Geraldine and Madalena Araújo;

– My colleagues. Living abroad was a new experience for most of us. More than friends, we rapidly became family. Your support was decisive throughout the year. Besides my friends at Queen Mary, I would specifically like to thank Bernardo Abreu and Duarte Mendonça, both of whom were present in every step of this journey;

– Maria Ana, who never allowed me to give up, always pushing me towards greater heights. Her example inspired me, her understanding kept me afloat and her dedication gave me confidence. An ever present caring person that has been sharing my hardships as well as my achievements;

– My family, who was always interested, supportive and made sure I had everything I needed throughout this whole endeavour.

Table of Contents

1. Literature Review	3
2. Historical Background	11
2.1 The Vietnam War (1955-1975)	12
2.2 Falklands Conflict (1982)	13
2.3 Grenada (1983)	14
2.4 First Gulf War (1991)	15
2.5 War in Afghanistan (2001)	16
3. Embedding - The 2003 Iraq War	17
3.1 Conditioning Journalists	18
3.1.1 Coordination by the DoD	18
3.1.2 Journalists were stuck with one unit	20
3.1.3 Proximity between Journalists and Soldiers	21
3.1.4 Safety Concerns	24
3.2 Conditioning the Audience	27
3.2.1 Embedding and news agendas	27
3.2.3 Entertainment	29
3.3 Case Study: The Fall of Saddam's Statue in Baghdad	32
Implications for the future of War reporting	35
Results and Conclusion	36
References	38

Did the United States and the United Kingdom manage to influence public opinion in the 2003 Iraq War, using the “embedding system”?

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the impact on public opinion of the media coverage during the invasion phase of the 2003 Iraq war (from 20 March 2003, until 1 May 2003, when President Bush declared the war was over), which featured the embedding system. Firstly, I will argue that the system allowed both the United States and the United Kingdom to gather and maintain support for the war, during the invasion phase. Secondly, I will explain how the embedding system influences journalists, compromising their objectivity as well as their capacity to provide context. Thirdly, I will assess whether the embedding system also influences the audience, tricked into believing it is receiving all the relevant information when in fact it is being distracted from the important questions. Lastly, I will apply my arguments to the specific event that was the fall of Saddam's statue, in Baghdad.

This dissertation will also analyse the impact of the embedding scheme in the current media paradigm of big media corporations and reality television.

1. Literature Review

Gaining the support of the public – “the hearts and minds” of the crowd – has been a key concern in any military conflict, since Carl von Clausewitz established it as one of war's principles in the 1830s (Cited in Christie, 2006: 519). Clausewitz's understanding of war predates modern concepts of public opinion by describing some elements of human nature that today we classify as relevant when assessing public support for war (Darley, 2005: 126). He referred to them as “moral forces” and considered them to be among the “most important in war” as they permeated conflict “as whole” (Clausewitz, 2006: 184-185). These moral forces included a “primordial hatred and

enmity” for the enemy, implying that public support is not a reflective but rather emotional reaction (Cited in Darley, 2005: 126). In this sense, public opinion can be a defining instrument in the initiation and termination of wars (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 279).

Even if understood in a different way, public support for war is still seen as essential for the successful outcome of any war (Christie, 2006: 519) and that has been visible in the strategies put forward in the most recent conflicts. The main difference between Clausewitz's time and today is the role played by the media in gaining and maintaining public support for war. Even if it might still be unclear how the media affects public opinion in these matters, it is clear that such link exists (Christie, 2006: 521). Western offers some insight into this matter, arguing that public, as well as political, support are a function of two variables, one being information flows and the other the population's natural predisposition (Western, 2005: 5). The latter coincides with what Clausewitz defines as hostility, one of the elements of his trinity (Clausewitz, 2006: 28-29). In Western's view, public support for war is dependent on the information it receives and the severity of the crisis (Western, 2005: 5). In other words, there might not be enough support for a conflict that, although critical, is perceived not to be so by the public. The same could happen the other way around, as it could be argued in the case of Iraq. Information and propaganda are key items in that mix, with politicians investing in strategies and public relations structures to spin them in their favour (Western, 2005: 4).

This idea comes from one of the premises of Liberalism, as an International Relations theory, which is that in a democracy, citizens have an influence over their country's foreign policy, especially when it comes to war. States should not be thought as units, they are a composite of intricate social and political relations that, in a democracy, compose a system of checks and balances (Doyle, 1986: 1159 -1160) Even if domestic policies are usually at the heart of the agenda, the public is actually very “sensitive to questions of war” (Western, 2005: 14). Mueller reinforces this point by arguing that it is actually the only topic capable of shifting attention from domestic to

international affairs (Cited on Christie, 2006: 521). Important social interactions should therefore be taken into account before military action is taken.

Not only should these interactions be considered but they actually are. Policy elites are deemed very sensitive to the public's thoughts in these matters (Western, 2005: 15). Material losses and moral costs are carefully weighed if a country like the United States (US) or the United Kingdom (UK) is to invade another country, such as Iraq, because those are issues of concern to the public (Western, 2005: 8) This was already argued by Kant in his work *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (Kant, 1991). He argues that if the public's consent is required to wage war, it is natural that they will exert some opposition to that endeavour (Kant, 1991: 99-102). In sum, Liberalism's argument stands on the idea that the public would not, generally, want war because of the consequences it will entail for the country waging it. Also, as Ray points out, the masses are usually the ones that pay the heaviest price (Ray, 1995: 203).

Liberalism also stands on the idea that citizens have a say in their countries policies (Western, 2005: 7). If one is to accept these two assumptions, it is clear that, in order for a democratic society to wage war, it needs to convince its citizens to support it.

The argument that citizens do not want war because it has human costs suggests a relationship between the number of casualties and public opinion. An argument that was first put forward by Mueller, in 1973, and that has become one of the central tenets of Liberalism's proposed democratic peace thesis (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 279).

Mueller's theory suggests that public support for war can be maintained as long as the log of national casualties is kept below a certain number (Cited on Gartner & Segura, 1998: 279). In his analysis, of both the Vietnam and the Korean War, he adds that the public seems to become more resistant to this impact as war progresses, making them more sensitive to small numbers of casualties in the early stages of a conflict but only to a large death count in later stages (Mueller, 1973: 62). Mueller also argues that specific events of a conflict do not play a major part in shaping

public opinion during war (Mueller, 1973: 57).

However, this impact is not felt in the early stages of a war because of the “rally-around-the-flag” effect. When the country is involved in an international crisis, its population will support the government's position in the earlier stages of that crisis (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 281).

Despite its ground-breaking advance, Mueller's theory has been widely contested since he first presented it. His claim that casualties, not war weariness, have an impact on public opinion has sparked some opposition among those who argue that time is also important (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 280). Amongst the reasons for this criticism is that Mueller also limits war costs to the loss of life, excluding other important criteria, such as economic costs, the length of troops' absence from their homes and possible anxiety about the achievement of the war's objectives (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 281). Gartner and Segura defend that an analysis of this kind of impact on public support for war must be measured also using marginal casualties, not only the cumulative casualties used by Mueller (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 279). They also argue that this measure captures the effects of turning points and other key events of a war (Gartner & Segura, 1998: 279).

While the linearity of Mueller's theory may be widely contested, his main idea, that casualties influence public opinion has withstood criticism and is still accurate. This is an important notion for this dissertation because, as it will be explained, one of the objectives of the embedding scheme is to divert attention from some of the facts that make war real. Casualties are one of them. Furthermore it also falls in line with Mueller's critics that suggest a wider approach, by spinning concrete events to make them more appealing to the public. It manages the kind of information that, if transmitted through the media, could, in theory, account for changes in public support for the war (Coe, 2013: 488).

