

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department of Arts and English Language



**A Comparative Study of Western and Arabic Media Coverage of the
US Invasion of Iraq**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

Submitted by:

Mohammed Amine BELHADI

Mohammed Bachir BOUHELAL

Supervised by:

Dr. Adel BOULEKHSAIM

Board of Examiners:

Dr. Adel DERIBIAI

President

University of El-Oued

Dr. Adel BOULEKHSAIM

Supervisor

University of El-Oued

Dr. Ahmed ANAD

Examiner

University of El-Oued

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Dedication

We are grateful to Allah to complete this research after hard working and a long march.

We dedicate this dissertation to our parents, siblings and to everyone that supported us directly and indirectly.

It was a very long journey, we learned a lot of things during my study years, we will never forget the memories we made along the way, the friends we made and the dear moments we forged together.

Amine, Bachir

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And finally, we announce that any errors or omissions are uniquely ours, and we take all the responsibility.

Abstract

This dissertation aims to investigate and compare the kind of biases that are displayed in both the Western and the Arabic media regarding the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Utilizing historical and qualitative methodologies, the study aims at examining the representation of the war and the stories associated with it in the media articles. The study shows that there is some degree of bias in both Western and Arabic media but the findings show that they employ different techniques in their coverage. The invasion was depicted by many western media sources in terms of national security concerns which included Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, and toppling the dictatorship and establishing democracy and human rights in Iraq. Moreover, they placed the US within a righteous framework of justice and power in the region. On the other hand, Arabic media mainly concerned itself with reporting the number of losses, tragedies, and the use of images to portray the suffering of the Iraqis. This emphasis was meant to make the audience sympathize as well as illustrate the pain the Iraqis have been forced to go through as a consequence of the said invasion. To summarize, the comparative analysis of Western and Arabic media discourses reveals the more subtle forms of bias in media coverage of the US invasion in Iraq. Overall, this paper has also added to the discourse about media biases, and their related stories, in influencing conflict and international intervention perception among the public.

Keywords: US invasion of Iraq, media bias, Western media, Arabic media, historical method, narratives, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD),

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SAD	Special Activities Division
UK	United Kingdoms
UNSCOM	United Nations Special Commission
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

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General Introduction

1. Background of the Study:

For a long time, media outlets have been a subject of academic scrutiny regarding their coverage of political matters, mainly international conflicts. The portrayal of such conflicts can significantly affect the perception of the public as well as policy-making. 2003 marks the beginning of the Iraqi war which also acts as a critical case study in understanding how media bias operates across different cultural and geopolitical contexts. The goal of this dissertation is to compare the biases found within Western and Arabic media in their coverage of the war on Iraq, analyzing how such biases reflect and shape the narratives presented to their respective audiences.

In March 2003, the Iraq war, which is also called the Second Gulf War, began with a collusion led by the United States of America. Some of the major reasons that were given for the invasion included the belief that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), it posed a threat to international security. The consequence of the war was that the regime of Saddam Hussein was overthrown together with provoking a wide scale violence and insurgency and further more prolonged conflict with complex ramifications for the region and globally.

2. Statement of the Problem:

Western media has been largely criticized for its stance on war and subsequent positions that it takes akin to the ones taken by the governments. It offered a view which, over time, shifted, but at the time was to provide encouragement for the war and to showcase successes of strategy. Meanwhile the Arabic broadcasts were perhaps more critical at the onset, focused more on the impact and humanitarian displacement as well as the upsetting nature of the invasion. These two depictions convey the message that media bias is not only about presenting or omitting certain information's, but it is also connected with cultural, political and ideological definitions of owning media channels.

The issue therefore resides in making a proper assessment of the nature as well as the representations of these biases. As it is noticed, the two different narratives help the public to have an understanding of the war in different ways. This paper seeks to look at the various factors which contribute to these biases and how it surfaces in the conflict. Furthermore, there is a blank on researching the impact of such misrepresentation on the international relations, public opinion and, especially, policy-making.

This dissertation shall aim at filling this gap through examining the nature of Media coverage of the Iraqi War through the western and Arabic Media. It is to these explorations of bias that this investigation seeks to contribute: to examine and understand how the media spheres under consideration construct their narrative, and how and why such constructions are significant. It is not just an abstract issue; it is subjective and practical in the sense that it determines how conflicts arise and are solved outside the classroom.

3. Research Questions:

- 1- Do the Western and Arabic media outlets use bias within their coverage during the Iraq war?
- 2- If yes, how do they differ in their ways and strategies to alter the public perception on the conflict?
- 3- How effective were the different medias in changing the public opinion regarding the Iraq war?

4. Literature Review:

This dissertation is centered on the comparison of bias in the Arabic and Western media during the 2003 Iraq War, a topic that has not been widely explored. Many scholars have used quantitative methods to investigate bias in Arabic and Western media in isolation. These studies have provided much information regarding the degree and form of bias present in the media. But unfortunately, there is a significant lack of qualitative studies, which are essential for revealing the contextual and subtle factors that shape media discourses. Furthermore, the focus of the studies has

been mainly limited to the inter-regional comparisons, while there are few comparative studies that focus on the differences and similarities in the media bias between the Arabic and the western media. This dissertation seeks to address these gaps by undertaking a qualitative comparative analysis of the media systems during the Iraq War and consequently it will shed more light on the media systems during the Iraq War and advancing the existing literature on media bias and international journalism.

5. Aims of the Study:

It is quite a common feature of most studies to have an objective or research question at the onset of the work; however, beyond these official scholarly procedures, the main research question of this study may be quite easily defined: to compare and contrast the biases of Western and Arabic media in reporting the Iraqi War.

In this context, the investigation will identify some of the differences and similarities in how these two media spheres portrayed the conflict, and discuss the factors that influenced media constructions of the event and its potential consequences for the formation of media public opinion and international relations.

6. Significance of the Study:

Knowing why the media bias occurred in the coverage of the Iraqi War is important for several reasons. Firstly, it will provide a general insight towards understanding the media control over the general populace and possible policies during inter-nations conflicts. Second, it also discusses shape of culture and politics and consequences on media representation. Last, by presenting the finding of western and Arabic media this studies enhance the knowledge on communication, media ethical issue, and politics of representation.

7. Research Methodology:

This study fills the existing gap by employing both a qualitative content analysis of selected articles from both the Arabic and Western media outlets as well as secondary data analysis on past studies that focused on the bias within the respective regions of Medias, mostly by using a quantitative approach to find out the effect of the media on the public perception. Some components of the qualitative content analysis include frames, the use of language, and the thematic level of narrative structures in an effort to reveal biases. However, examining the data qualitatively hinders the ability to offer a statistical analysis of the employment of words and themes used in media reports. Combining these conclusions with historical and contextual perspective, therefore the focus of the dissertation will be to contribute to understanding of media bias in the coverage of this conflict.

8. Structure of the Study:

Due to the formation and requirements of the study, the dissertation is split into three chapters. The first chapter forms the prelude to Iraq in that it outlines the historical background of the country from the era of the Ottoman control to Saddam Hussein, as well as creating the context and lead up of the Iraq war. The second chapter identifies the bias that is contained in the media outlets which originated from the western countries especially from United States and United Kingdom, by investigating the frames, the language, and the narratives to establish the bias. The third chapter synthesizes the customary form of writing and rhetoric deployed in the Arabic media regarding the Iraqi War and investigates how frames, argumentative patterns, and narratives from the Arabic media represent bias, in comparison with the Western media analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

From Ottoman Dominion to Saddam's Regime: Iraq's Historical Shift

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Introduction:

The Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in the United States (nd) defined Iraq as a nation located in the Middle East, originally known as the Republic of Iraq. The country is surrounded by Turkey on the north, Iran on the east, Syria and Jordan on the west, and KSA & Kuwait on the south. It has the fifth largest proven oil reserves on the globe, which makes it a significant participant in the global oil market. Also, Iraq has large deposits of natural gas reserves as well. The existence of these natural resources also brings with it various prospects as well as risks for Iraq as it attempts to capitalize on its energy advantage and deal with the geopolitical issues and the sustainable development of the nation. Ancient history of Iraq dates back to the dawn of civilization in the valleys of Tigris and Euphrates rivers, the so-called Mesopotamia.

Iraq covers a total area of 438,317 square kilometers and is home to a diverse population estimated at 41,266,109 as of 2023. Despite its relatively large landmass, much of Iraq's population is concentrated in the north, center, and eastern parts of the country (The World Factbook - Iraq, n.d.)

1.1. Iraq's History under Ottoman Rule:

Çetinsaya (2006) pointed out that the decline of prosperity had already begun before Ottomans set foot in the region due to the impact of the Mongol invasion that occurred in the 13th century which affected the irrigation system. The Ottomans started involving Iraq into their empire in the early 16th century; they occupied Mosul in 1516-1517, Baghdad in 1534 and Basra between 1538-1546. Basra at first was an important naval port but it died out due to shift in trade and also due to some conflicts with the European powers in the gulf as well as shift towards Red sea. Iraq was not fully centralized into Ottoman administrative system, Mosul was under timar system in which land grant were provided to military services and Baghdad and Basra were under salyane system which was direct tax collection with fixed payment to the treasury. It is important to note

that the central Ottoman power in Iraq gradually declined over time which paved way to the emergence of local rulers such as the Georgian Mamluk in Baghdad and Jalili in Mosul. Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) aimed at strengthening the authority of the Ottoman state, and he managed to regain the control over Baghdad by 1831, and Mosul by 1834. The Kurdish Emirates to include Baban of Sulaymaniyah could only be fully subdued in 1850.

1.2. The British Invasion of Iraq:

The First World War had a major impact on the region of the Middle East. It led to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire as well as the rising of political Zionism, which fueled Jewish and Arab nationalism. The British started the Mesopotamian Campaign during the war in order to secure control over the valuable resources of the Persian Gulf and to establish a strategic base to safeguard India, which acts as a vital British colony. While victorious European allies turned their colonial focus to the region, it was British actions that laid the groundwork for enduring issues in Iraq and the wider Middle East. This included the establishment of the Iraq Mandate and British occupation of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra after the war, which paved the way for the creation of the state of Iraq (Whitcotton, 2015).

1.2.1. The Reasons of the Invasion:

British interests in India prior to the First World War had links with Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf from the strategic and financial aspects. The British wanted to safeguard the sea routes from Mesopotamia to Bombay in order to secure their Eastern Empire due to increasing German presence in the area. Mesopotamia, the Ottoman provinces of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, was important for transport between the Persian Gulf and eastern Mediterranean. Though diplomatic and commercial relations with the Ottoman Empire were established in the 16th century, the later discoveries of oil in Iran and competition with Germany and Russia in the Middle East made Britain more active in the region. British war plans were also fueled by aggressive stance of the Ottoman

empire towards British businesses in Baghdad and anti-British sentiments in Basra and thus Britain invaded the southern part of Mesopotamia in 1914 to protect its interest (Matters, 2015; Fabal, 2015).

