

## Financialization, Emotionalization, and Other Ugly Concepts

Toby Miller

Former US diplomat George Dempsey identified Robert Fisk, noted foreign correspondent of the British newspaper the *Independent*, as partly to blame for the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> (International Federation of Journalists 2001: 13), and actor John Malkovich told the Cambridge Union that he 'would like to shoot' Fisk. The reporter's reaction was to say: 'If we want a quiet life, we will just have to toe the line, stop criticising Israel or America. Or just stop writing altogether' (Fisk, 2002).

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Andrew Heyward, the President of CBS News, said the chief US TV networks (CBS, ABC, NBC, and Fox) were in a struggle for the 'survival of the samest' because they were 'uncannily similar,' and had come to regard news as 'a commodity' (quoted in Elkin, 2003). Unprecedentedly, CBS and ABC lost viewers at that time of crisis, so quickly did they return to game shows, entertainment news, and other genres (Smith, 2003) for fear of devoting too much time to irregular programming.

These two stories tell us two key things about the contemporary United States. The first tells us that Zionism is a priority for both liberals and conservatives, supported to the hilt unquestioningly. A key plank of US foreign policy is untouchable by critics – even foreign ones like Fisk. The second story tells us that entertainment has taken precedence over news in US TV. This chapter cannot explain the complex twists and turns that see, for example, right-wing Protestants supporting Zionism because they might see its triumph as the beginning of a welcomingly transformative Armageddon. But it can note how that links up with governmental and business decisions to make for an impoverished journalism unworthy of the name.

In the last ten years, the US media have gone from being controlled by fifty competing companies to five (Schechter, 2003). Many of these institutions are corporate conglomerates for which the traditions of journalism are almost incidental to profit-making. News divisions have been fetishised as individual profit-centers, whereas their previous function as loss-leaders had helped to give television networks a character that 'endorsed' other genres (Smith, 2003). In search of 'efficiencies', owners have closed investigative

sections and most foreign *bureaux* (Chester 2002: 1060 – other than in Israel (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2002). ABC News once maintained seventeen offices overseas. Now it has seven (Higham, 2001). In 2001, CBS had one journalist covering all of Asia, and seven others for the rest of the world.

Numerous academic studies have found that the networks do not pay attention to other countries other than as dysfunctional or as threatening to the United States (Golan and Wanta, 2003). TV coverage of governmental, military, and international affairs dropped from 70% of network news in 1977 to 60% in 1987 and 40% in 1997 (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2002). The ‘big three’ (CBS, NBC, and ABC) devoted 45% of their newscasts to foreign news in the 1970s (‘Did 9/11?’, 2002). In 1988, each network dedicated about 2 000 minutes to international news. A decade later, the figure had halved, with about 9% of the average newscast covering anything foreign (‘Battle Stations’, 2001). In 2000, just three stories from beyond the US (apart from the Olympics) made it into the networks’ twenty most-covered items, and all were directly concerned with domestic issues: the Miami-Cuba custody dispute over Élian Gonzales, the second *Intifada*; and the bombing of the USS Cole off Yemen. Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) issued a list of ten humanitarian disasters that barely rated a mention on these programmes, including the famine in Angola, civil wars in Somalia, Liberia, and Sudan, and expansion of the conflict in Colombia (Lobe, 2003a). Nicolas de Torrente, director of the US branch of the Médecins, put it this way: “Silence is the best ally of violence, impunity and contempt ... these enormous catastrophes don’t seem to exist for most Americans” (quoted in Rotzer, 2003).

Did this change with the shocks of 2001? Fox News executive Roger Ailes describes its new method of covering global stories in this helpful way: “We basically sent hit teams overseas from out of here”, while Leslie Moonves of CBS explains that entertainment now dominates news: “As you get further away from September 11<sup>th</sup>, that will revert back to normal” (quoted in “Battle Stations,” 2001). And, sure enough, the Project for Excellence in Journalism (2002) revealed that TV news coverage of national and international issues fell by 33% from October 2001 to March 2002, as celebrity and lifestyle issues took over from discussion of the various parts of the world that the United States directly and indirectly rules and controls. Discussion of entertainment itself was not undertaken critically; for instance, Michael Eisner, chief executive officer of its corporate owner, Disney, has announced that “I would prefer ABC not to cover Disney” because “I think it’s inappropriate”. And a third of local TV news directors surveyed in 2000 indicated that they were under pressure not to portray key station advertisers negatively (Eisner quoted in Alterman 2003: 24).