Thus, in order to go to war, governments need to convince their citizens that the conflict will be won at an acceptable cost range – whether these are material or moral costs (Western, 2005: 21) This requires a strong argument by the military and the governing elite (Western, 2005: 21) It is also

important to take into account that victory is a matter of perception (Bartholomees, 2008: 26). Before, during and after the battle, the victor will be decided, to a great extent, by the public and by political and military elites (Bartholomees, 2008: 31). Although, allies and the rest of the world's opinion also play a role in this decision, such a role is of a smaller scale (Bartholomees, 2008: 32). The way that war is perceived becomes increasingly important and so does managing public opinion. "War is continuation of politics by other means" (Clausewitz, 2006: 28) and so is deciding the victor (Bartholomees, 2008: 31). Therefore, the political elite has two choices: to allow the public to decide on the basis of what they see or to try to convince the public (Bartholomees, 2008: 32). This is where public opinion about war meets the media, because while victory is about perception, it is also about the media's role. It is through the media that "perceptions are created, sustained or challenged" (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 5).

The twenty first century brought a new age in warfare, one that has seen the immersion and production of war through a new media ecology (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 18). According to Hoskins and O'Loughlin, this new "diffused war" is composed of three axes that interact across the different events that are a part of conflict (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 18). The first is the mediatisation of war that has been brought by the advancements in communications technologies, which changed our relationship with conflicts taking place on the other side of the planet (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 1). These changes in technology have turned the media into an essential part of warfare, to the extent that conflict cannot be understood without taking its role into account (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 4). From planning to the actual waging, warfare no longer resides outside of the media sphere: it is essential to win the battle of "how things are perceived and seen" because it ultimately influences the public that supports the war (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 5). Mediatisation leads to more diffuse relations between action and effect, with traditional media no longer having the monopoly of information gathering and publication, which is the second axis of the "diffused war" (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 9). Relations of cause and effect become

increasingly difficult to predict because at any moment some new information can “emerge” and completely change our understanding of a certain event (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 9). The diplomatic cables revealed by Wikileaks in 2010 can be seen as an example of this. Wikileaks' actions in recent years have been seemingly unpredictable and changed our view of the war in Afghanistan, for example. This is the reason why twenty-first century conflicts have been characterised by uncertainty, the third axis of the “diffused war” (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 13). Due to more disordered and irregular flows of information, there is a continual risk of damaging reports, capable of shaping public opinion both at home and near the battlefield (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 13). Information management has therefore become a requirement of modern warfare (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 12). This is where the embedding scheme comes into play.

When it comes to influencing society, Herman and Chomsky argue that there is a strong relationship between the government, the media and public opinion (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 1-2). This happens because of what they refer to as the five filters of news content: profit orientation of mass media corporations, advertising as their main source of income, their dependence on official government sources, the possibility of using 'flak' as a media disciplining tool and the shared ideology of anticommunism (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 2). These filters account for the media's transition from the ideal watchdog towards outlets of government propaganda.

The first filter concerns not only the profit orientation of media corporations but also their size and ownership. Dominant corporations are very big and composed of numerous media outlets. They are also owned by wealthy people, who share common interests with government and banking institutions, and are driven by market/profit oriented forces (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 14). In sum, media organisations seem to have traded their ideals for corporate interests.

The second filter is closely related to the first one. As organisations driven by profit, they try to maximise it through advertising, their primary source of income (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 17). This condition places the media under the influence of advertisers, who select which programs to

sponsor according to their own principles, which are usually conservative (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 17). Basing the core of the business model on advertising will therefore force networks to avoid controversial current affairs programs, opting instead for more entertaining ones, in line with the buying state of mind that advertisers seek (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 17). The will to keep viewers on the hook, to maximise revenue, is another motive that will drive media corporations to exclude more critical or cultural programs. These may cause the audience to switch channels and, therefore, will be driven out of primary and secondary channels, surviving only on the periphery of mainstream media (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 18).

Another of Herman and Chomsky's filters is the media's reliance on official sources. Media networks concentrate their resources on places where they have a bigger chance of reporting news and government buildings are central in this activity (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 19). Their public relations apparatus provides journalists with news in quantity and in 'quality' as they are recognised as credible sources (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 19). Government institutions take advantage of this and try to meet journalists' needs by organising press conferences, media facilities, photo opportunities and providing advanced copies of speeches and press releases that are ready to air (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 22). In sum, the government tries to use the media to spread propaganda, spending millions in the public relations apparatus. Government spending can only be matched by big private sector corporations, dwarfing the aggregate spending of independent dissenting groups and individuals (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 19-21). However, the rise of the internet in recent years has challenged this assumption. Cyberspace has become an enormous source of information in general and, most importantly, independent information (Robinson, 2004: 99). It increased the flow of information and allowed for the creation of new news cycles with concrete effects in the media's dependence on the government – it became more likely for the media to include different points of view (Robinson, 2004: 99). Still, the impact seems to be far from revolutionary and more research in this area is required.

'Flak' can be defined as a negative action taken against the media, in order to deter future criticism, and it constitutes the fourth filter identified by Herman and Chomsky. Government and big corporations are the main institutions that use this tool against the media, threatening the withdrawal of access or advertising to punish networks for what they perceive to be “deviations from the established line” (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 28). 'Flak' generates fear in media corporations that they might be punished for presenting more critical perspectives. Their goals and those of the government and their sponsors become intertwined.

The final filter is the anti-Communist ideology, which frames issues as communist – the ultimate evil – or as anti-communist – the correct side (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 29-30). Under this framework, rooting for the government's side is considered legitimate (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 31). Although this ideology stopped making sense after the end of the Cold War, the framing it provided is still in effect. With the terrorist attacks of September 11, the narrative shifted towards the “war on terrorism” (Robinson, 2004: 107). It provided the government with a tool to further explore the framework, now defining actions as terrorist or anti-terrorist, with the latter being firmly aligned with the official government perspective (Robinson, 2004: 107).

It is in the media paradigm defined by Herman and Chomsky that the embedding scheme thrived, with the aim of influencing public opinion. Such is suggested by the relationship between public opinion and war as well as the relationship between perception and victory.

This theoretical framework will help us analyse the results of this new communications reality that was put to the test in the 2003 Iraq war and had the embedding scheme as its highlight. I believe this analysis is particularly important as a way of understanding what this kind of journalism entails for the public in times of war. Its importance is highlighted by the fact that this type of scheme is bound to be used again in the future, not only due to the results it produced for both governments, but also because of the increasingly dangerous environment that journalists have to deal with.

With all of this in mind, the primary medium of analysis in this dissertation is network television news. Not only because of its immediacy, still unmatched by the other media, but also because of the number of viewers. Although declining, television audiences are still a lot bigger than those of other media and most viewers acknowledge that television is their primary source of news (Coe, 2013: 487). During the 2003 Iraq war, it was the most trusted medium in countries like the US and the UK, the object of this study, and proof of that was the rise of 24 hour news channels' ratings (Allan & Zelizer, 2004: 6).

2. Historical Background

Before elaborating on the embedding example, used in 2003, we must try to understand the motivations behind the military's need to control public opinion as well as the experiences that preceded embedding. As Tumber argues (Tumber, 2004: 190), the “battle for information and the contest over the winning of public opinion is a feature common to all conflicts”, and this has led to similar approaches by both the military and the media. Media management has been a constant feature in most conflicts, which can in part explain why the media have been unable to explain the motives for war, as well as the reasons that dictate its ending (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 34). Political strategies or what the conflict aims to achieve have been forgotten as well (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 34). As the military tried to continue its job, the media pressed for more answers. They are by design two very different organizations, with different natures and objectives: the military wants to hide what the media wants to reveal (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: ix). They were bound to collide and that is exactly what happened in Vietnam: the military did not understand the media's inability to keep a secret (Trainor: 1990: 3).