1.2.2. The Events of the UK Invasion:

In November 1914, the British began their invasion of Iraq by easily capturing the Fao fort and soon occupying the region including the Abadan oil plant where Turkish forces did not offer much resistance. They were able to successfully defend themselves from further Turkish attacks using naval support and moved to Sanniya, bolstering their position with additional forces. On November 14, General Barrett received the orders to capture Basra and on November 19 and 20, successfully assaulted Turkish forts at Saihan and Sahil that gave British control and influenced the Arab tribes. The British attack on Baghdad started on the 5th of March in 1917, although the British was able to cross the Diyala River and ready itself for the last push, they suffered a lot of losses and had to fight hard. The British sustained over 60,000 men killed by March 11, 1917, but in the end the British were able to seize Baghdad, which is considered a major achievement of the entire campaign (Majd, 2006).

1.2.3. The War Aftermath:

Following the war's end, the British presence in Mesopotamia became a subject of international criticism, especially after the U.S. President Woodrow Wilson advocating for self-determination at the League of Nations. Not to also mention that the evolution of Mesopotamia into the independent state of Iraq faced a turning point in the years following World War I. Wilson's principle of self-determination ruled out traditional colonial rule, it also raised concerns about the ability of Arab peoples to govern themselves without significant foreign help. This issue resulted of the establishment of the Mandate System, which became notorious in both Mesopotamia and

Palestine. Essentially, the British administration during the war aimed to preserve order in the region until a final decision on its future status could be reached (Whitecotton, 2015).

1.2.4. The British Mandate Over Iraq:

Whitecotton (2015) claims that the British Mandate over Iraq was characterized by a need of clear decision-making as well as the organization on the part of the British government in London. Even though there is a noticeable decline of colonialism and appearance of the principle of self-determination that was advocated by the US president Woodrow Wilson, the Mandate System was created in order to prepare territories like Mesopotamia for the upcoming independence. However, this system, which aimed to cancel colonialism, itself faced a criticism because of the disposal of the Ottoman territories without regards to the wishes of the indigenous inhabitants. Under the Mandate System, Britain was awarded control over Iraq under the San Remo Agreement in April 1920. This mandate included the provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and, departing from previous agreements, Mosul. The British perspective on their legitimacy in Iraq was articulated by figures like Nigel Davidson, who emphasized their adherence to international approval and obligations. Despite the unrest, the British government moved forward with plans for indirect rule in Iraq, offering the throne to Hashemite Amir Faisal. Faisal, possessing Arab nationalist sympathies, proved to be a politically astute leader who cooperated with the British while providing leadership to the Iraqi people. However, the path to Iraqi independence was conditioned on securing British economic interests in the region.

1.3. The Rise of Saddam to Power:

1.3.1. Background and Early Life of Saddam Hussein:

According to the claims of Mahallati (1992), Saddam Hussein was born on April 28, 1937. He was born in a mud house in Tikrit owned by his maternal uncle, Khairallah Talfah. Even though he had an affection to his birthplace, his childhood was nevertheless marked with both

poverty and hardships. That's mainly because his father, Hussein al-Majid, passed away before his birth. Saddam was entrusted to the care of Khairallah's family by his mother, Sabha, who was unable to support him. These hardships faced starting from his childhood shaped Saddam's trajectory as a Ba'thist leader. He began his political activism during regional upheaval and shifting alliances. In the 1950s, Gamal Abd al-Nasser acted as a symbol of anti-imperialism and Arab nationalism, contrasting sharply with Iraq's perceived alignment with Western interests. The formation of the turbulent political climate of Baghdad in 1956 provided a fertile ground for Saddam's involvement in anti-government activities. His upbringing, marked by his uncle's political activism and his own sense of isolation, primed him for this role. Saddam joined the Ba'ath party in his early 20s. He was attracted by its radical ideology and commitment to pan-Arabism. The main goal of the Ba'th Party, that was founded in Damascus, is to unify the Arab world under a secular as well as a socialist agenda. Despite facing competition from other political factions, including communists and nationalists, the Ba'th's vision aligned with Saddam's. His decision to join the party was influenced not only by ideological affinity but also by personal ties to his uncle and foster father, Khairallah Talfah. the Baghdad Pact further isolated Iraq internationally and sparked domestic discontent.

1.3.2. Saddam's Ascendancy to Power:

Even though Saddam failed to enroll the Baghdad Military Academy, he was determined to pursue a military career nonetheless. He involved himself in anti-government activities during his youth, including his participation in the murder of a government official which resulted in his imprisonment. However, this experience did not affect nor deter him from his political aspirations. Saddam, alongside other Ba'thists, participated in an attempt to assassinate General Abd al-Karim Qassem, was the ruler of Iraq at that time in 1959. Even though this attempt was not successful, it still marked a significant moment in Saddam's life, promoting his status within the Ba'th Party. Saddam had several years in exile in Syria and Egypt which further shaped his political outlook. In

Cairo, he observed President Nasser's leadership closely and admired his political tactics, which likely influenced Saddam's own strategies. Saddam continued his education despite facing challenges and occasional imprisonment during his time in Egypt. Upon his return to Iraq in 1963, Saddam found himself on the outskirts of the Ba'th Party's leadership. However, the internal power conflicts within the Party made opportunities for him to rise through the ranks. Saddam gained the trust of the faction led by Ahmad Hasan al-Bar by aligning himself w the leader. He eventually became Bakr's close confidant and right-hand man. His loyalty and strategic alliances within the Party earned him positions of authority, paving the way for his ascent to power in the years to come. Mahallati (1992).

1.3.3. Gulf War:

In August 1990, a major conflict began named The Gulf War. This conflict was caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The prelude to the war was the debt that Iraq owed to the Gulf States from the Iran-Iraq War. Saddam Hussein asked for debt forgiveness from Gulf States, which were ignored. In addition to that, Saddam also accused Kuwait and the UAE of violating OPEC oil production quotas, which further crippled Iraq's economy by lowering oil prices. Iraq's historical territorial claims over Kuwait and accusations of oil theft from the Rumayla field escalated tensions. Despite diplomatic efforts, including a message of conciliation from U.S. President George H.W. Bush, Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990. This act resulted in an embargo by the U.N. Security Council as well as the formation of coalition comprised of 34 nations and led by the US. This coalition included several Arab countries, with their aim is to liberate Kuwait. The coalition's military campaign began with an extensive aerial bombardment and culminated in a swift ground offensive, forcing Iraqi withdrawal and leading to a ceasefire. The U.N. imposed several sanctions on Iraq following the war; the U.N. imposed sanctions on Iraq and established UNSCOM to

dismantle Iraq's weapons of mass destruction capabilities, while internal unrest in Iraq was suppressed by Saddam Hussein's regime (Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations, n.d.).

1.4. The 2003 Invasion of Iraq “Operation Iraqi Freedom”:

March 19th, 2003 marked the beginning of the Iraq War, a conflict that spanned nearly nine years. During this period, military forces from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland jointly invaded Iraqi territories. Just 21 days into the operation, Baghdad, Iraq's capital city, fell to coalition forces on April 9th following a six-day hard-fought battle. This marked a significant turning point in the conflict and signaled the beginning of a new chapter in Iraq's history. The swift and surprising overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime brought hope for a brighter future for the Iraqi people, which was soon dashed away by the outbreak of civil sectarian war that sparked years of instability and violence in the region (Godfroy & Collins, 2020).

On May 1st, U.S. President George W. Bush announced the end of major combat operations in his Mission Accomplished address, marking the end of the initial phase of the war. Subsequently, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was formed as the initial transitional government, paving the way for subsequent administrations before the first Iraqi parliamentary election in January 2005. American military presence in Iraq continued until the withdrawal in 2011 (Godfroy & Collins, 2020).

The coalition's main stated aims for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) were "to disarm Iraq of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), to end Saddam Hussein's support for terrorism, and to free the Iraqi people", according to U.S. President George W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair. Some long-standing U.S. allies, including France, Germany, and New Zealand governments, strongly opposed the invasion of Iraq. Their leaders argued that there were no evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and questioned the justifications for invading Iraq (Iraq Inquiry & Cabinet Office, 2016).

Protests all around the world broke out in objection to the invasion. One month before the invasion, on February 15th, 2003, a Guinness World Record anti-war rally of 3 million people took place in Rome, Italy. The French academic Dominique Reynie revealed that between January 3rd and April 12th, 2003, an estimated 36 million people worldwide took part in almost 3000 anti-Iraq war protests (Largest Anti-war Rally, 2003)(Anti-war Protests Do Make Difference|19Mar05|Socialist Worker, n.d.).

The United Nations inspection team led by Hans Blix stated that they had discovered no evidence to substantiate the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq just before the start of the invasion. In September 2004, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan denounced the invasion as illegal under international law and said it breached the UN Charter (UN INSPECTORS FOUND NO EVIDENCE OF PROHIBITED WEAPONS PROGRAMMES AS OF 18 MARCH WITHDRAWAL, HANS BLIX TELLS SECURITY COUNCIL | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2003).

1.4.1. Prelude and Pre-War Diplomacy:

Negotiations between the UN coalition and Iraq had succeeded in implementing a cease-fire suspending military conflict on February 28th, 1991. The U.S. and its allies executed many military surveillance operations such as Operation Southern Watch. A biological weapons program was discovered in Iraq that had begun early in the 1980s with apparently unintended help from the U.S. and its allies (Washington, n.d.).

Investigations concluded that the program had not continued after 1991. Since the early 1990s, the U.S. and its allies adopted a policy of “containment” against Iraq, which involved several economic sanctions by the UN Security Council, the enforcement of Iraqi no-fly zones, and operational measures by the UK and the U.S. in protection of the Kurds in the north and the Shias in the south. Iraq’s air force regularly contested these zones. In October 1998, the U.S. enacted the Iraq

Liberation Act, one month later, the U.S. and the UK launched Operation Desert Fox, a bombardment campaign aimed at hampering Iraq's ability to produce chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons (Air Force Historical Support Division, n.d.).

After the rise of George W. Bush to the presidency of the U.S. in 2000, the Republican Party called for the full implementation of the Iraq Liberation Act as a starting action to remove Saddam from power. However, very few official movements toward a full-scale invasion happened until the September 9th Attacks. Despite that, the rationale for invading Iraq as a response to 9/11 has been heavily criticized as no clear-cut evidence was found supporting the cooperation of Saddam Hussein with the alleged perpetrators of Al-Qaeda (Iraq Inquiry & Cabinet Office, 2016).

On September 20th, 2001, Bush announced the “War on Terror”. However, he still decided to seek UN authorization before invading Iraq, while still reserving the option to launch the invasion without it.

In an interview with General David Petraeus “Reflections on Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan”, he spoke about his experience in the times before the invasion. When he was asked how his views of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan evolved throughout his several leadership missions, he said: “When we were getting ready for what became the invasion of Iraq, the prevailing wisdom was that we were going to have a long, hard fight to Baghdad, and it was really going to be hard to take Baghdad. The road to deployment, which was a very compressed road for the 101st Airborne Division, started with a seminar on military operations in urban terrain because that was viewed as the decisive event in the takedown of the regime in Iraq Iraq—that finding and destroying the weapons of mass destruction.”(National Defense University Press, n.d.).