How did this extraordinary state of affairs come to pass in a media environment of hugely wealthy and massively differentiated media audiences, and equally gigantic and diverse niche programming? The answer is available in the seemingly arid world of political economy, for, at times of crisis

above all, one must return to structures, and to the conditions of possibility, for explanations.

But enough culturalist reductionism; time for some grubby talk, for this deracination derives from ownership and content deregulation and the subsequent dominant influences on US current-affairs TV: 'financialisation' and 'emotionalisation'. These tendencies typify the consumer-culture, genre-driven nature of television in a deregulated era.

## Finance, Feelings, and Entertainment

The neo-liberal agenda was the only element of the Clinton administration's policies that was uncritically accepted, and even applauded, by the mainstream media. Contemporary coverage of the market is beloved by the conglomerates. Its specialised vocabulary is accepted; a community of interest and commitment to fictive capital are assumed; and the deep affiliation and regular participation of viewers in stock prices are watchwords of a neo-liberal discourse. So, in 2000, finance was the principal topic on ABC, NBC, and CBS nightly news programs, and it was second only to terrorism in 2002 (Lobe, 2003a). News stories are evaluated in terms of their monetary significance to viewers. Neo-classical economic theory is deemed palatable in a way that theory is not accepted elsewhere (other than the weather). Business advisors dominate discussion on dedicated finance cable stations like CNBC and Bloomberg, and are granted something akin to the status of seers when they appear on cable news channels MSNBC and CNN or the networks. The focus is on stock markets in Asia, Europe, and New York; reports on company earnings, profits, and stocks; and portfolio management. Economic and labour news has become corporate news, and politics is measured in terms of its reception by business (Alterman 2003: 118-38). The doubling of time dedicated by TV news to the market across the 1990s was in part responsible for the way in which fawning journalists turned business executives into heroes. Along the way, labour fell into irrelevance, other than as so-called 'X-Factor inefficiency', while promoting stocks where one had a personal financial interest became *de rigueur* for anchors and pundits (Alterman 2003: 123-24, 127, 133). There is a sense of markets' stalking everyday security and politics, ready to punish all anxieties, uncertainties, or collective political action to restrain capital. The veneration, surveillance, and reportage of the market is ever-ready to point to infractions of this anthropomorphised, yet oddly subject-free sphere, as a means of constructing moral panics around the conduct of whoever raises its ire. That's the 'financialisation' side – knowing and furthering the discourse of money and its methods of representing everyday life, substituting for politics and history.

Then there is 'emotionalisation'. It is validated by some as an expansion of the public sphere to include issues hitherto excluded from view, such as

the sexual politics revealed on television talk shows, but I would rather see it as the tendency to substitute analysis of US politics and economics with a stress on feelings – in the case of Iraq, the feelings of serving military and their families, viewers, media mavens, politicians, and state-of-the-nation pundits. The latter in particular produced a shortage of knowledge and a surfeit of opinion, a surplus of bluster filling in for an absence of skill. It can be no accident that Fox News Channel, which employs few journalists and staffs just four foreign *bureaux*, has the most pundits on its payroll of any US network – over fifty in 2003 (Tugend, 2003). Margaret Carlson, a correspondent for *Time* and one of CNN's pundits, explained the key qualifications for her television work in these damning words: "The less you know about something, the better off you are ... sound learned without confusing the matter with too much knowledge" (quoted in Alterman 2003: 32).