2.1 The Vietnam War (1955-1975)

Despite research suggesting the contrary the US military still holds the media responsible for losing the war (Darley, 2005, 122). Or at least the public support that lead to US defeat (Trainor, 1990: 2). Mueller found that public support for both the Korea and Vietnam wars followed a similar trend, despite the lack of press criticism or television coverage in the Korean peninsula (Cited on Darley, 2005, 122). Journalists were allowed to roam free and reported what they saw, with very few restrictions or management on the part of the military (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 85). That meant reporting on the visible battlefield results of some major strategic flaws and the lack of clear goals that the US had when they went into this war. However, the South Vietnamese were known to apply some censorship and self-censorship was also common among the media (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 85). Journalists were still supportive of the campaign in its beginning, shifting only towards a more critical stance when the number of casualties started to rise (Trainor: 1990: 3). The Tet Offensive proved to be a critical moment in this shift as it showed that the war was not, as Lyndon Johnson's administration claimed, won (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 85).

Although journalists did reveal the conflict's worst side, research has concluded that mounting criticism for the war in Vietnam was the result of a political process in which the media were just one of several parts (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 88). Studies have also shown than even if the media became unsupportive of the conflict it did not shape public opinion, but rather reflected it (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 87). Misguided policy was more to blame for the loss of public support than bad press (Trainor, 1990: 3).

However, the ill-conceived notion of the media's betrayal in the Vietnam War still carries weight inside the military. Most of today's soldiers and officers were very young or not yet born when the US sent troops to Saigon but they still suffer from this institutional hate for the media (Trainor, 1990: 2). The “Vietnam Syndrome”, as it is commonly referred to, still defines the relationship between the media and the military, as the latter's credo seems to have become “duty,

honour, country, and hate the media” (Trainor, 1990: 2)

After Vietnam, the US had several foreign intervention experiences where they tried to implement new rules for reporters to operate in and around the battlefield. Never again were reporters allowed to roam around like they were able to in Vietnam. The objective was to make sure they would not produce the same kind of reports that the army deemed responsible for losing the war.

2.2 Falklands Conflict (1982)

The British military was unable to prepare in advance of the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands and thus, no media management system was put in place. On the eve of deployment, about 30 British reporters, a mixture of experienced and young journalists, were allowed to accompany the Task Force that was going to the islands (Tumber, 2004, 191). Journalists on the ships were accompanied by minders, public relations officers that supervised their tasks (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 90). That was, however, the greatest effort by the British military to manage the media (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 90).

Unwillingly, the British military generated an opportunity to examine the performance of journalists that covered war next to the soldiers, assessing their impartiality and objectivity (Tumber, 2004, 191). It soon became apparent that a bond between soldiers and journalists was created. As Tumber argues (Tumber, 2004, 191), there was a shared collective experience and what mattered to the soldiers also mattered to the journalists; reporters identified themselves with the mission and felt the determination to see it through. In other words, “military, media, and government immersed themselves in a patriotic desire to win” (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 93). Journalists slowly surrendered their independence, their will to cover the story in a detached way, for the very human and real need to belong, to feel safe (Tumber, 2004, 192). Language started to change towards “we” or “us” and the bond became thicker, with some Falklands reporters admitting

to have become lifelong friends with soldiers in those units (Tumber, 2004, 191-192). Support for the conflict was maintained, dissent was silenced and the Falklands war became an example for British and American planners, in future conflicts (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 93-94).

2.3 Grenada (1983)

The invasion of Grenada was the US's first conflict after the war in Vietnam and presented the military with a chance to rebound after the loss it suffered in Indochina. The negative coverage by the media in Vietnam was still very present and the military adopted a very restrictive policy towards the press: the relationship between the military and the media was characterised by exclusion, censorship and manipulation (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 94).

No plans were made to include the journalists in Operation Urgent Fury and the first pool of 15 journalists to reach Grenada got there only two days after the war had begun (Willey, 1989: 76). When they landed on the island there was virtually nothing to report except that they were not allowed do their jobs (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 94-95). In the following days, the remaining of the nearly 400 journalists that were waiting in Barbados, were allowed in, as the area of operations opened to the media (Willey, 1989: 76). At the time, military stills and video were the only available visual recordings of the conflict, and they portrayed the new US military as “fully recovered from the traumas of Vietnam” (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 94). Still, the press argued that it had been prevented from reporting to hide American military incompetence, rather than to protect operational security (Trainor, 1990: 10). The full story was only revealed years later (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 94) and the media were proven right (Trainor, 1990: 10).

Following the Grenada conflict, a panel was formed to review the relationship between the military and the media, and to try to access the feasibility institutionalising the pool system that had been deployed (Willey, 1989: 76). The Siddle Panel recommended to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) the establishment of a constantly up-to-date and accredited pool system, as well as

proper communications and transport for the media to use in a war zone (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 94). The DoD followed these recommendations and created the national media pool programme that has been put to the test in several military interventions and training exercises, around the world (Willey, 1989: 76-77), including the 1991 Gulf War. The objective was to manage the media without barring coverage.

2.4 First Gulf War (1991)

The method used in the Gulf war was the creation of press pools, a method that had numerous limitations, from the journalist's point of view (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30). The system developed following the Siddle Panel was fully implemented and incorporated into press pools 300 out of the 1500 reporters present in the region (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 157). Reporters were always accompanied by the military, they had limited access to troops and they saw almost no action, which made them unable to provide a first person report of combat (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30).

The military decided what journalists were allowed to see, which meant important episodes were left out of the coverage. The carpet bombing of southern Iraq, where a million Iraqi troops were stationed was one of them (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 159). While the military praised itself for using smart bombs, that only targeted military buildings, 92% of the bombs used in the war and in the bombing of southern Iraq, were not as advanced (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 159). However, that information or the bombings were not reported until after the conflict was over (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 159). Furthermore, even if journalists did witness any event, every story was reviewed by their military escorts and, in some instances, forwarded to military command for approval (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30).

Journalists were very critical of the system not only because their reports were subjected to review but also because it countered the very competitive nature of the media (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 162). Reporters had to share their material with the rest of the pool which ultimately made the

task of getting a scoop harder than usual (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 162).

The pool arrangement also made journalists very dependent on the military for information, transport and security, a feature that would be reinforced by the embedding system (Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008: 162). There was always the choice of covering the war without the military's support, but it presented journalists with another set of difficulties, namely security issues. They risked getting detained, lost, captured or even killed (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30).

The pool system had numerous flaws, namely the fact that it did not suit the journalistic profession, which made reporters resistant to it. It did however prove to be an excellent test for military information management. The arrangement of the 1991 Gulf War was then adapted, using knowledge gathered during the war as well as during the Falklands conflict, to create the embedding scheme.

2.5 War in Afghanistan (2001)

The public relations arm of the military did not prepare for the intervention in Afghanistan as extensively as it did for the invasion of Iraq. As a result, journalists were free to roam the country but had no military protection and only a select few were allowed near NATO convoys (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30). For those that enjoyed the privilege, restrictions were imposed on what could be published and on who the reporters had access to (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30). It was a conflict where media coverage and information management were downplayed and, for that reason, is not of particular relevance when trying to establish the origins of the media management model used in Iraq.

All these experiences played a role in designing the embedding scheme that was used by the US and UK military in the 2003 Iraq war (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30). The way information management evolved, from conflict to conflict, is also demonstrative of the military's intentions. The objectives were clear and simple: silence dissent, gather unquestioning support and rally around

a common symbol (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30). As Boyd-Barrett puts it, the “media became part of a psychological warfare directed to the domestic US population” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 30).

3. Embedding - The 2003 Iraq War

A new communications approach was required to manage a conflict like the 2003 Iraqi invasion because it presented itself as a unique case of media-state relations (Robinson, 2004: 96). This happened mostly because of the unprecedented level of opposition from France and Germany but also from other countries (Robinson, 2004: 96). Dissent around a possible invasion of Iraq led an estimated 10 million people in 600 cities around the world to march against the impending decision by the Bush Administration (Hutchinson, 2008: 4). The failure to get UN support and the distinctive justification that was used to sell the war also made the system necessary, if war was to be viable (Robinson, 2004: 96).