1.4.2. Preparation and Preemptive Operations:

On September 12th, 2002, Bush officially made his case for an invasion of Iraq in his address to the international community in the United Nations General Assembly. There was a

growing debate between key NATO member countries, with the United Kingdom supporting U.S. plans, while Germany and France were critical of the invasion and favoring the continuation of diplomacy and WMD inspection efforts, the debate ended with the UN Security Council adopting a compromise resolution, UNSC Resolution 1441, which demanded that Iraq readmit inspectors and comply with all prior resolutions, and that non-compliance will face serious consequences. (Iraq | History, Map, Flag, Population, & Facts, 2024) The resolution gave Iraq a final chance to comply with its disarmament obligations and enhanced inspection regime.

In January 2003, Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) conducted a poll that later revealed 64% of Americans had voted for military action against Iraq to remove Saddam from power; however, 63% favored diplomacy over war as a solution, while 62% believed the war would expand and heighten the threat of terrorism projected against the U.S (Cosgrove-Mather, 2003).

The Central Intelligence Agency's Special Activities Division (SAD) teams, combining both the paramilitary operations officers and the 10th Special Forces Group soldiers, were the first U.S. forces to enter Iraq, in July 2002, before the main invasion. Once they landed in Iraqi Kurdistan, they prepared for the subsequent arrival of U.S. Army Special Forces to organize the Kurdish Peshmerga to defeat and capture territory controlled by Ansar Al-Islam, an ally of Al-Qaeda, they managed to defeat Ansar Al-Islam and capture a chemical weapons facility at Sargat (Plan of Attack, 2004).

SAD teams also conducted air strikes against Saddam and his generals, which was capable of disrupting Saddam's ability to command and control his forces. They degraded the Iraqi command's ability to respond to major subsequent military operations effectively. Furthermore, they convinced several key Iraqi army officers to surrender once the fighting began. After NATO member Turkiye refused to allow U.S. forces across their southern borders through Iraqi Kurdistan,

SAD, Army Special Forces, and the Peshmerga constituted the northern front of the OIF forces (Plan of Attack, 2004).

On February 5th, 2003, the U.S. Secretary of State, Collin Powell gave a presentation to the UN Security Council explaining the justifications for the invasion and providing evidence for the existence of WMDs (Secretary of State Addresses the U.N. Security Council, 2003).

With a slew of military and public relations actions, the US, UK, Poland, Australia, Spain, Denmark, and Italy started preparing for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. In his speech to the nation on March 17, 2003, President Bush demanded that Saddam Hussein and his two sons, Qusay and Uday, surrender and leave Iraq, giving them a 48-hour deadline. During a pivotal moment in the Blair administration's history, the UK House of Commons overwhelmingly approved the government's motion to go to war on March 18, 2003. Three government ministers resigned in opposition to the war: John Denham, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, and the then-leader of the House of Commons, Robin Cook (Department of the Official Report (Hansard), House of Commons, Westminster, 2003).

1.4.3. Rationalizing the Invasion:

The military objectives of Operation Iraqi Freedom were described by U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as follows: First, end the regime of Saddam Hussein. Second, to identify, isolate, and eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Third, to search for, to capture, and to drive out terrorists from that country. Fourth, to collect such intelligence as we can related to terrorist networks. Fifth, to collect such intelligence as we can related to the global network of illicit weapons of mass destruction. Sixth, to end sanctions and to immediately deliver humanitarian support to the displaced and to many needy Iraqi citizens. Seventh, to secure Iraq's oil fields and resources, which belong to the Iraqi people. And last, to help the Iraqi people create conditions for a

transition to a representative self-government (Cordesman & Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003).

The doctrine of restoring world peace and order via “regime change” in Iraq and the justification of preemptive war - or the Bush doctrine - was the main concern for the Bush administration since the September 9th attacks, citing potential dangers of weapons of mass destruction, ties to terrorist organizations, mainly Al-Qaeda as well as non-conforming policy towards UNSC resolutions on the part of Iraq. In October 2002, Bush said, “...if Saddam were to meet all the conditions of the United Nations, the conditions that I have described very clearly in terms that everybody can understand, that in itself will signal the regime has changed.” (Daily Times - Site Edition, 25 August 2004.).

Collin Powell, in his address to the UNSC on February 5th, 2003, stated that “in a post-September 9th world” the United States cannot and will not afford to take the risk of leaving Saddam Hussein in possession of weapons of mass destruction that could potentially pose a danger to the security of the U.S. and its allies, concerning Saddam’s record of aggression, persecution and covert relationships with terrorists. He also presented a computer-generated image of a “mobile biological weapon laboratory”, based on the testimony of an Iraqi informant living in Germany who had later admitted his claims to be false. Powell also presented unreliable evidence asserting that the Iraqi regime is harboring terrorist activity led by Al-Qaeda operative Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi. Powell also addressed Saddam’s violations of human rights and persecution of ethnic and religious minorities of Iraqi Kurds and Iraqi Shias respectively (Secretary of State Addresses the U.N. Security Council, 2003).

The U.S. has submitted intelligence documents as evidence to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to support the claim that Iraq had tried to purchase 500 tons of uranium oxide (yellowcake) from Niger. These claims were dismissed by the IAEA and the IAEA Iraq team

leader quickly demonstrated that these documents were crude forgeries. Since the invasion However, the U.S. government statements concerning Iraqi weapons programs and links to al-Qaeda have been discredited (Twenty Years Ago in Iraq, Ignoring the Expert Weapons Inspectors Proved to Be a Fatal Mistake, 2023).

While the Bush administration has never directly linked Iraq with the 9/11 attacks, they have repeatedly been insinuating a connection between the two. In a press conference in March 2003, President Bush, often in the same context, mentioned 9/11 and referred to Saddam Hussein. Eventually, Bush and his administration successfully created and reinforced an impression of an Iraqi role in the Sept. 11 attacks. The Christian Science Monitor (CSM) polling data right after September 9th, 2001, have shown that only 3% of Americans mentioned Iraq or Saddam when asked about who do they think is behind the attacks. By January 2003, much “had been transformed”, a Knight Ridder poll revealed that 44% of Americans now believed that “either "most" or "some" of the Sept. 11 hijackers were Iraqi citizens.” (Feldmann, 2003).

The focus has increasingly shifted toward other justifications that have been used at different times, such as the human rights violations of the Saddam government, since the claims made by the United States and the United Kingdom regarding the existence of Iraqi WMDs and connections to terrorist organizations have been refuted or weakened. However, several prominent human rights groups stated that they do not think that military intervention was justified on humanitarian grounds, nor do they believe that concerns about human rights were ever a primary justification for the invasion, most significantly because "the killing in Iraq at the time was not of the exceptional nature that would justify such intervention." (Human Rights Watch World Report 2004: War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention, n.d.).

1.4.4. The Coalition & the Iraqi Forces:

In a NATO summit in November 2002, President George W. Bush announced that "should Iraqi President Saddam Hussein choose not to disarm, the United States will lead a coalition of the willing to disarm him." (CNN.com - Bush: Join "coalition of Willing" - Nov. 20, 2002).

The coalition of the willing, combining 49 nations, refers to the countries that have contributed to the military action in Iraq and the subsequent military presence in the post-invasion phase in Iraq. Around six countries alongside the U.S. have contributed militarily to the invasion force (the United Kingdom, Australia, Poland, Spain, Portugal, and Denmark).

At the time of the invasion, Iraq had an estimated 650,000 reservists and a large pool of annual conscripts. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) believed that each year, around 274,000 males entered military service. Despite Iraq's defeat in The Second Gulf War in 1991, and losing some 40% of its army personnel and air force, Iraq still maintained some 389,000 full-time active troops. The army consists of 350,000 actives, including some 100,000 called-up reservists, this was before deployment seriously escalated as a reaction to the deployment of coalition forces, mainly the United States and the United Kingdom. Iraq possessed "an inventory of some 2,200–2,600 main battle tanks, 3,700 other armored vehicles, and 2,400 major artillery weapons." (Cordesman & Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003).

The United States deployed a sum of 466,985 personnel for OIF, including ground forces, air forces, and naval forces, including 130,000 troops stationed in Kuwait. The coalition forces of 42,985 soldiers was mainly British, the UK deployed 40,906 personnel. Not to mention, the U.S. and The Coalition's naval and air capabilities surpassed their Iraqi counterparts (Cordesman & Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003).

1.4.5. The Events of the US invasion:

1.4.5.1. The Opening Attack:

Ricks (2006) speaks about the opening attack of Operation Iraqi Freedom under the title “a false start”, right at the beginning he says: “Fittingly, a war justified by false premises began on false information.”

Combat was initiated on March 20, 2003, in Iraq— meanwhile, it was the evening of March 19 back in the United States— with a large wave of surgical airstrikes, including cruise missiles and bunker-penetrating bombs against Doura Farms which was a place that Saddam occasionally used west of the Tigris in Southern Baghdad. The CIA received false intelligence about the current location of Saddam Hussein, so the decision was rushed to commence the operation immediately. The CIA believed that the airstrike could have killed or wounded Saddam, but it was soon revealed that he was safe somewhere else (Ricks, 2006).

Richard Perle later concluded in April 2005 that Saddam fooled the U.S. government, and that the initial attacks were a successful intelligence operation by Saddam to lure the CIA into believing he was in a place in which he was not. And that the regime had successfully planted double agents to mislead the US Army (Ricks, 2006).

1.4.5.2. Battle of Basrah:

Basrah, the second largest city in Iraq, is located in the south and is predominantly Shia, with an estimated population of 1-1.5 million. The city was a target of heavy shelling and airstrikes both in the Iraq-Iran war of 1980-1988 and again in a failed uprising against Saddam in 1991. This sparked hope and investigation over potential support for the coalition amongst the opposition populous. The Battle of Basra began on 21 March 2003, most of the invading forces consisted of British regiments, including the British 7th Armored Brigade (the Desert Rats) and the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. Three consecutive days of open tank battles resulted in the surrounding of the city and the control of its outskirts. Three weeks later, Basrah was captured with the UK forces advancing the city center by 9 April 2003 (Aoav, 2015).

It was, in fact, a key objective of the British forces to occupy the “Basra Box”, to minimize casualties and secure the American advance northwards, as there was no rush to occupy Iraq’s second-largest city. By 6 April 2003, days after the U.S. forces had successfully surrounded Baghdad, the conditions were all set to advance inside the city of Basrah. British commanders commanded their forces inside Basrah swiftly occupying strategic locations. Basrah was the first city to fall to the coalition. However, the casualties were minimal due to the initial welcome of the coalition by the civilian population, and the limited insurgency (Iraq War: The Invasion, n.d.).

1.4.5.3. The Road to Baghdad:

The main goal of Operation Iraqi Freedom was the capture of Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq. The advance northwards was essential and integral to the success of the operation. That required the capture of many cities on the road to Baghdad, to secure the main routes and supply lines to facilitate the mission of the advancing troops. The major cities on this route were An Nasiriyah and Al Najaf, both of which presented significant tactical and strategic challenges to the coalition forces.