Powerful emotions are of course engaged by war, and there is value in addressing them and letting out the pain. But as with 'financialisation', this exclusivity helped to shore up a mendacious Administration and a teetering economy in the name of raw, apolitical, emotional truth. The point is to work through inchoate feelings to generate an apparatus that makes sense of them – especially given that so many in the audience will simply not share particular forms of identification, knowledge or ignorance. The organisational and textual norms of US journalism need to be understood as time- and space-bounded norms of a particular period, nation and profession. Consider the personalisation that is a standard means of starting newspaper stories. Lengthy paragraphs are produced about one family or one person, prior to establishing the nature of a social problem. This is profoundly irritating to readers reared on something beyond personal worries as the centre of news, especially as the individual is inevitably forced to recede by the weight of the actual story sooner or later (frequently some pages on, with the space between covered with advertisements), and so the devotion of space to establishing a solitary situation is wasted on us. But this unfortunate tendency is encouraged by large-scale studies by the Readership Institute indicating that coveted young-adult readers in the US want 'stories ABOUT ordinary people' (Fitzgerald, 2003). The Institute's gloss on this is an imperative: 'More stories ABOUT ordinary people' (Lavine and Readership Institute, 2003). That is fine – ordinary people are those most affected by grandiloquent policy designs and imperialist programs – but of course the ordinariness referred to here is about the feelings of fraternity boys and sorority girls when the price of fuel increases. Even when potentially radicalising news is reported, it gets trivialised. Consider the impact of such coverage on public understanding of the dramatic US coal-mining disaster of July 2002, when working men were trapped for over three days in a flooded mine shaft in Pennsylvania. The feel-good, faith-based TV emphasis was on rescue, emotion and God, to the absolute exclusion of the disaster's causes: the Republican Administration's rolling back of occupational health and safety regulations

and systems of compliance, and its support of anti-union employers using antiquated, dangerous systems of exploration (Sherman and Vann, 2002).

The search for positive stories by 'Yanqui' journalists, once their heroes were not greeted with universal acclaim upon invading Iraq, reached its regrettable acme with the case of Jessica Lynch, an enlisted woman who was injured and captured during the war. While she was in an unguarded Iraqi hospital receiving treatment, US forces violently entered this site of healing, modestly videotaping their heroic mission for instant release. Numerous stories were immediately concocted to make the emotions run still higher – she had fought off her attackers in the desert; she had been knifed; the US military had conquered serious opposition to lift her out – all fabrications, none subject to first-hand knowledge or back-up sources, all reported without problem by CNN, Fox, NBC, ABC, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times* – and all just as instantaneously regarded as dubious if not spurious by media from other countries, including the BBC. US journalists who questioned the story were derided as unpatriotic on Fox (Eviatar, 2003), even though the soldier herself subsequently testified that her story had been embellished and turned into propaganda by the Pentagon. How people *felt* mattered most, not the military reality – after all, the mission of the US media is to offer therapy at times of national risk. And not maintain too many foreign *bureaux*. In the next section, we shall see the result of this *ad hoc* emotionalism.

## US Television and the Iraq Invasion

Seventy per cent of the US public obtained 'information' about the 2003 invasion of Iraq from television rather than from newspapers (Fitzgerald, 2003; Sharkey, 2003) and whilst all media increased their audiences during the crisis, the largest growth was achieved by cable (Lavine and Readership Institute, 2003).<sup>1</sup> And studies of the two major cable news channels, Fox and CNN, reveal that despite the former's claim that it is less liberal, each delivers a pro-Bush position on foreign policy as if they were organs of the Pentagon (Pew Charitable, 2002). During the invasion of Iraq, both MSNBC and Fox adopted the Pentagon's *cliché* 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' as the title of their coverage. MSNBC used, as its slogan to accompany stories of US troops, 'God bless America. Our hearts go with you' (quoted in Sharkey, 2003). Its President, Erik Sorenson, said that "[t]his may be one time where the sequel is more compelling than the original" (quoted in Lowry, 2003). The American flag was a constant backdrop in coverage, correspondents identified with the killer units they travelled with, and jingoistic self-membership was almost universal (Sharkey, 2003; Folkenflik, 2003). The proliferation of US flag pins on reporters, and the repeated use of such membership categorization devices as 'we,' is simply not permitted by major global newsgatherers, whether they are regionally or nationally based or funded. British viewers

were so taken aback by the partisanship of Fox, which was rebroadcast there via satellite, that they protested against it through the local regulator, the Independent Television Commission, which calls for impartiality (Wells, 2003).