The embedding scheme was a vital part of this new approach and was planned by the DoD as a reaction to the Vietnam Syndrome (Tumber, 2004: 190). More control over the press was seen as necessary and the embedding system appeared as the answer to that need (Tumber, 2004: 190). The role of the press in influencing the outcome of the war is referred to in the DoD's *Public Affairs Guidance for Embedded Journalists*:

“Media coverage of any future operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception of the national security environment now and in the years ahead. This holds true for the US Public; the public in allied countries whose opinion can affect the durability of our coalition; and publics in countries where we conduct operations, whose perceptions of us can affect the cost and duration of our involvement.” (DOD, 2003)

When it was introduced, the military divulged its system as key in countering Iraqi

misinformation, by allowing journalists to the front lines, an aspect that would make the US mission more credible, as it was highlighted by the DoD (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 13).

3.1 Conditioning Journalists

3.1.1 Coordination by the DoD

As I have mentioned, the embedding system was developed by the DoD, which was also responsible for its coordination (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 14). Before it was put into motion, the DoD consulted with news organisations to achieve a consensus that would be seen as suitable to both sides (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 14). There were several briefings before the war and before the scheme was revealed (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 14). Although the Pentagon admitted, right from the start, that the coverage through the embedded scheme would not be very broad, as journalists would be limited to a single unit, it highlighted that this type of coverage would allow journalists to better understand a unit's mission and they would be able to report on it more accurately (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 14). Joining the embedding scheme required reporters to comply with the DoD guidance for embedded journalists, which stated what they could and could not report:

“For the safety and security of U.S. Forces and embedded media, media will adhere to established ground rules. Ground rules will be agreed to in advance and signed by media prior to embedding. Violation of the ground rules may result in the immediate termination of the embed and removal from the AOR [Area of Responsibility]” (DOD, 2003).

This sentence is followed by 50 paragraphs that detail the ground rules that embedded journalists had to adhere to. The list includes detailed orientations on which information can be released (most figures only in approximate numbers, for example) and what cannot be revealed (locations or information regarding future operations, for example) (DOD, 2003). After these, the

guidance manual specifically addresses the coverage of sensitive issues such as casualties, injured and wounded, namely when it comes to the visual portrayal of these situations (DOD, 2003). Although the military states that this barrage of regulations, for these specific situations, mainly concerns “patient welfare, patient privacy, and next of kin/family considerations” (DOD, 2003) there is a connection with Mueller's relationship between public support for war and casualties. Making sure no images of dead and wounded were reported was one way to maintain public support for the war.

Some of these ground rules allow censorship, even if in some very limited and specific situations, regarding the sharing of sensitive information, the document makes journalists responsible for their actions. Reporters were given access, under certain conditions, and warned that if they did not comply, they would be removed from the front lines. It was up to journalists to withhold sensitive information, forcing a choice between self-censorship and access to the action (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 25).

It was also the case that most rules are not specific enough as to what might constitute sensitive information. The ambiguity left final decision on what could and could not be reported to the unit's commanders with additional constraints for journalists, as it was argued by some of those on the field (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 28).

If one could understand the military's will to impose such restrictions it is hard to grasp that journalists would, so willingly adhere to them. As Chomsky mentioned in an interview, “no honest journalist would be willing to describe himself or herself as 'embedded.' To say «I'm an embedded journalist» is to say «I'm a government propagandist»” (Chomsky, 2004). As mentioned, access and safety concerns were among the reasons but one must also take into account the media paradigm defined by Herman and Chomsky. The five filters of the propaganda model suggest that media coverage will be to the benefit of powerful interests, including the government (Herman & Chomsky, 1994: 35).

3.1.2 Journalists were stuck with one unit

While in the embedded scheme, journalists were bound to one unit. Although they were not hostages and were allowed to stay or leave as they wished, they could not do any independent reporting around their unit (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 15). This meant that journalists only saw what the army wanted them to see. And, as Trainor argues, “the military is always going to want to put its best face in hopes of influencing the reporters it is hosting” (Trainor, 1990: 10).

It was also a serious limitation for journalists because they ended up producing reports that lacked depth or context (Tumber & Palmer, 2004:56). Reporters had to limit themselves to what was happening and were unable to gather extra information to complement the pictures they sent – while it was certainly exciting it did not add much information (Tumber & Palmer, 2004:56). What they reported was just the narrow view of the war, through the eyes of the unit they were embedded with (Tumber & Palmer, 2004:56).

This conclusion was one of the many forwarded by a Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) study on embedded journalism. The PEJ study concludes by saying that these reports “are only isolated pieces of a larger mosaic, and that relying too heavily on them would thus skew the picture viewers get” (PEJ, 2003).

The study adds that this new type of coverage was “anecdotal”, and that while these reports did have factual accuracy, they lacked a critical view of the conflict, as it is expected of the media (PEJ, 2003). It also mentions the fact that reports were “both exciting and dull, combat focused” and that 61% of them were live and unedited” (PEJ, 2003). The abuse of live reports was another feature of this new coverage format. CNN's Christiane Amanpour referred to the excessive usage of live reports as one of the reasons why most report's lacked depth. “While the live [coverage] is exciting, it can't give you everything in a concise and broader context” (Cited on PEJ, 2003) Stahl adds that real time and live demands meant that, most times, reporters had nothing of substance to say (Stahl, 2009: 85).

While such reports are valuable they must be complemented with additional information or the whole story of the war – the big picture – would not be relayed back to the public (Tumber & Palmer, 2004:56). Embedding meant that immediacy trumped analysis and context. It produced an array of reports biased towards the idea of “being there” while struggling to fit the “where” and the “why”, in the interest of operational security (Stahl, 2009: 86). Even if one journalist is unable to, by himself, report on the whole scope of the war, the decision to pin them to one unit certainly added to those limitations, especially because it prevented them from talking to Iraqi citizens and the other side, giving Western audiences a one-sided view of the conflict. It also prevented journalists as well as the audience from raising questions about the war and its objectives, all while seeing only what the military wanted them to see.

3.1.3 Proximity between Journalists and Soldiers

One of the issues with the embedding scheme is the transformation of the relationship between journalist and soldier. As in the Falklands, reporters in Iraq were put in a position where they had to share the lives and experiences of the troops they were embedded with (Tumber, 2004: 193).

They were dependent on the military for their safety and their stories and bonds were eventually formed between them (Reese, 2004: 261). This proximity between journalist and soldier became more evident when reporters, on the ground, started using expressions that established them as part of the unit. “We” and “our troops” made that close relationship transparent and qualifying nouns such as “heroes” or “liberators” reflected the kind of indoctrination that these journalists were being subjected to (Allan & Zelizer, 2004: 7). Not only did they start referring to the military in these terms but there was also a change in the way they looked and sounded on television. Journalists appeared in front of the cameras wearing army gear or mounted on tanks and used military expressions in some of their descriptions (Tumber & Palmer, 2004:54) The system fostered

this unhealthy identification that led reporters to use this kind of “pro-American slant” (Rantanen, 2004: 311) An “us-versus-them” feeling became common among the American media (Rantanen, 2004: 311). Some journalists recognized the dangers of being too close to one unit for a long period of time and tried to counter it but, as CNN's Bob Franken put it, “it was very tempting to become part of the unit” (Cited in Tumber & Palmer, 2004:52).

The danger is that journalists, faced with a choice between their professional commitment and loyalty to the soldiers, might choose the latter, shifting from observers to participants (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 61). A choice not easily made but one that happens under a very specific set of conditions. When reporters are embedded in a unit their fates become the same and so do their concerns – what matters to soldiers, also matters to journalists (Hutchinson, 2008: 37). In the end, embeds can be likened to hostages, sharing their 'captors' fears and identifying with their objectives (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 50).