Nasiriyah is a strategic city located on the Euphrates River, some 375km south-east of Baghdad. The Battle for Nassiriyah began on Sunday, 23 March 2003, the Fedayeen Saddam guerilla fighters ambushed a convoy of eighteen vehicles of the 507th Maintenance Company, who had mistakenly entered Nasiriya, causing eleven casualties and capturing seven U.S. Army soldiers, one of which died in an Iraqi hospital. On the next day, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) sent the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force to Nasiriyah with the aim of clearing the city, fortunately for the Iraqis, those forces were swallowed by a massive sandstorm (Draper, 2020)

There were key bridges throughout the city of Nasiriyah that the coalition forces were trying to access, the battle recommenced on the night of 24-25 March, the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade clashed with the Iraqi Army 11th Infantry Division, and the Marine’s Regimental Combat

Team 1 stormed the city successfully and managed to pass through the bridge, advancing north towards Baghdad. However, the fighting and the battles continued until April 1st, when the Iraqi resistance, which included the Fedayeen militia, was finally defeated (Fontenot et al., 2004).

The Battle in Najaf spanned from March 24 until April 4, 2003. Najaf is a holy city to the Shia population of Iraq, the coalition commanders knew that capturing this city would be of great symbolism, and a key to maintaining the momentum of the advance northwards. The battle was first initiated when the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division attempted to storm the city, only to find great resistance from the Republican Guard and the Fedayeen. The coalition forces were aiming at the Najaf airport, and similarly to secure key bridges and passages along the Euphrates. As the coalition forces were advancing they faced more resistance of guerrilla tactics. The coalition attempted various psychological operations encouraging the Iraqi defenders to surrender (Fontenot et al., 2004).

1.4.5.4. The Battle of Baghdad:

The U.S. led invasion of Iraq that was spearheaded by the Operation Iraqi Freedom was characterized by the Battle of Baghdad, which was the main combat in this war. On the 20th of March 2003, from the south, north and western fronts, the coalition forces began to advance with ease and seized key installations including the Rumaila oil fields as observed by Franks (2004). By early April the position for the final attack on Baghdad, the major hub of Saddam's rule, was established. Lt. General Tommy Franks focused on speed and versatility, using air support and ground tactics, such as "thunder runs" – rapid, armored strikes into enemy territory to penetrate defenses and dismantle leadership (Franks, 2004).

The American Division launched the Battle of Baghdad on April 3, 2003, with the help of the 3rd Infantry Division. A "thunder run" on April 5 showed that the coalition can successfully penetrate and neutralize defenses, which is essential for espionage activities against the Iraqi troops

(Ricks, 2006). April 4 saw another significant event when the International Airport of Baghdad was seized. On the seventh of April, the U. S. forces advanced further into the city and, despite encountering various forms of resistance, the use of firepower and mobility was overpowering (Franks, 2004).

By April 9, 2003, many strategic areas in Baghdad, including governmental facilities and the presidential compounds referred to as Saddam Hussein's palaces were captured by the coalition forces. The capture of Baghdad was when the statue of Hussein was brought down in Firdaus Square, symbolic of the defeat of the Ba'ath party in Iraq (Ricks, 2006).

Conclusion:

It is safe to say that the history Iraq is rich with a lot of events of invasion, conquest and shifting powers. Beginning with the ancient civilizations of the Mesopotamia to the modern age, Iraq had seen numerous cultures, civilizations as well as empires. Furthermore, Iraq faced many invasions, including the Ottomans, Mongols, British and recently, the coalition led by the US.

These invasions left lasting effects on Iraqi society. These effects shaped its culture, politics, as well as identity. This can be proven through the different ethnicities, religions, and cultures all within Iraq. It can be also argued that these shaping of the diverse cultures also reflect the complex legacies of these historical encounters. Furthermore, the fight for power and ruling of Iraq has been the main cause of instability within the region, leading to the escalation of internal tensions as well as the need for external interventions.

CHAPTER TWO

Western Media Coverage Bias on the USA's Invasion of Iraq

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Introduction:

Objective media reporting is a well needed tool for a healthy democracy. When news outlets aim to portray the facts in a neutral and unbiased way, the public can form their own informed opinions on current events. Such objectivity reduces the spread of misinformation and allows a just debate without any subjectivity regarding the matters in question. Without this objectivity, the public will lose trust in these institutions and the power imbalance between those in power and the public increases. Furthermore, False news coverage can and will affect the lives of people in question. Biased reporting can escalate tensions as well as distort the public perception of conflicts, leading to catastrophic real-world consequences. In instances where misinformation is allowed to flourish, lives are lost, resources are misallocated, and opportunities for peaceful solutions are squandered. This is why a free and responsible media, committed to factual reporting and presenting diverse perspectives, is not just a luxury but a must for just society. In this chapter, an investigation will be conducted to find whether media outlets affiliated with the Coalition during the Iraq War followed the principles of objective reporting.

According to Gunter (2009), the position of journalists in war areas has become a topic of criticism for years, especially during the Iraq War in 2003. Because of the requirement to be as close as possible to the actions covered while at the same time ensuring the safety of the reporters, the notion of the ‘embedded’ journalist was created. Thus, the embedded journalists are those that were included into military units. There are more opportunities for the actual coverage of the events in question due to the embedded journalism, which theoretically leads to better reporting. But it can’t be also dismissed that this camaraderie between the journalists and military created issues with regards to the credibility of the information disseminated. This chapter goes deeper into the analysis of media coverage during the Iraq War by presenting polls that were conducted during the time. Specifically, as for the traditional news sources, the New York Times, the Daily Mail, and the

Washington Post held the highest credibility and were considered to be the most credible sources. The prevalence of these outlets is indicative of the fact that they were central to the formation of opinion within the society. However, it was evident that public debate on the neutrality and reality of embedded reporting was still a major issue. Despite the fact that many people recognized the potential to make the war more personal, there was question whether journalists would be able to keep their bias in check when working so closely with the military.

2.1. Embedded Journalists:

According to Ghosh (2021), embedded journalism refers to a particular type of war reporting where the journalist is officially accredited by the military to cover operations of forces in a theatre for an extended time. Unlike other forms of war reporters, who work on the periphery of the war and the armed forces, embedded reporters are physically and professionally connected to the military, thus gaining privileged access to the war theater and the military machinery. In exchange for such access, the embedded journalists are expected to give the same loyalty as is expected of the troops and are expected to be under certain regulations as are the military. These conditions reduce the independence of the journalist to give the public an objective view of the events, this will result in arising issues such as military control over media, the neutrality of the event, and the duality of the war reporters. In general, embedded journalism is an issue that provides numerous questions regarding the nature of journalism and particularly the neutrality of the war journalism since it merges journalism with the military.

The war in Iraq, which began when the U.S. invaded Iraq in March 2003, was one of the most reported wars in history. During the initial stages of the war, 775 journalists were assigned to accompany the American troops; several hundred others were covering the war independently but attached to the military vehicles. The personal and relatively cheap digital video cameras, teleconferencing equipment also encouraged the instant and close coverage of the war. This

abundance of media tools gave the viewer the impression that things were happening right before the cameras, which depicted the real spirit and rhythm of the war (Powell, 2004).

2.2. The Coalition's Influence on Media Coverage:

Although investigating a conflict that sets one's home country against another has its challenges, journalists cannot shy away from such scenarios. These challenges are mainly because of factors such as patriotism and relations with the higher tiers of the government. While the first war was characterized by a general global consensus against Saddam Hussein, the second war was quite the opposite. In early 2003, UN inspections for WMDs were still in progress, and key members of the EU were against the US and the UK on war. The idea of going for a war against Iraq was not welcomed by large masses of people in all the countries including the US. The US and UK actions were considered unlawful by the UN. The media had a herculean task in reporting in such a setting where there was a clear divide amongst nations regarding the decision to wage war and in the United States; there was also a divide even in the populace. It is needless to say that the news media must take greater care when covering events in times of war. The news media's responsibility during wartime transcends mere reporting. It becomes an essential act of public service, ensuring that citizens have the information they need to hold leaders accountable, advocate for peaceful solutions, and ultimately, work towards a world where war is not the only answer (Melkote, 2009). As quoted by Lule (2004):

As a nation prepares for war, the news media should offer sites in which rationales for war are identified and verified; official claims are solicited and evaluated; alternative views are sought and assessed; costs, both human and material, are weighed; legalities are established; possible outcomes and aftermaths are considered, and wide ranging debates are given voice. The consequences of war seem to require no less from the news.

(p. 180)

However, several extensive empirical researches on the impartiality of the Coalition's media coverage in the Iraq War have found out that there is significant favoritism towards the Coalition forces. These studies have examined different facets of media representation, such as, framing, language, and choice of stories, all of which have provided evidence towards media bias in favor of the Coalition's actions and motives. This bias has called for concern over the neutrality and the independency of the media stations owned by the Coalition, not forgetting the difficulties involved in getting authentic and balanced information in the course of the war.

According to the findings of Kull et al., (2003) in a study to find the effect of western media on the public opinion during the Iraq war, it shows that there is a strong correlation between the source of news and the public misperceptions of the conflict. Viewers of media outlets such as Fox News showed the highest level of misperception while NPR/PBS exhibited the lowest. It is safe to assume that the perception of viewers changes between a media outlet to another based on the way the news were covered.

This chapter will focus on the US and UK, being the key countries of the Coalition, and the bias revealed in them based on the literature review.

2.2.1. The US Influence:

Before the actual war in Iraq, President Bush used the national security paradigm and progressive theories to justify the war. He depicted the invasion as a way of bringing freedom to Iraq, as a measure to prevent Saddam Hussein from committing atrocities against humanity, and as a way of preventing the growth of WMDs. War media techniques are utilized by the military, political, and corporate affiliations of the media to relay propaganda messages. The political economy of media associations plays a significant role in the production of news and decides the aspects of war declaration. When air campaign on Iraq started, President Bush painted a very moving picture about the coalition and countries that are part of the allied forces. Nevertheless, the

conflict was characterized by the bipolar structure where the US and UK were leading the coalition of the willing to war against Iraq and had the support of most of the international community for Bush's policy (Javed & Hashmi, 2021).

In order to determine the bias within the media, particularly those from the US, a study was done by Gunter (2009) analyzing the Media Coverage of the Iraq war specifically in the New York Times. The findings of the study:

- **Focus on Bush administration:** This paper highlighted that the newspaper particularly concentrated on President Bush and his administration by providing them with the most coverage.
- **Limited coverage of opposing views:** The major players that were depicted in the media as supporting the war included the US, UK, and Australia, while organizations such as the UN, weapons inspectors, and countries like France, Germany, and Russia that opposed the war received relatively little coverage. Furthermore, there were few opportunities to engage with critical voices that could have provided a different perspective.
- **Negative portrayal of Iraq:** Saddam Hussein and his government were portrayed negatively and the US military was portrayed positively.
- **Uncritical reporting of WMD claims:** The Times did not aggressively question the sources of the information provided by the Bush administration regarding the WMDs in Iraq and frequently used inferences and judgments rather than reports.

The senior editors of The New York Times (NYT) have apologized on May 26, 2004 for the paper's coverage of the war and admitted that the paper's coverage was substandard compared to its usual professionalism. As much as it is true that the coverage leading up to the war was laden with numerous journalistic flaws (Melkote, 2009). The statement quotes:

However, we have identified several examples of the inadequate coverage that could have been otherwise prevented. Sometimes what was considered to be controversial knowledge in the past, and may look questionable now, was not adequately restrained or argued. With hindsight, we would have liked to be more assertive in revisiting the allegations as fresh evidence materialized, or in some cases, did not.

In summary, the study indicates that The New York Times' coverage of the pre- Iraq War may have leaned towards the US government side and provided limited coverage to the arguments against the war. This brings into question the bias the media has in relation to journalistic neutrality during a highly sensitive period of political transition.

2.2.2. The UK Influence:

Similar to the US and according to Robinson et al., (2009), the UK had a high opposition to the notion of invading Iraq, both from the public and the Parliament. Numerous accusations were directed to the UK government and media, particularly regarding the claim of Iraq's WMDs capability.

In contrast to US newspapers like the New York Times, mainstream media outlets in the UK such as the BBC presented a comparatively more balanced perspective on the war. According to a study conducted by Ashley (2014), it demonstrated an overall equilibrium between consensus (46%) and dissent (56%) in its coverage. The study also found that the BBC used broader range of sources, including UK officials and international figures.

However, it is important to note that the UK's press arena is very competitive, newspapers differs in their opinions based on their political stance. Therefore it is inaccurate and misleading to judge the UK's media bias solely on one media press (Goddard et al., 2008).

Goddard et al (2008) found in their study that the UK media press had a conflicting stance on the Iraq war, different newspapers had different opinions regarding the war, and the findings of the study were:

Pro-War Newspapers:

The Sun: To be more specific, it can be stated that they unconditionally supported the war effort. Promoted more support for British soldiers and painted the war as a just war. This paper incorporated a language that was patriotic and encouraging to soldiers.

The Daily Mail: Shown a kind of ambiguity by supporting the troops, while at the same time questioning and having apprehensions about the war. While it accepted the need for the invasion, it questioned the justification of the government and the ramifications of its actions.

The Daily Telegraph and The Times: These two newspapers were predominantly in support of the war and dismissed the concerns and instead focused on the call for action against Saddam Hussein. They described the invasion as something that had to be done for the sake of the global safety.

Anti-War Newspapers:

The Daily Mirror: It is important to note that this outlet was very much against the war, considering it wrong and unnecessary. It also accused the Tony Blair government for deciding to get involved in the war.

The Guardian and The Independent: These two newspapers were strongly against the war and they considered the moral and geopolitical factors of it. Lack of military intervention emphasized the decision making process and criticized. And also using appeasement and advocating for political approaches and underlining the possible adverse impacts of the invasion.

The media bias in the UK is particularly more evident as a result of the rising levels of competition within the media market. Unlike in some other countries where the media houses are likely to have a polarized position along the political divide, the British press represents a broad

spectrum of opinion and political bias influenced by business and political affiliations. Appreciating this contestation is crucial to making sense of media coverage of major happenings and concerns such as the Iraq War.

2.3. Examples of Western Media Bias during Iraq's Invasion:

All the media channels around the globe were filled with the expectations and speculations about the war on Iraq that was to happen. The study reveals a wide range of attitudes towards the conflict based on the articles in various newspapers of different countries. This segment will further explore the apparent positive bias towards military intervention in Iraq as demonstrated in four articles. Among them two articles retrieved from the Daily Mail that is considered one of the leading newspapers in the United Kingdom, which is famous for its rather clear support on the war. Also, the New York Times and the Washington Post will be used to analyze the possible bias that these articles have within them.

2.3.1. Pre-war examples:

2.3.1.1. The Daily Mail:

Phillips (2003) wrote in an article titled “This week our world will change” has presented a perspective that fully supports the war in Iraq based on the view of the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The author goes on to assert that Blair’s leadership in the upcoming war could potentially lead to substantial changes in the geopolitical structure of the world and the general attitudes toward such international organizations as the United Nations and the European Union. The article gives an impression of Blair as a brave man whose actions may lead to change even if it is not politically correct in this case, the Middle East. This pro-war slant is particularly visible in constructing the opposing view to Blair’s decisions as illogical or wrong. Upon further inspection of the article and language used within, it can be found that:

Support for Tony Blair's Leadership:

“If Saddam is removed in reasonably short order, Mr Blair will not only be hailed as a leader of huge courage and statesmanship.”

“His whole approach to his party will have been changed by these traumatic experiences. He will have been through the fire; and the Prime Minister who emerges will be forged in a mould of iron.”

These statements imply a high level of support for Tony Blair as the leader of the Labour Party, stating that his decision to support the Iraq War was a brave one and was that of a statesman. Such challenges are portrayed as tests that could change Blair, thus suggesting a story of triumph over adversity and depicting him as a powerful and competent leader.

Downplaying Potential Negative Consequences:

“It would be a defining moment, the reshaping of the international order and the British and European political landscape.”

“But even if Mr Blair is vindicated by the success of the war, British voters are unlikely to forgive him.”

These quotes reduce the possible adverse effects of Iraq war by presenting it as a major event that may lead to a change of the world politics for the better. Despite the possibility of a backlash against its own citizens by the British voters, there is an indication that there are international repercussions which override internal issues hence downplaying the possible repercussions.

Dismissal of Opposing Viewpoints:

“More profoundly, if Saddam is beaten and the world clearly benefits, then the whole world view of the Left will have taken a series of enormous knocks.”

“The biggest blow to the Left, however, will be delivered if America succeeds in its governing ambition to restructure the Middle East.”

These quotes ignore the arguments of the other side by labeling them wrong and asserting that the success of the Iraq War would surely contradict the principles of the Left. In this way, the article

erases competing views on the war and strengthens the belief that the war is justified and a blow to leftist values.

Emphasis on Potential Benefits:

“But if the war does go well, then we will also enter uncharted political waters.”

“In short, this could be where the world turns for the better.”

These statements remain optimistic and focused on the positive outcomes of the Iraq War, which was presented as the event that can bring positive changes worldwide. Thus, by shifting readers’ attention towards the potential for positive change that may come out of the conflict, the article aims to rationalize the war by pointing to the positive consequences that may stem out of it, including the potential for a reconfiguration of the geopolitical map and the promotion of a more favorable world order.

In conclusion, one can say that this article presents Saddam Hussein and his regime as the main antagonist. On the other hand, it paints the UK as a politically correct and courageous entity under Tony Blair’s government to counter this oppressive menace. Altogether, the article is informative and shows the biased view of the author who supports the military operations against Iraq and depicts the UK’s role as legitimate.

2.3.1.2. The New York Times:

The article titled “U. S. says Hussein intensifies quest for A-BOMB parts” by Gordon and Miller (2002), subconsciously makes use of certain biases that support the U.S. Bush administration’s agenda in the early 2000s. It is essential to note that in this article, some of the aspects that are used to create a sense of an impending threat include selective quotations, emphasis on unverified intelligence reports, and framing of statements from administration officials. Moreover, the presentation of Iraqi defectors and their claims without questioning their credibility or

cross-checking their claims extends the sense of danger to the audience, which in turn creates an understanding of the necessity of pre-emptive military action. From the article it can be found that:

Iraq's Pursuit of Nuclear Weapons:

“Iraq has stepped up its quest for nuclear weapons and has embarked on a worldwide hunt for materials to make an atomic bomb.”

“President Hussein has met repeatedly in recent months with Iraq's top nuclear scientists and, according to American intelligence, praised their efforts as part of his campaign against the West.”

These statements show that Iraq is keen on developing nuclear weapons, making it appear as if the Saddam Hussein regime is determined to develop atomic weapons. This was especially so when the intelligence report singled out Hussein's direct interaction with nuclear scientists; an indication of the extent of the Iraq's nuclear ambitions and perceived threat to the western world's interests.

Heightened Efforts in Chemical Weapons Development:

“An Iraqi defector said Mr. Hussein had also heightened his efforts to develop new types of chemical weapons.”

This quote brings into focus the fact that Iraq has stepped up production for chemical weapons, which is an indication that the regime is serious in using weapons of mass destruction. The credibility of the claim is supported by the testimony of an Iraqi defector, making it easier to understand why it is believed that Iraq is a formidable enemy in the chemical warfare.

Urgency for Action:

“The question is not, why now? The question is why waiting is better.”

The use of the word ‘now’ in this statement brings the idea that further delay in action against Iraq's weapons programs will only exacerbate the situation. By formulating the problem into a question of timing rather than the necessity for intervention, it suggests that urgent action is essential to stop Iraq from progressing with its weapons programme.

Increasing Difficulty of Dealing with Hussein:

“The closer Saddam Hussein gets to a nuclear weapon, the harder he will be to deal with.”

This quote is an implication of the growing problem in dealing with Saddam Hussein as Iraq continues to move forward with its nuclear capabilities. It implies that if the USA lets Hussein get nuclear weapons then it would be even harder to deal with the regime and therefore makes the need for a pre-emption even more imperative.

Challenges in Assessing Threat:

“Painting an up-to-date picture of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is not easy.”

This statement attempts to justify how it is difficult to determine the stockpiling of WMD in Iraq and the reason why intelligence agencies may have difficulties in getting factual and timely information. It highlights the unknown about the Iraqi weapons programs, thus providing more support to those who are demanding action to be taken in response to the perceived threat from the Iraq regime.

In simple terms, the article advances a number of propositions related to Iraq's intentions of acquiring WMDs and its potential desire for nuclear weapons capabilities, with an emphasis on the rationale for using force against Saddam Hussein's regime. It focuses on statements by the officials of the Bush administration, intelligence reports and Iraqi defectors indicating an increased level of danger from the Iraqi WMD program. While admitting the lack of intelligence information and using other questionable sources, the article depicts Iraq as a country possessing dangerous capabilities and evil intentions that should be eliminated as soon as possible to prevent further threat to the US and its allies.

2.3.2. During the War Examples:

2.3.2.1. The Daily Mail:

In an article written by Phillips (2003) 'This war IS about good versus evil', the author is already taking sides before the reader is introduced to the arguments of the article. This bias is evident throughout the entire article; the author presents the war in black and white terms and depicts it as a fight between good and evil. Instead of recognizing shades of gray or subtle distinctions, this narrative pits one side as the white-hat heroes who are fighting for liberty against the other as the black-hat villains who are waging a war on freedom. The kind of framing that is done in the above examples not only distorts the genuine nature of the conflict but also helps to rationalize and entrench the author's preconceived ethical position. In the article, it can be found that:

Portrayal of Saddam Hussein's Regime:

"The unspeakable nature of Saddam Hussein's regime has been brought home by the parading of terrified American prisoners of war on Iraqi television, and by the disgusting footage of the bodies of other captives, at least two of whom had been shot between the eyes."

"Terrorised Iraqis understand this distinction only too well. Hundreds of young men stood applauding as allied convoys rolled into Basra."

These statements show the cruelty of the Hussain regime, and present the allied forces as humane when dealing with prisoners of war as compared to the Iraqi forces. The reception given to allied troops by the Iraqis, in the form of cheers, clapping and shouting for freedom from tyranny, implies that the war was moral.