Looking at it from a public relations perspective, PR expert, Katie Delahaye Paine says that “the sagacity of the tactic is that it is based on the basic tenet of public relations: It’s all about relationships” (Paine, 2003). She adds that with better relationships, the military has a greater chance of getting its version through (Paine, 2003). The magazine *PR Week* also praised the success of the embedding scheme, adding that it “inspired the corporate world to look into embedding journalists as a public relations strategy for controlling news flow” (Cited in Stahl, 2009: 84).

We can therefore conclude that through this system that encouraged proximity, journalists surrendered their professional detachment and reported more favourable and less critical stories. The result was that embedded reporters ended up cheer-leading the American led invasion of Iraq. A fact that is especially concerning if we take into account that 8 out of 10 reports featured only the journalist and no one else (PEJ, 2003).

However, this notion that identification with the military leads to a more supporting kind of journalism is not as linear as it may seem. Lewis & Brookes claim that reports from British embeds

were more likely to be impartial, than those coming from the journalists covering military briefings in Doha or in London (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 294). They claim that reports from these embeds were much more balanced and had a higher chance of featuring stories portraying the Iraqi people (32% out of 85 stories on the population were presented by embeds) (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 294). Although they claim that embedded journalists were not as supportive of the military as it was first thought, they add that there was a difference in the approaches of British and US Networks, with the American coverage coming closer to cheerleading than anything else (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 294). American journalists, as mentioned by reporters from other countries, were on board with the US Government's plan, and showed little critical distance (Reese, 2004: 260).

However, Lewis and Brookes' claim does not discredit the idea that embedding was an important tool in influencing journalists and public opinion. Rather, it highlights that there were more public relations strategies in place that played a role. Their conclusion suggests that there were preconditions on the American media that did not necessarily exist in other countries. An idea that makes perfect sense if we consider that the US led the invasion and that the DoD's prime objective was to manage public opinion at home, even though it tried to do the same in allied countries and in Iraq (DOD, 2003).

Another aspect that we can refer to when discussing the problems of embedding journalism is the nature of the reports sent home. Rather than discussing the motives that made the coalition invade Iraq, embedded journalism focused on simply relaying what was happening at the front line (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 289). Political and moral questions raised by the conflict were traded for military and operational ones, giving the Pentagon the upper hand when discussing these issues (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 289). US and British governments encouraged this change in the focus of war reporting towards the progress of war and on a military narrative because it was their area of expertise (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 298). The story of the war became about winning or losing rather than about the motivations and reasons for the war (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 298).

If managing the media was possible, complete control was not because of the technological advancements in media communications that were deployed in Iraq (Reese, 2004: 261). It was easier to record, easier to film and to transmit: every journalist could do it, from almost anywhere, at any given time (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 4). Thus, communication was made easier and quicker and in that fluid environment (Reese, 2004: 261), allowing journalists to escape the controls of the military and also of their own editors.

The internet became an alternate source of information for users that demanded to “know what was really happening” (Allan, 2004: 349). For a few users it became a way to provide them with the context that was lacking from television coverage (Allan, 2004: 349).

However, most of these users consulted the online websites of the television networks they were watching in the first place, which meant that they got not additional information (Allan, 2004: 351).

Although the public was unable to satisfy its need for more depth and context, this does demonstrate that they felt that the coverage presented by TV stations lacked information.

3.1.4 Safety Concerns

Apart from embedded journalists, there were other reporters on the field that became known as unilaterals. These were journalists that did not adhere to the embedding system and roamed the front lines without sticking with one single unit, with the ability to interview Iraqi citizens as well as military personnel from both sides. The fact that they operated outside of the DoD control made them an unwanted obstacle for the military which, in response, frequently obstructed their work (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 33). Access to Iraq was one of those issues, with borders and checkpoints now controlled by American soldiers that had no intention of allowing unilateral journalists into the country (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 33). They were not bound by the DoD's guidelines and hence they were of no use to the propaganda machine set in motion by Washington. The situation caught

the attention of the International Federation of Journalists, which considered this approach of coalition forces an “unacceptable discrimination against independent journalism” (IFJ, 2003a). Reports from the field suggested that unilateral journalists were being singled out, especially if they belonged to countries that were not a part of the coalition, and forcibly removed from Southern Iraq (IFJ, 2003a). The federation added that “military control of the media is unacceptable” (IFJ, 2003a).

However, even if in some cases they could be detained or see their equipment confiscated by coalition troops, their main concern was safety. They were frequently fired upon by US and Iraqi military (Hutchinson, 2008: 37) a common trend in modern conflict. As warns the Committee to Protect Journalists in its Security Guide: “Today, both government forces and insurgents have detained or attacked journalists suspected of having relationships with their foes” (CPJ, 2012). For this reason, Iraq became the most dangerous conflict for journalists, with fatalities among the media surpassing those in any other “documented war-time death toll for the press” (CPJ, 2013a). From the beginning of the invasion until the proclaimed end of the war, at least 150 journalists and 54 media support workers were killed (CPJ, 2013a). If you look at the numbers in perspective making a comparison with the Vietnam War, for example, we can understand that the rate at which reporters were killed is far greater in Iraq. In the 21 years that the Vietnam War lasted, 63 journalists lost their lives, a lot less than the 150 that perished in the Iraq war (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 38). It is also important to note that 17 journalists were killed in the country, in the first six weeks of the invasion, suggesting that they faced an increasing threat (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 39). The manner in which these deaths occurred goes in line with this idea of killing journalists that are perceived to provide unfavourable opinions:

“...nearly two out of every three killed, did not die in airstrikes, checkpoint shootings, suicide bombings, sniper fire, or the detonation of improvised explosive devices. They were instead murdered in targeted assassinations in direct reprisal for their reporting.” (CPJ,

2013a).

Many were targeted by Iraqi soldiers or, at a later stage, by insurgents but US forces were also responsible for several killings, especially during the invasion phase. One of the most reported events of this kind was the attack on the Palestine hotel, in Baghdad, where the media was based (IFJ, 2013c). Media presence at the hotel was a well-known fact but the US claimed they only fired in response to sniper fire that came from the building. However, no evidence supporting this hypothesis was found (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 44-45). On the same day, the offices of Abu Dhabi television and Al-Jazeera in the city were bombed by US forces (IFJ, 2013c). A striking coincidence since the same had happened to Al-Jazeera in Kabul during the war in Afghanistan (IFJ, 2013c). The US' response to the Al-Jazeera bombing was that it had been a mistake (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 44). These events were preceded by the death of an ITN television crew that, witnesses say, was targeted and fired upon by coalition forces despite being inside a clearly marked television vehicle (IFJ, 2013b).

One of the solutions that unilaterals found as a way to protect themselves was to take shelter, if they could, with US and UK troops at night, in what could be described as partial embedding (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 34).

When compared to unilateral reporting, embedding provided, as mentioned, much easier access to the front lines as well as a safer environment. Records show that from 2003 to 2009, only 9 embedded journalists were killed, a lot less than the 150 total (CPJ, 2012). These figures help explain why news organizations preferred to send reporters embedded with the military. The implications of this paradigm represent a very serious condition not only for the coverage of the Iraqi invasion but also for future conflicts as it will be discussed further below.

3.2 Conditioning the Audience

As they were conditioned by the military, journalists were also conditioning the perception of the war that the public was receiving. While embedded with the units, they also provided a human face/perspective to those watching back home (Reese, 2004: 249). However, the format itself was designed to influence the audience, news agendas and to turn the genre of war reporting into something that had an entertaining value.