Justification of Military Action:

"It is clear the Americans have made every attempt to avoid needless loss of Iraqi life."

"The allies have been fighting in accordance with the proportionality demanded by a just war."

These quotes exonerate the military aggression on Iraq since they show that the forces of the coalition have tried to reduce the loss of civilian lives while waging war. The depiction of surgical

strikes, that is, strikes targeted at specific objectives, and juxtaposition of the targets with Saddam's alleged shielding of human shields, thus, presents the coalition's cause as virtuous.

Criticism of Anti-War Protests:

"But some people in the West... deny this is truly a just war - and fantastically, believe instead that the most dangerous person in the world is not Saddam but President Bush."

"Yet amazingly... thousands of people in Britain and other Western countries refuse to accept this moral difference."

These passages condemn anti-war protests in the West which are described as wrong and symptomatic of people's moral depravity. The author accuses protesters of not recognizing the rightfulness of the war and points to anti-Americanism, anti-Bush sentiment, and lack of understanding Middle East situation as sources of protesters' opinions.

Denouncement of Moral Equivalence:

"The most fundamental reason is surely the general moral confusion... where people are increasingly unable or unwilling to distinguish good from evil."

"This doctrine of moral equivalence means that one person's terrorist is another's freedom fighter - regardless of the fact that he may be fighting against a free democracy."

These quotes criticize the idea of moral relativity, which, according to the authors, obfuscates the difference between the right and wrong and weakens the spirit of resistance to oppression and extremism. The author voices the anger of the readers toward the many religious and political leaders who have not stood up against evil, thus being labeled as cowards who are as evil as the perpetrators of the injustice.

Condemnation of Opposition to War:

"And now that allied troops are laying down their lives for their countries, those who continue their protests are committing nothing less than an act of treachery."

“The battle is between those who want to build a better world... and those who wish instead to appease them...”

These passages deplore further non-compliance with the war as sinful and thus rewarding the oppressors and terrorists. The author depicts the war as a battle between the side that wants to liberate the people and the side that perpetuates tyranny, positioning the anti-war movement as a force that slows down development and hinders justice.

Therefore, the points brought up in the article prove a prejudice in the author’s account of the Iraq War that only acknowledges two sides. Another way, the author supports the idea that military action is justified is by depicting the cruelty of Saddam Hussein’s regime and presenting the coalition’s actions as moral. Furthermore, the rejection of anti-war demonstrations and the condemnation of moral equivalence also work to discredit dissenting voices, painting them as not only wrong but also immoral and pandering to the enemy. Last but not least, the negative characterization of those who are against the war as being traitors also reveals the author’s strong conviction as to the need for the war, and positions it as a battle between the forces of good and evil. In other words, it is possible to conclude that the author has a clear set of moral values that does not allow for alternative opinions and discussions regarding the Iraq War.

2.3.2.2. The Washington Post:

The article under review, “Hussein’s Baghdad Falls” by Shadid (2024) seems to chronicle historical event when the citadel of Hussein and his tyrannical rule was brought down by the brute force of the US military. But even with this disguise of being the bearer of the news, there is a layer of prejudice that shapes the narrative. Starting from the choice of events that are described, ending with a specific approach to their presentation, the article is a mirror reflecting a certain outlook on the events that took place in Baghdad. Upon the examination and analysis of the articles, multiple points can be made, which are:

Portrayal of the Collapse of Saddam Hussein's Regime:

“Swept aside by U.S. troops who drove through the streets of Baghdad, President Saddam Hussein's government collapsed today...”

“...thousands of Baghdad residents poured into the streets to celebrate the government's defeat and welcome the U.S. forces in scenes of thanks and jubilation.”

These statements depict how quickly the regime of Saddam Hussein was overthrown in Bagdad and how people rejoiced and welcomed the U. S. troops. The scenes of celebration show that there is a popular demand for freedom from decades of tyrannical rule, thus proving the coalition’s mission to be justified.

Justification of Military Intervention:

“Since launching the invasion from Kuwait March 20, U.S. and British forces have seized control of all the country's important centers south of Baghdad and at least two-thirds of its territory.”

“The fall of Baghdad -- and its celebration by thousands of Iraqis eager to heap scorn on their leader -- marked a climactic moment and a clear turning point in the war...”

These quotes justify the military intervention in Iraq by pointing to the coalition’s strategic successes and symbolic victory of ousting Saddam from Baghdad. This paper argues that the occupation of strategic sites and the reception from the Iraqi people are represented as evidence for the legitimacy of the coalition’s goal in overthrowing Saddam Hussein’s rule.

Reflection on the Fallout of the Regime's Collapse:

“In a country where virtually every family has a tale of suffering at the hands of the Arab world's most brutal government, the day prompted reflection...”

“...many braced for the claims that the disenfranchised Shiite majority would make.”

These passages give an insight into the post-regime scenario by accepting the fact that the Iraqi people suffered greatly under the rule of Saddam Hussein. This expectation of changes in the society

and politics especially in the Shiite majority groups give a deeper insight into the challenges Iraq is likely to face after the war and the need to rehabilitate.

Uncertainty and Ambivalence amid Liberation:

“Those conflicting emotions gave rise to odd moments.”

“Even during the jubilation, Hussein still felt present in Baghdad after such a long period as absolute ruler.”

These quotes capture the joy of the liberated and the confusion and doubt the Iraqis felt during that time. This paper intends to analyze how the Iraqi people experienced the duality of liberation and dictatorship as they transition from one form of government to another, the role of the media in the cause of the liberation of Iraq and the impact of the liberation on the people of Iraq.

Contemplation of Future Challenges:

“...the questions suggested that the United States -- its credibility suffering in much of the Arab world -- had a window of goodwill...”

“But how long that window lasts may become a more pressing question in time.”

These passages consider the future consequences of the war for Iraq and the United States, such as the issues of credibility, state-building and maintaining good will. The events and issues that have emerged in the years since the Iraq War and the challenges of defining its aftermath suggest that long-term stability may be a long way off.

When analyzing the biases incorporated this article, one is faced with the reality of the nature of mediated communication. By choosing what to highlight and what to ignore, by presenting information in a particular manner and by excluding some information altogether, the article naturalizes and legitimizes some specific ideological stances while rendering other stances as unnatural and illegitimate. In this regard, it has a significant purpose of raising awareness of the role of media in influencing public opinion and the writing of history. Through such biases, it becomes

possible to attempt to see beyond simple black and white, and look at the grey in between, thus questioning the monopoly that a single narrative has over an event.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, media became one of the major factors that influenced the perception of the population regarding the military actions in Iraq. One of the threads dominating the analyzed articles, among others, is the persistence of the use of specific methods and strategies to build a narrative around the conflict. First among these is the constant preoccupation with the WMD, which are highly suspicious even if one examines their claims closely. It thus helps to justify intervention in the same manner in which the Bush administration painted the invasion of Iraq as a pre-emptive strike against an impending danger.

In the same manner, the articles also stress the oppressive nature of Saddam Hussein's regime, the need to depose him for the good of the Iraqi people and the international community. In this way, the media tries to use Hussein as a scapegoat, mobilizing people's emotions and making them concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Iraq to call for intervention.

Moreover, another common feature of these articles is the silencing of the voices of individuals who had posed questions of criticism about the war. The voice of the opposition is silenced or is labeled as being anti-State which means that the dissenting voices are suppressed and only the narrative that the intervention was necessary is allowed.

Also, one can identify a pattern where the coalition forces are portrayed as the 'white hat' – the good guys who have good intentions of overthrowing Hussein's regime and providing the Iraqis with what they want and need. This portrayal is used in an effort to solicit support for the mission of the coalition while at the same time trivializing the realities and the consequences of military action.

Lastly, the employment of these techniques and approaches by the media builds a story that can be deemed as justifying the military action in Iraq and garnering support of the public for the actions of the coalition. And according to the previously mentioned findings, it shows that it had a strong effect on the public perception to supporting the war.

CHAPTER THREE

Arabic Media Coverage Bias on the USA's Invasion of Iraq

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Introduction:

Language plays a significant role in reinforcing and shaping these war narratives. It conceals the power dynamics at play and normalizes them. Therefore, this study aims not only to outline the media themes but also to examine the media's framing strategies and positioning used to elucidate these themes. In this sense, language becomes a crucial factor. While language may not completely dictate the media's portrayal and characterization of military actions, it is one measure that can help demonstrate the extent to which the media projects and normalizes a specific war narrative (McIntosh, 2021) (Jackson et al.2021).

The 2003 invasion never obtained the approval of the United Nations and was called “illegal” and a “war of aggression” by a number of legal scholars, politicians and diplomats. The invaded country had not attacked any other member or breached any of the key United Nations’ Security Council’s resolutions. Arab nations and the wider Arab world were engulfed in large-scale protests much before the invasion started, during the armed conflict and even after the fall of the Ba’athist regime. Arab political elite, intellectuals and the wider public opinion condemned the invasion and argued that its real objectives were oil and the imposition of United States and Israel interests in the region, as well as the desire of President George W. Bush and his supporters to carry out a “crusade” against Arabs and their culture. The invasion was also seen as an attempt to create a new Middle East by redrawing the political map of the Middle East, creating client regimes and changing the political nature of the existing corrupt ruling elites. A number of these arguments were raised, discussed and debated in the columns, articles, commentaries and news reports of Arab media outlets (Abdelmoumene, 2023).

News values undoubtedly have a significant impact on media performance and news coverage worldwide. Sometimes these values are acknowledged, while other times they are overlooked. News stories that align with these values are emphasized, while those that do not are

often downplayed or ignored altogether. It is not surprising that conflict, political, and economic themes are at the forefront of these preferences. The debates surrounding the "new world information and communication order" and "media imperialism" in postcolonial/empire/government regions, as well as internal strife and conflict within fragmented Third World or Asian blocs, further reinforce these preferences. Against this backdrop, news values are strengthened as these regions strive to protect their power, establish order, and suppress subversive activities and internal dissent (Shultziner & Stukalin, 2021) (Christin & Petre, 2020).

3.1. The Role of Arab Media:

The Arab media include outlets that are owned by the state and those that are privately owned. These include newspapers, radio, and television stations which play a major role in influencing the opinions of the people in the Arab region. These media ensembles function as vessels for delivering government policies and, therefore, tend to focus on pertinent political, economic, and social concerns as viewed by the ruling powers. For years, theorists have understood the significant part played by media in the formulation and dissemination of public opinion and the Arab media is no stranger to this dynamic. It is worth mentioning that Arab media have played a significant role in promulgating a unified anti-west imperialism message, coupled with the plight of the Palestinians and the civilian victims of the war on terrorism in Afghanistan more recently. Through the systematic promotion of these narratives, Arab media sources have managed to mobilize public support for Palestinian and other Arab nationalist ones. This has not only helped in defining regional discourses but also contributed to transforming perceptions and attitudes regarding the western powers and their policies in the Middle East. As it relates to the Iraq invasion in 2003, many scholars have undertaken research to identify the framing and themes that characterize the coverage in Arab media. These studies help to understand the actual images and meanings which the Arab media outlets constructed and conveyed around the invasion, as well as the discursive

frameworks through which the event was narrativized in the Arab context. Through analyzing quotations from the leading Arab media like Al Jazeera, the findings of these studies can be validated and supported by the researchers, which helps in explaining the role and influence of the Arab media in forming the opinion of the public in the conflict and crisis situations (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2020) (Richter & Kozman, 2021).

Overall, the analysis of Arab media coverage for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 highlights the significant impact that these media organizations bear in controlling the narrative of the event, rallying the masses, and creating perceptions of geopolitical events in the Arab world. In this context, Arab media play an active role in defining and disseminating significant matters and stories that provide the groundwork for the formation of collective subjectivities and the modulation of individual and collective conduct in the region.

In this chapter, we have examined results of multiple studies on the framing and themes of the Arab Media coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq to extract the main underlying themes and frames. We have also taken quotation examples from older webpages from the leading Arab Media outlet of Al Jazeera to verify and support the results of previous studies.

3.2. The Arab Media Scene before the War:

When we look at news broadcasting in the few decades prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, between the 1960s and the mid-1980s, Arabic news was mainly government-controlled, especially in the larger Arabic countries. At that time, reports were restricted and aired to local audiences as well as Arabs in the region. Likewise, the regular consumers of the Arab terrestrial television services that began in the 1960s continued to be imbued via state propaganda. Traditionally, western democracies were less considerate of reporting and news gathering as critical to the governance structure's management of the media. Instead of going out on the streets and interviewing people on the ground, or having studio discussions, which has normally been

associated with the practice of news casting, viewers of the young Arab news broadcasting systems of that time only watched a hopefully narrated briefing of protocol news, which was mostly made up of government announcements on the activities of the state and speeches of the day (FRONTLINE/World, n.d.).

Arab states have continued using media as a strategic tool since the times of decolonization. The Nasser Egyptian government sought the Arabic-speaking people's compliance by using radio, television, and print media, and borrowing media propaganda methods found in Europe in favor of the Egyptian Pan-Arab and Non-Aligned foreign policy. It was clearly acknowledged how media can get into action to become a subversive force, this was seen in the case of Egypt and Iran in the 1970s where preachers' cassettes that criticized the governments for being oppressive and corrupt were popular (Hammond et al., 2018).

Throughout the 1990s, Egypt's hegemony over the Arab media scene was in decline and failed to keep up, with the advent of satellite news and the outbreak of entertainment media, and the rising media rivalry funded by the Gulf Arab states. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait saw loyal wealthy businessmen setting up news channels that ended up in the creation of the Qatari Al Jazeera in 1996, and later, Al Arabiya in 2003 (Hammond et al., 2018).

“When Al Jazeera launched from the Qatari capital, Doha, on Friday, November 1, 1996, it was the first independent news channel in the Arab world. Media in the Arab world, till then, was characterized by state-controlled narratives that denied audiences the right to know and the right to be heard.” (About Us | Today's Latest From Al Jazeera, n.d.)

The Al Jazeera satellite news channel was established in 1996; it was founded due to a conflict of interests between Saudi Arabia and the BBC News Service. Orbit Radio and Television Service which is an affiliate of Saudi has had the BBC's Arabic television section to launch an Arabic satellite television. However, the Saudis ceased their funding of the project following a

disagreement with the British over a Channel 4 documentary of executions in Saudi Arabia. It surprises that while planning the venture, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Prince of Qatar hired many of them from the BBC. Al Jazeera began with \$140 million in start-up money and had a five-year deal in which half its satellite cost was subsidized; it broadcasted from a studio located in Doha. It has developed into one of the most familiar media brands of the modern era, providing Arab homes with direct news and hot• uttered talk shows for more than ten years now. This was after Al Jazeera upset not only the United States but also many Arab governments; Libya and Kuwait threatened to recall their respective ambassadors from Qatar (FRONTLINE/World, n.d.).

Despite several attempts over the last few years by other satellite channels to rival Al Jazeera, the network was not really challenged until 2003 when the Saudi-owned 24-hour news-oriented channel, Al Arabiya, set up from Dubai. At first, it was like another Al Jazeera but with dolled-up graphics, at least that was how It started. However, shortly after its inception, the channel was managed by a new, highly pro-American editor, who was married to Saudi Arabia's longtime King Fahd's sister. Since then the coverage of the two has significantly differed especially with regard to Iraq, as it challenged the common narrative that the Arab Media was accustomed to. It was in 2001 that American audiences first experienced what Arab television offered, when Al Jazeera headlined the world's media with its live feed of the U.S. attack upon Afghanistan in the wake of September 11th (FRONTLINE/World, n.d.).

3.3. The Battle for Influence on Arab Public Opinion:

Arab media, with their live coverage of scenes from the ground and presence in the main centers of action, brought the war home to viewers in an unmediated way for the first time. Inside the Arab world, a large number of people no longer reflected on the war through secondhand accounts; they felt it and lived it. The stage for real-time, high-stakes media competition to define the war was set. Arab media's own reporting on the war and the monumentally intrusive, hyper-

dramatic climate it created took the region's discussion of itself and its future to new levels of intensity and scrutiny. These accelerated Arab media-catalyzed conversations about domestic reformation, transnational and trans-state linkages, intra-regulate relations, and external powers provide only early and still largely impressionistic evidence that this also may shape a new chapter of more open, more participatory, and therefore, more independent Arab media (Stallabrass, 2020). By March 2003, there were several Arab satellite channels present on the battlefield, in an indirect contrast to the embedded journalism the coalition forces attempted to rely on.

Djamal Dajani writes: "In the early days of the Iraqi War, when many Western journalists were practicing roof-top reporting before becoming more embedded with the troops, Arab reporters and camera crews were putting their lives at risk, reporting from the "eye of the storm" in Baghdad."(FRONTLINE/World, n.d.)

There was a strong sense of unity in the Media War in terms of the framing of the sides of the confrontation on the ground, the coverage began to revolve around the "coalition invaders and the Iraqi resistance". Al Jazeera operated under the slogan "War on Iraq" and used the term "invaders", and broadcast graphic imagery of dead and wounded Iraqi soldiers and civilians, and the destruction caused by the American-British war machine. Al Arabiya and the Emarati news channel Abu Dhabi, although not able to deliver the same level of news and coverage of Jazeera, they still did the same work in highlighting casualties and damage, but not in the same tone as their Qatari counterpart (Swissinfo.Ch, 2003).

Generally, The invasion of Iraq in 2003 provided Arab media with an opportunity to challenge the monopoly of foreign, especially Western, media in the presentation and interpretation of international events. Millions of Arabs turned to Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based satellite television channel, and to Al-Arabiya, its Dubai-based rival, for up-to-the-minute coverage of the war. In addition to these two specialized news channels, the print and broadcast media in the Arab world

provided diverse perspectives and editorial policies on the war and its implications. Arab media coverage of the invasion of Iraq—and of other international events as well—varies in terms of emphasis, selection of news items, and interpretation. In particular, Arab media coverage tends to reflect the political orientation of the owners of the media establishments and the states in which they operate (Sameer Masoud Shqair, 2021).

3.4. Key Themes and Framings of Arab Media Coverage of the War:

3.4.1. The Anti-American Sentiment:

Growing up, Arab citizens were taught in their respective countries' history classes that the United States of America was an enemy. Propaganda machines led by ruling governments made sure that the negative image of the United States was deeply embedded in the psyche of every Arab citizen. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has underestimated the role of communications in international relations, and has allocated altogether a modest amount of money for public diplomacy efforts. As a result, the U.S. has been unable to correct the negative stereotypes that many people, particularly in Arab countries, have of it. Furthermore, in the case of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, U.S. actions only served to confirm the conspiracy theories, bias, and judging that many Arabs accused the U.S. of, and thereby nurturing anti-American sentiment even more (Salinas et al.2022) (Qutami, 2020).

Throughout the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and even to this day, most Arab media reflected the voice and concerns of the anti-American Arab public. The tone of Arab media reporting regarding the invasion of Iraq was very critical of the U.S. and its actions. Most journalists and news broadcasters did not use their professional training, assumed subjective coverage, and pinpoint the invasion's real purpose; they rather became a loud speaker of the Arab street, and sharply articulated its voice, which depicted fury and anger. The ensuing analysis and discussion were also one-sided. Very coherent arguments were made about the U.S. failing to adhere to the

United Nations Charter, using excessive force, killing innocent civilians, not providing a secure and safe environment, and wanting to secure the Iraqi oil. Moreover, the Arab media argued that the U.S. was acting on behalf of the Israelis, and that the invasion was only serving to strengthen Israel. The lack of balance in their reporting must not be taken lightly; however, Arab media's lack of objectivity is only the tip of the iceberg (Jati, 2021).

When we analyze the content of Al Jazeera's website, being the leading Arab Media outlet, on a snapshot of the Waybackmachine website on 29 March 2003, we can read the following headlines:

"American plan to partially resume pumping Iraqi oil"

"Archeologists accuse the Americans of allowing looting of artifacts"

"British minister accuses Iraq invading forces of breaking the Geneva Accord"

"Voice silencing and eye gouging in protection of the cleanliness of the American invasion of Iraq" (العراق على الحرب / نت الجزيرة, n.d.).

On the webpage of the 30th of March we read the following:

"American planes shell the Iraqi Ministry of Media Building"

"The capturing of oil fields.... American and British forces take control over 600 oil wells in southern Iraq"

After the fall of Baghdad and on 11 April 2003, one of Al Jazeera's program episodes is titled "The rising global coalition against America"

We see here that Al Jazeera, which is arguably a representative of Arab Media during the invasion, have been maintaining negative depiction of the U.S. military operations and diplomacy. Insinuating an impression of an invasion for the resources when reporting U.S. forces securing Iraqi oil and "looting" Iraq's historical artifacts. Al Jazeera also puts forth international condemnation and accusations against the U.S. and the coalition, in an attempt to frame international response as being

anti-American and feed the Arab audiences with resentment towards the “invading forces” of the coalition.

3.4.2. Human Suffering and Civilian Impact:

Al Jazeera also focused more in its coverage on highlighting campaigns of sympathy and solidarity with Iraq through Arab opposition demonstrations and protests, compared to the coverage of Al Arabiya and Abu Dhabi, which do not expand much in coverage taking into account the positions of the countries that own it (Swissinfo.Ch, 2003).

Arab media would relay news that was actually banned or suppressed from being broadcasted in Western media stations. For example, during invasion by America, the Baghdad regime provided Al-Jazeera with the video of dazed and wounded American prisoners of war which was shown but when American networks received same video they refused claiming that showing such video is in bad taste and infringing privacy of people involved and their families. A site that is an Arab news site also televised and published the video on its site received a lot of visitors from net users in the United States. It is evident that U.S. news networks are being hypocritical when U.S. channels do not blanch at showing similar scenes of captured Iraqis (Stallabrass, 2020).