3.2.1 Embedding and news agendas

Embedding was, from the start, an idea that was appealing to news organisations and their journalists, for one simple reason: it allowed them to fulfil the most basic expectation regarding their role: being there (Allan & Zelizer, 2004: 5). It also had the added value of allowing journalists to report with more quality, more drama, from a first-hand vantage point, while also endowing their stories with historic immediacy (Reese, 2004: 260). For the military and the government it was perfect because it allowed them to shape news agendas, which, today are determined by profits and ratings (Allan & Zelizer, 2004: 5). From a business point of view, news organisations prefer dramatic and controversial stories rather than expensive and less popular investigative reports (Allan & Zelizer, 2004: 12). The competitive environment between networks can lead 24 hour news channels sensationalise and trivialise complex news stories in an attempt to attract more audiences, in an ever growing tendency towards infotainment (Robinson, 2004: 101). In that regard, war stories are the best kind. There is drama, tension, a winner and a loser: “the epitome of a good story” (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 25).

With the embedding system, news organisations got everything they wanted. War reporting without any annoying, time and money consuming investigations that infuriated advertisers or attracted political flak. Reporters just had to turn the camera on and wait for something to happen. There were no analytical inquiries or critical reports, just nonstop action. Discussing the causes for

going to war was therefore left out of the news agenda. The subject was too lengthy and “wordy”, lacking the emotion of seeing the action unfold, that audiences were craving to see (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 28). And once the subject is forgotten, like it was, it is increasingly more difficult for journalists to get it back on the news agenda (Boyd-Barrett, 2004: 28).

We may accuse some media organisations, mainly American, of falling victims to this system but they do not represent the full media map that covered the war. Al-Jazeera was one of the other networks that covered the war in Iraq and managed to do so with a diversified coverage (Iskandar & el-Nawawy, 2004: 323). The television based in Doha had started covering the humanitarian crisis in the country before the war and, during the invasion, it had journalists on every side (Iskandar & el-Nawawy, 2004: 323). They reported from the American and Iraqi sides, with reporters covering the events from embedded positions and the coalition's headquarters in the region, as well as from Baghdad and other Iraqi cities (Iskandar & el-Nawawy, 2004: 323). Different angles were also provided by other media networks that did not give in to the US Government's pressure, like the BBC and other non-American stations. However, the key difference was in the criteria used by Al-Jazeera: the network portrayed a not so clean war by showing its gruesome realities (Iskandar & el-Nawawy, 2004: 323). The bodies of both American and Iraqi combatants were displayed, on air, for their audience to see (Iskandar & el-Nawawy, 2004: 323). This kind of coverage was praised by not only consumers, with subscriptions rising to 4 million in Europe; but also by other journalists that published favourable articles in the American and European media (Iskandar & el-Nawawy, 2004: 324). If it is important to say that there was alternative coverage to that of the mainstream Western media it should also be stressed, at the time of the war, Al-Jazeera was not available to the domestic audience in the US.

Other than fitting perfectly into what most organisations define as their business model, the embedding scheme also had in it an entertaining factor that distracted audiences from relevant topics.

3.2.3 Entertainment

After the 1991 Gulf War, it was understood, that conflict had could be used as entertainment, in a system of consumption meant to control the public – militainment (Stahl, 2009: 20). Governments relied on the spectacular nature of warfare to distract and alienate the public from important policy questions (Stahl, 2009: 20). A method that had the very concrete purpose of silencing dissenting voices (Stahl, 2009: 20). This notion evolved and, during the 2003 Iraq war, journalism, specially through television, was one of the fields that experienced a transformation of the military entertainment genre, giving the public the opportunity to engage in what became known as the “interactive war” (Stahl, 2009: 3).

This was a transformation that brought a new visual experience that fomented “first person fantasies of war” (Stahl, 2009: 3). It is a transition that brought a change in focus for war reporting. Instead of analytical and critical pieces, news coverage that falls into this category, as Steve Ford mentions, “seems almost to revel in the suspense and excitement, and inevitably the violence and suffering, of combat” (Cited in Stahl, 2009: 6). The term became more common in 2003 because of the very specific nature of media coverage during Operation Iraqi Freedom, namely because of the model of embedded journalism designed by the DoD. The war happened at a time when market considerations outweighed journalistic values (Hutchinson, 2008: 38). The entertainment value was preferred over depth and accuracy (Hutchinson, 2008: 38). Embedding was the perfect news coverage model as it had a remarkable similarity to extreme sports coverage, where the viewer establishes a relationship with the endangered athlete (Stahl, 2009:17). With embedded journalism, the public was transported onto the battlefield through the body of another non-military individual – the reporter (Stahl, 2009: 19) There it was, someone like the viewer at home, with no military background, experiencing the thrill of war. Through them, the public got the chance to, safely, in the comfort of their homes, fantasise about being in a war zone (Stahl, 2009: 17)

One of the features of the entertaining war was that it was clean and safe. Aiming at the integration with commercial television, the Pentagon and the DoD devised strategies to quell war's brutality (Stahl, 2009: 22). The clean war erased the dead, the civilian and the enemy from the screen while at the same time keeping all of the excitement: "while dramatic, the coverage is not graphic. Not a single story examined showed pictures of people being hit by fired weapons." (PEJ, 2003). To do so, journalists were forbidden to enter both Dover and Andrews military bases, the two entry points for caskets that returned from Iraq (Stahl, 2009: 26). The DoD also adopted an evasive posture towards body count, never disclosing definitive numbers to the press (Stahl, 2009: 26). The number of bodies was hidden as they were from television cameras, removing the links that tied war with reality (Stahl, 2009: 26). This was the kind of war that the Pentagon and the DoD wanted, one without casualties that would dim public support, as it is argued by Mueller's theory on casualties. A type of conflict that aims to escape critique because the information that reaches the audience, although action packed is hollow on content – and death (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 7).

This was the purpose of the embedding system: using entertainment to remove important questions from the air. The war portrayed in the media managed to bring some things closer while keeping others further away (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2010: 7). The system aimed to deliver a real time and up close view of the front lines, claiming to show the brutality of war, while at the same time hiding it (Stahl, 2009: 43). In this sense, the embedded journalism system closely resembled reality television, where coverage is choreographed (Stahl, 2009: 43).

Journalists traded their independent spirit and coverage of conflict became a constant "adrenaline rush" (Stahl, 2009: 43). Numerous shots were filmed using night vision cameras, reporters appeared over the tank and cameras were placed inside airplanes to give an increased feeling of reality to those at home (Stahl, 2009: 44).

Another feature of embedding was that it transported television hosts from some of these shows to a war scenery. Mathew Gilbert noted that reporters like CNN's Anderson Cooper and

CBS's Julie Chen left behind the sets of *The Mole* and *Big Brother*, respectively, and were now “hosting the embedded war” (Cited in Stahl, 2009: 73). In fact, the scope of reporters present on the field makes the link between journalism and entertainment seems clear. Among more than 500 embedded journalists, there were many that were not normally associated with war coverage. The DoD reached out to reporters from MTV, Rolling Stone, Men's Health and People Magazine in an exchange that gave these journalists prestige with their viewers while, at the same time, giving the military access to a wider audience (through, most likely, a different perspective) (Tumber & Palmer, 2004: 18-19).

Embedded reporting had not only the same hosts as reality television shows, but it was also filmed in a similar manner. Mathew Gilbert adds that interviews given by soldiers had the same format as direct-to-camera confessions and interactions of popular reality television shows (Cited on Stahl, 2009: 73). It was not only the usage of reality TV hosts to report the war that made these two so similar: it was also the fact that reporters, inexperienced and unprepared citizens, had to go through a one-week boot camp (Stahl, 2009: 82). It was the consummation of embedding as reality television: “putting ordinary people in extraordinary situations to see 'what it's like'” (Stahl, 2009: 83).

These similarities were not a coincidence but rather thoroughly planned by the Pentagon (Stahl, 2009: 83). They followed on a joint experience by ABC and the Pentagon that involved the renowned film producer, Jerry Bruckheimer, and TV producer Bertram van Munster (Stahl, 2009: 85). The project's name was *Profiles from the Front Line* and it consisted of a six episode reality series that followed a unit fighting in Afghanistan (Johnson, 2003).