In a study conducted on the home pages of news websites during the invasion phase, including Al Jazeera and Al Ahram, it was noted that Arab media have presented more often the role of media journalists in the conflict, being on the battlefield at high risk. This could be attributed to the fact that Arab media used more often the media self-referential frame on their websites alongside source attribution. This finding could be attributed to the fact that most Arab journalists had more convenient means by which they could access Baghdad and several other parts of Iraq than their Western counterparts. The two Arab media outlets shed focus on the violence using graphic imagery of wounded civilians, dead soldiers and destroyed infrastructure (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007).

To truly grasp the Arab media framing of the war on Iraq, we examine old webpages of Al Jazeera and analyze their content. For example, in the 10th day of the invasion, the main headline writes “Day 10: Shelling continues after Baghdad Massacre”, and the first article is titled “American forces open fire and kill four Iraqis in Mosul”, and on the survey section we read “Humanitarian scenarios for the consequences of the war on Iraq” the article further states “Secret UN documents recently issued predicts 30% of Iraqi children under 5 (1.26 Million children) face the danger of death due to malnutrition” (الجزيرة نت / الحرب على العراق, n.d.). The framing of headlines here is very apparent, with the use of terms such as “Baghdad massacre”, “kill”, and “Iraqi children...face the danger of death”. showcases the stress of the violence of war and the American war machine, and highlights the horrors and potential consequences of war, which leaves the audiences in a state of shock and sympathy, and establish support for the Iraqis as a nation under unjustifiable violence and war machine.

3.4.3. Pan-Arab Solidarity:

Reporters from around the Arab world filled a religious and intellectual void by demonstrating firsthand the excessive military power of the invading western forces. They also showed, live from the bombarded streets of Baghdad, the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of the invasion. Arab reporters conveyed the feelings and views of the Iraqi people to their own Arab audiences. These messages contributed to strengthening the traditional pan-Arab sense of solidarity. In this context, the suffering of the Iraqi people was portrayed as an attack on all Arabs. The foreign invasion therefore became an internal Arab issue, with pan-Arabism rearing its head again in political debate as a result of Arab media coverage of the war. The secondary role played by Qatar-based Al Jazeera and other Arab satellite stations was not carefully considered in previous studies (Najimdeen) (AlAhmad, 2023) (Mellor, 2020).

The plethora of small, private, public, independent, and pro-government Arab satellite stations that began broadcasting after the deregulation of the Arab broadcasting sector in the mid-1990s offered a variety of different, competing viewpoints on the invasion and the events that followed it. Not surprisingly, each Arab state and government had its own political, economic, and strategic interests and priorities in the war-torn country of Iraq, and attempted to promote its own agenda and viewpoint by opening the satellite-station floodgates and funding one or more new channels. As a result, the Arab media environment in 2003 became a new political battlefield for both non-Arab and Arab actors. Arab regimes and intellectuals feared that the dramatic and swift western military advances and victories could result in a new political order imposed by force of arms, where the United States would replace the Arab League as the source of collective Arab security. The invasion and occupation of Iraq could therefore lead to the demise of pan-Arabism and its associated ideology (Glazzard & Reed, 2021) (Miladi, 2021).

Arab Media outlets, whether state owned or belonging to independent parties, have been supportive of the Pan Arabian narrative in their own interpretation since the independence movements in the past century. We see that present in the Arab media coverage of the Iraq Invasion. On Al Jazeera website during the war, on April 8th we read an article titled “The weak Arab education system is a pivotal cause of Arab weakness”, the article highlights the following quote “Last year, the United Nations Development Program published a famous report identifying low educational standards as one of the main reasons for the backwardness that Arabs are experiencing today, after they were the pioneers of civilization in the world.”. The later quote unfolds a sentiment of disappointment, sympathy and hope, posing a question to the Arab intellectual and cultured readers of the causes of the collapse of the mightiest Arab nation at the time, which took Arabs by surprise, despite the enemy being coalition including the world’s superpower at the time.

3.4.4. Legitimacy and Sovereignty:

Al-Jazeera and other Arabic channels' views on the war and invasion of Iraq differ from those provided by the Western media. Whereas, the invasion was viewed by the western media as liberation of Iraq and the spread of democracy, the Arab media saw it as a violation of international law, aggression and tyranny similar to other unjust interventions in the affairs of the Arab world. This view stemmed from historical background of colonialism and foreign intervention, which contributed to labeling of those fighting the intruders as the 'resistance' rather than 'mujahideen' or 'suicide bombers' (Stallabrass, 2020).

Arab media sources including Al-Jazeera, were quick to provide statements from Arab leaders like Egyptian President Mubarak who opposed the war (Al Ahram, March 24, 2003). This focus on the political leaders' point of view contributed to the ways in which the war was portrayed in the Arabic media, which was not the same as the portrayal in the Western media that was dominated by political and military figures. This divergence pointed to the impact of regional politics and leadership positions on media coverage of the invasion, with consequential effects on the public. Furthermore, the Arab media played an active role in inciting anti-American sentiment and provided wide coverage to the allegations of media repression and aggression by the coalition forces norms of international law. For instance, an article on Al Jazeera's website published on 8th April 2016 unapologetically stated that "America wages war...without legitimacy" – a statement that contradicts the narrative that is commonly sold by the Western media. Thus, Arab media tried to respond to the invasion, using the rhetoric of the perceived illegitimate power and presenting an alternative point of view to the audiences (Dimitrova & Connolly-Ahern, 2007).

In general, the war in Iraq was viewed by Arab media in the context of the general Arab political position, stressing the struggle against the invasion and focusing on the alleged violations by the coalition states. This process was effective in rallying people against invasion and to

strengthen the anti-American sentiment that already existed in the Arab countries and it helped in framing the discourse of the conflict in the region.

Conclusion:

The conclusion to this chapter in short is that the Arab Media coverage of the 2003 invasion of Iraq was framed by the spread ideologies and values of the Arab culture: Pan Arabism, Islamic values, historical and nationalistic tendencies of the Arab people and the political elite. Arabs Media also had an approach of viewing and depicting the coalition objective as being greed over Iraqi resources, a misuse of power, and a service for the region's enemy, Israel. They also saw Operation Iraqi Freedom as some sort of postmodern crusade, with various indicators of religious motives and support. The Arab Media was in fact biased in their news reporting, against the coalition's military operation and political conduct, in accordance of various external and internal factors that surround the region's identity, present and future aspirations.

Moreover, Arab media used certain strategies to enhance this bias and gain audiences' sympathy. Through the extensive use of gruesome images and real life fatalities such as injured civilians, damaged houses, and demolished infrastructures, they were able to trigger the desired emotional responses in their target markets. That was done to show people, especially children, women and the elderly, the human toll of the invasion and make the coalition forces look like villains. This approach was to intensify the negative attitude towards the coalition and create a sense of social identity for the viewers based on the principles of injustice.

Arab media also employed narratives and anecdotes of the Iraqis to bring emotion and specific identity to the war and demonstrate the invasion's effect on the population. The newspapers also featured accounts from the eyewitnesses, family members of the victims, and local authorities on the impact of the invasion. These narratives were designed to generate anger and sadness, portraying the coalition forces as invaders rather than saviors. It also used rhetorical appeals and

invectives to appeal to the emotions of the audience and to paint the situation in the darkest possible light. Such headlines and commentaries contained expressions like ‘massacre’, ‘occupation’, and ‘atrocities’ that served to shape negative perceptions of the actions of the coalition. This language was intended to trigger feelings and call for public support against the invasion.

In addition, the media provided historical precedents of the invasion and the previous experiences of colonialism and past military incursions in the Arab world by the Western countries. In this way, the message of the media that situated the 2003 invasion within the history of Western imperialism was effective in provoking resentment and mobilizing the population against the invaders.

The Arab media was able to sustain the message and build the notion that the coalition’s actions were brutal and unjust through constant and passionate reporting. Not only did this prejudice impact the perception of the public, but it also set the tone for the regional and international discussion on the invasion. Laying stress on the human aspect of the war and defining the war in terms of cultural and political difference, the Arab media contributed to writing the script of the war and its aftermath, that is, Operation Iraqi Freedom.

General Conclusion:

Explaining the results of the study, it is possible to state that both Arab and Western media sources were highly biased in the representation of the 2003 Iraq War, although the approach and methods used by the two groups of sources were somewhat different. Western media primarily focused on the WMD that, as was claimed, was possessed by Iraq and also focused on the brutal dictator Saddam Hussein and his regime's human rights abuses. This narrative portrayed the coalition forces as the forces of good that were fighting to free people, democracy, human rights, and the world from the evil forces of the Saddam Hussein regime. On the other hand, Arabic media tried to show the ugly face of the war and its effects on the poor civilians, the losses they suffered and the lives they lost to make the viewers emphatic to the humanitarian crisis of the war. Such differences also highlight the divergence in the political and cultural perceptions of the conflict as depicted by the two modes of media and contributed to the formation of opinions and attitudes regarding the war in accordance with the media narratives being portrayed.

This work examines the significance of media and the need to understand bias in news reporting by focusing on the case of several media outlets. This is especially so since biased reporting can lead to the dissemination of half-truths, or even complete falsehoods, and help maintain stereotypical views among the populace; it can also deepen divisions within society and influence the formation of public opinion and policies. This clearly points to the necessity of presenting the information in an unbiased manner especially during conflict situations to avoid a skewed presentation of the information by the media. Thus, enhancing the role of journalism as well as increasing the awareness of the population in terms of media literacy are two significant steps toward a more enlightened society.

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى التحقيق والمقارنة بين أنواع التحيزات التي تظهر في وسائل الإعلام الغربية والعربية بشأن الغزو الأمريكي للعراق عام 2003 باستخدام كل من المنهجين التاريخي والنوعي. تظهر الدراسة أن هناك درجة معينة من التحيز في كلا وسائل الإعلام، الغربية والعربية. لكن النتائج تشير أنها تستخدم تقنيات مختلفة في تغطيتها. تم تصوير الغزو من قبل العديد من مصادر وسائل الإعلام الغربية من ناحية مخاوف الأمن القومي التي شملت امتلاك العراق لأسلحة الدمار الشامل، والنظام الوحشي المستخدم من طرف صدام حسين، بالإضافة إلى هدف الإطاحة بالديكتاتورية وإقامة الديمقراطية وحقوق الإنسان في العراق. علاوة على ذلك، فقد وضعت هذه الوسائل الإعلامية الولايات المتحدة كبطل جالب للسلام والأمن في المنطقة والعالم بشكل عام. من ناحية أخرى، اهتمت وسائل الإعلام العربية بشكل كبير على نقل أعداد الخسائر والمآسي واستخدام الصور لإظهار معاناة العراقيين. الهدف من هذا التركيز هو ربح تعاطف الجمهور بالإضافة إلى توضيح الألم الذي أجبر العراقيون على تحمله نتيجة للغزو سابق الذكر. بشكل عام، أضافت هذه الورقة إلى الخطاب حول التحيزات الإعلامية، والقصص المرتبطة بها، في التأثير على تصور الصراع والتدخل الدولي بين الجمهور.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الغزو الأمريكي للعراق، الانحياز الإعلامي، الإعلام الغربي، الإعلام العربي، المنهج التاريخي، أسلحة الدمار الشامل.