In his article, Johnson points out to the seemingly opportunistic premier of the show: “As America braces for a possible conflict with Iraq, scheduling the series now appears to take advantage of the tension.” (Johnson, 2003). He adds that “stirring orchestral music and editing, framing and pacing that mirror 'Race' - one of the better reality shows - succeed in instilling enough

patriotic feelings so that Bush should give the producers a cheer” (Johnson, 2003).

The final episode of *Profiles from the Front Line* aired just eight days before the invasion of Iraq began (Stahl, 2009: 85). It coincided with the birth of embedded journalism, with the Pentagon admitting that the show served as “prelude” for the embedding scheme (Stahl, 2009: 85).

This is also confirmed by the similarity between the objectives that the DoD had with the embedding system and the aims that the producers of *Profiles from the Front Line* had for their show. Bertram van Munster forwarded that it would “be a very visual reality show with a strong patriotic message” and “pro military, pro-American stance” (Cited in Stahl, 2009: 84). These goals resembled the ones that the DoD had for the embedding scheme, supposed to tell the army's side of the story: “our people in the field need to tell our story (...) [Thus] we must organise for and facilitate access of national and international media to our forces, including those forces engaged in ground operations, with the goal of doing so right from the start.” (DOD, 2003).

When the war started, embedded journalism had all the ingredients of the reality television shows that people were used to watch. Instead of promoting critical analysis and debate, it drew on the public's war fantasies, in an interaction that fostered a passive attitude towards the real issues of conflict. As soon as embeds started appearing on television, the top four reality television shows saw their ratings drop, pointing to a substitution of one reality show for the other (Stahl, 2009: 85).

3.3 Case Study: The Fall of Saddam's Statue in Baghdad

One great example of media management during the Iraqi invasion was the fall of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad. From the people present in the square to the way events unfolded, the moment was scripted for television cameras (Robinson, 2004: 101). The multiple reports that were broadcast from the scene were the culmination of the DoD's PR campaign as Peter Maass, a unilateral journalist present at the scene, reported:

“The toppling of Saddam’s statue turned out to be emblematic of primarily one thing: the fact that American troops had taken the centre of Baghdad. That was significant, but everything else the toppling was said to represent during repeated replays on television - victory for America, the end of the war, joy throughout Iraq - was a disservice to the truth” (Maass, 2011).

However he does add that “the sceptics were wrong in some ways, too, because the event was not planned in advance by the military” (Maass, 2011). This claim is supported by an army report developed in 2004. Staff Sergeant Brian Plesich, team leader of the Tactical Psychological Operations team present on the scene describes his view of the moment (Fontenot et. al., 2004). He mentions that when he arrived near the Palestine hotel, where the media was based, “there was a large media circus at this location (...), almost as many reporters as there were Iraqis, as the hotel was right adjacent to the Al-Firdos Square”, where Saddam Hussein's statue was (Fontenot et. al., 2004). Peter Maass' report describes the moment in a similar way:

“Very few Iraqis were there. You can also see (...) that much of the crowd was made up of journalists and marines” (Maass, 2011).

However, in the report, Plesich also mentions that his PSYops team then assisted a Marine Corps colonel that had arrived before and saw “the Saddam statue as a target of opportunity and decided that the statue must come down” (Fontenot et. al., 2004). Even if the events were not scripted beforehand, the military took advantage of the media presence and staged a show for the hundreds of journalists at the scene. The psychological effects of the embedding, the hunger of the 24 hour networks and the close, dramatic shots did the rest. BBC world affairs reporter Rageh Omarr, admitted, in an interview with John Pilger that he, and the rest of the media, were to blame for the “echo chamber” that their coverage of the conflict became:

“I didn't really do my job properly. I think I'd hold my hand up and say that one didn't press the most uncomfortable buttons hard enough. (...) The entire live cameras of the world's press were on the balcony of the Palestine hotel and that was really the only event that they saw about the Iraqis coming out. So it was sort of a made for TV moment” (Cited in *The War You Don't See*, 2010).

The first “feel good moment” of the war was orchestrated to resemble not so distant events in Eastern Europe and portray the American soldiers as liberators, among a crowd of adoring Iraqis (Zelizer, 2004: 117). Embedding itself was not the only tool used by the DoD in this instant, but, as mentioned above, it did help shape the circumstances and the state of mind of the reporters on the scene. Shared values and fears, as well as their identification with military objectives were on display in the live reports sent home that day. Journalists could not see the deceit and only after the event had been broadcast and photographs printed, was it argued that it might have been staged (Zelizer, 2004: 117). Important details like the fact that the square was sealed off and that only pro-American Iraqis were allowed in were left out by reporters on site (Zelizer, 2004, 117).

There is also the entertainment value of the event, highlighted by the moment when the US flag was placed on the head of Saddam's statue. Even if for a brief moment, before being substituted by an Iraqi one (Fontenot et. al., 2004), it carried a symbolic meaning. BBC reporter, Rageh Omarr referred to it as “the most telling moment in that whole day”, that symbolized what had just happened: “America had taken ownership of Iraq” (Cited in *The War You Don't See*, 2010).

The results of this theatrical manoeuvre were astounding, when looked at from a public relations perspective. Opinion polls suggest that support for the war rose after the toppling of Saddam's statue, with sympathetic coverage swaying some “hitherto unconvinced people to support the war” (Lewis & Brookes, 2004: 298). Lewis and Brookes mention a YouGov poll that measured

public support for war in the UK and Iraq. When asked if they thought “the United States and Britain are / were right or wrong to take military action against Iraq?” at the time of the invasion 53% answered “right” (YouGov, 2013). This number rose to 66% on 10 April, 2003, following the destruction of the statue. A similar poll conducted in the US by The Washington Post and ABC News shows that 65% of Americans were supportive of the invasion when it started, a number that peaked at 75% in the days following the toppling of the statue (The Washington Post, 2007). The media management system designed by the DoD produced its results as the journalists on the scene provided an image that did not resemble the truth but that came to represent the invasion phase of the war (Hoskins & O’Loughlin, 2010: 5). The journalists “embedding” mind-set, the entertainment value and the military spin were all at play during this episode.

Implications for the future of War reporting

Although this dissertation focuses on the media coverage used during the 2003 Iraq war, we can draw on its conclusions to extrapolate for future conflicts. Communications technologies will continue to evolve, giving journalists better and quicker access as well as increased reporting capacity in the future. However, the embedding scheme is bound to become more popular and that entails a problem for journalists and for the concerned public.

Embedding provides journalists not only with access but also with a safer view of the battlefield. With the increasingly dangerous environment for unilateral journalists, it is safe to assume that the number of those that risk their lives to provide independent coverage will decrease. If Iraq was one of the most dangerous wars for journalists, as demonstrated, more recent conflicts such as the Syrian civil war have proven equally deadly for reporters (CPJ, 2013b)

Results and Conclusion

The invasion phase of the Iraq war lasted a total of 42 days. The short duration of this phase might suggest that public support could have been maintained solely because of the “rally-around-the-flag” effect, as some authors have argued (Gelpi, 2006: 141). However, poll results from both the US and the UK show that there were fluctuations during that period. In both cases, support for the war was higher when major combat operations ended (75% in the US and 57% in the UK) than they were at the start of the war (65% in the US and 53% in the UK) (YouGov, 2013; The Washington Post, 2007). This suggests that there were other intervening factors and research points towards the media as the main driver of these high levels of support. The analysis presented above shows that the embedding scheme was not only designed and tested in advance but that it had the specific purpose of swaying public opinion during the war. It also shows that the mechanisms employed to deceive and influence journalists, and hence the audience at home, were very successful. While attached to a unit, reporters saw only what the military wanted them to see, when and how it wanted them to see. Embeds became “in-beds”, uncritical and part of the team. In this particular case, American journalists embraced a cheer-leading type of coverage more than reporters from the UK or other countries. In this regard, alternative media outlets, such as Al-Jazeera, and the internet became important sources for those that required more information.

The media failed to provide a critical account of the war, immersing itself in the adrenaline of live and entertaining reports that failed to add important information. Furthermore they have also allowed the entertaining side to trump the critical and essential one, leaving some of the wars most important questions unasked (and unanswered). The resemblance between embedding reports and reality television distracted the viewer, failing to discuss the motives and causes behind the war. Through this frame war looked exciting and safe, without casualties or any brutality to diminish support for the war. The toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue was the epitome of this media management system, giving US and British governments a strong boost in public support, that

lasted until the end of major combat operations. Criticism from independent journalists and media analysts, as well as poll results and praises from the PR industry, are good indicators of this reality.

However, it must be acknowledged that the embedding scheme is only effective in the current media paradigm. Profit dictates the agenda of big media corporations that prefer dramatic stories that produce high audiences at lower costs than investigative ones, more costly and less profitable. Without the existing structure, permeable to political pressure and highly aligned with state propaganda, the embedding system would not have been adopted so easily by the media and it would not have been so effective.

References

- Allan, S. (2004). The Culture of Distance: Online reporting of the Iraq war. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*. London: Routledge, pp. 347-365.
- Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. (2004). Rules of Engagement. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*. London: Routledge, pp. 3-21.
- Bartholomees, J. (2008). Theory of Victory. *Parameters*, 38 (2), pp. 25-36.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. (2004). Understanding: the second casualty. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*. London: Routledge, pp. 25-41.
- Chomsky, Noam (2004). Collateral Language, Noam Chomsky interviewed by David Barsamian. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/200307--.htm> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Christie, T. (2006). Framing Rationale for the Iraq War: The interaction of Public Support with Mass Media and Public Policy Agendas. *International Communication Gazette*, 68 (5-6), pp. 519-532.
- Clausewitz, Carl von (2006 [1832]), *On War*, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, abridged ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coe, K. (2013). Television News, Public Opinion, and the Iraq War: Do Wartime Rationales Matter?. *Communication Research*, 40 (4), pp. 486-505.
- CPJ (2012). Armed Conflict - Reports - Committee to Protect Journalists. [online] Retrieved from: <http://cpj.org/reports/2012/04/armed-conflict.php#3> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- CPJ (2013a). Iraq war and news media: A look inside the death toll. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.cpj.org/security/2013/03/iraq-war-and-news-media-a-look-inside-the-death-to.php> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- CPJ (2013c). Attacks on the Press in 2012: Syria. [online] Retrieved from:

- <http://www.cpj.org/2013/02/attacks-on-the-press-in-2012-syria.php> [Accessed: 26 Aug 2013].
- Darley, W. (2005). War Policy, Public Support and the Media. *Parameters*, 35 (Summer), pp. 121-134.
- DOD (2003). Public affairs guidance on embedding media during possible future operations. [e-book] <http://www.defense.gov/news/feb2003/d20030228pag.pdf> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Doyle, M. (1986). Liberalism and World Politics. *The American Political Science Review*, 80 (4), pp. 1151-1169.
- Fontenot, et. al. (2004). *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom*. [e-book] Available through: <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/car1/download/csipubs/OnPointI.pdf> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Gartner, S. and Segura, G. (1998). War, Casualties, and Public Opinion. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42 (3), pp. 278-300.
- Gelpi, C. and Mueller, J. (2006). Misunderstandings. *Foreign Affairs*, 85 (1), pp. 139-144.
- Herman, E. and Chomsky, N. (1994). *Manufacturing consent*. London: Vintage.
- Hoon, Geoff (2012). No lens is wide enough to show the big picture. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/law/columnists/article2045904.ece> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Hoskins, A. and O'loughlin, B. (2010). *War and media*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Hutchinson, W. (2008). "Media, government and manipulation: the cases of the two Gulf Wars", paper presented at 9th Australian Information Warfare and Security Conference, Edith Cowan University, 1st December. Perth Western Australia: Edith Cowan University, pp. 35-40.
- IFJ (2003a). IFJ Condemns Coalition Forces Over "Unacceptable Discrimination" on Media. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-condemns-coalition-forces-over-unacceptable-discrimination-on-media-> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].

- IFJ (2003b). IFJ Says Attacks on Journalists in Iraq Are “Crimes of War” That Must be Punished. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-says-attacks-on-journalists-in-iraq-are-crimes-of-war-that-must-be-punished> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- IFJ (2003c). IFJ Demands Full Inquiry Into Allied Fire That Led to Death of ITN Reporter. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-demands-full-inquiry-into-allied-fire-that-led-to-death-of-itn-reporter> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Iskandar, A. and El-Nawawy, M. (2004). Al-Jazeera and War Coverage in Iraq: The media's quest for contextual objectivity. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime. London: Routledge, pp. 315-332.
- Johnson, Allan (2003). Military gets a higher profile in ABC reality series. [online] Retrieved from: http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2003-02-27/features/0302270093_1_amazing-race-munster-cameras [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Kant, I. (1991). Political Writings. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kellner, D. (2004). The Persian Gulf TV War Revisited. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime. London: Routledge, pp. 136-154.
- Lewis, J. and Brookes, R. (2004). How British Television News Represented the Case for the War in Iraq. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime. London: Routledge, pp. 283-300.
- Maass, Peter (2011). Toppling the statue of Saddam Hussein in Iraq: How the media inflated a minor moment in a long war. [online] Retrieved from: http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/01/10/110110fa_fact_maass [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Moorcraft, P. and Taylor, P. (2008). Shooting the messenger. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books.
- Mueller, J. (1973). War, presidents, and public opinion. New York: Wiley.
- O'shaughnessy, N. (2004). Politics and propaganda. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.

210-237.

- Paine, KD (2003). The Measurement Standard, KDPaine & Partners' Newsletter of Public Relations Measurement. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.themeasurementstandard.com/issues/303/eng/painemilitary303.asp> [Accessed: 26 Aug 2013].
- Payne, K. (2005). The Media as an Instrument of War. *Parameters*, 35 (Spring), pp. 81-93.
- PEJ (2003). Embedded Reporters: What Are Americans Getting?. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.journalism.org/node/211> [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].
- Ray, J L (1995). Democracy and international conflict: An evaluation of the democratic peace proposition. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Rantanen, T. (2004). European News Agencies and their Sources in the Iraq War Coverage. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*. London: Routledge, pp. 301-314.
- Reese, S. (2004). Militarized Journalism: Framing Dissent in the Persian Gulf wars. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*. London: Routledge, pp. 247-265.
- Robinson, P. (2004). Researching Us Media-State Relations and Twenty-First Century Wars. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime*. London: Routledge, pp. 96-110.
- Stahl, R. (2009). *Militainment, Inc.*. London: Routledge.
- The War You Don't See (2013). [DVD] United Kingdom: John Pilger, Alan Lowery.
- Trainor, B. (1990). The Military and the Media: A Troubled Embrace. *Parameters*, 20 (December), pp. 2-11.
- Tumber, H. (2004). Prisoners of News Values? Journalists, professionalism, and identification in times of war. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004). *Reporting War: Journalism in*

Wartime. London: Routledge, pp. 190-205.

The Washington Post (2007). Washington Post-ABC News Poll. [online] Retrieved from:
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/postpoll_060307.html [Accessed: 25
Aug 2013].

Western, J. (2005). Selling intervention and war. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Willey, B. (1989). Military-Media Relations Come of Age. Parameters, 19 (March), pp. 76-84.

Yougov (2013). Iraq Trends. [e-book] London: YouGov. Available through:
<http://global.yougov.com/>
http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/raghpsamv0/YG-Archives-Pol-Trackers-Iraq-130313.pdf [Accessed: 25 Aug 2013].

Zelizer, B. (2004). When War is Reduced to a Photograph. In: Allan, S. and Zelizer, B. eds. (2004).
Reporting War: Journalism in Wartime. London: Routledge, pp. 115-132.