As the invasion of Iraq loomed, Rupert Murdoch said “there is going to be collateral damage ... if you really want to be brutal about it, better we get it done now” (quoted in Pilger, 2003). The Project for Excellence in Journalism’s analysis of ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and Fox found that in the opening stanza of the Iraq invasion, 50% of reports from journalists embedded with the invaders depicted combat, but none depicted injuries. As the war progressed, there were deeply sanitised images of the wounded from afar (Sharkey, 2003). Coverage of the invaders’ impact on the Iraqi people was dismissed by PBS *News Hour* Executive Producer Lester Crystal as not ‘central at the moment’ (quoted in Sharkey, 2003). NBC correspondent David Bloom astonishingly offered that the media were so keen to become adjuncts of the military that they were “doing anything and everything that ... [the armed forces] can ask of us” (quoted in Carr, 2003). Marcy McGinnis, senior vice-president of news at CBS, claimed that the networks brought this war “...into the living rooms of Americans...the first time you can actually see what’s happening” (quoted in Sharkey, 2003) and Paul Steiger, Managing Editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, divined that US media coverage of the invasion of Iraq was “pretty darned good” (quoted in Friedman, 2003). What counted as ‘happening’ and ‘darned good’ was extraordinarily misshaped, unbalanced – in fact systematically distorted – by American media. As military manoeuvres took second place to civilian suffering in the rest of the world’s media coverage of the Afghan and Iraqi crises, invasions, and occupations, this contrasted drastically with what other nations received (della Cava, 2003; Greenberg, 2003).

No wonder Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s thought-disordered remark about Baghdad, that it “...looks like it’s a bombing of a city, but it isn’t” received much uncritical US coverage. Statements by the International Red Cross and many, many other notable non-Pentagon sources detailing Iraqi civilian casualties from the bombing-of-a-city-that-wasn’t received virtually none (Wilkinson, 2003; FAIR, 2003c), just like the memorable Congressional speeches against this bloodthirsty militarism by Senators Robert Byrd and Ted Kennedy (Schlesinger, 2003). First-hand accounts of an unarmed family in a car being shot by US soldiers were overridden by the desire to promote the Pentagon’s strenuous insistence that the protocols for shooting an unarmed family in a car were followed (FAIR, 2003d). There was no mention, on any network, of the US military’s use of depleted uranium, and virtually no consideration of the impact of cluster bombs – both major stories everywhere else and subject to serious complaints by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The US claim to have dropped just 26 cluster bombs was belied by the thousands and thousands that had to be ‘cleaned up’, but this information was not available through domestic media outlets (FAIR, 2003e). Even wounded US soldiers were left unnoticed by the main-



stream media, with no bedside interviews from hospitals, and a prohibition on images of coffins. Fallen men and women had become the 'disappeared' (Berkowitz, 2003). After the invasion, 82% of US residents believed that serious efforts had been made to spare civilians – much higher numbers than in any other country, including those whose forces were involved (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2003).

When it was decided to coopt journalists for the Iraq invasion through the quasi-homonym of 'embedding' them with the military, reporters were required to sign a contract agreeing with Pentagon instructions on coverage, including no off-the-record interviews, which had been crucial in Vietnam (Taiara, 2003; Thussu and Freedman 2003: 6). This was widely condemned in the international media as a deathblow to independent war reporting (Jones, 2003), and it had a chilling impact on gender balance amongst the media (Huff, 2003). When added to the speeded-up routines of twenty-four hour news channels, it also led to disgraces like the day when nine separate announcements were made that Umm Qasr had fallen to the invaders, none of which was accurate (Tryhorn, 2003) and a Fox news producer saying "Even if we never get a story out of an embed, you need someone there to watch the missiles fly and the planes taking off. It's great television". No wonder Bernard Shaw, the former CNN anchor, saw these journalists as 'hostages of the military' (quoted in Bushell and Cunningham, 2003). But on the dominant side of the debate lay hacks like Marvin Kalb, for whom the events of September 11 2001 mean 'the rules have now changed,' and anxieties over patriotism are misplaced (2003).

Domestically, more than half the TV studio guests talking about the impending action in Iraq in 2003 were US military or governmental personnel (FAIR, 2003a). TV news effectively transformed the available discourse on the impending struggle to one of technical efficiency or state propaganda. A study conducted through the life of the Iraq invasion reveals that US broadcast and cable news virtually excluded anti-war or internationalist points of view: 64% of all pundits were pro-war, while 71% of US 'experts' favoured the war. Anti-war voices comprised 10% of all sources, but just 6% of non-Iraqi sources, and 3% of US speakers. Viewers were more than six times as likely to see a pro-war than an anti-war source, and amongst US guests, the ratio increased to 25 to 1 (Rendall and Broughel, 2003). When the vast majority of outside experts represent official opinion, how is this different from a state-controlled media (Johnson, 2003)? The *New York Times* refers to these journalists as "[p]art experts and part reporters, they're marketing tools, as well" – and they are paid for their services, something quite shocking given the traditions of independent critique (Jensen, 2003). CNN's gleeful coverage of the invasion of Iraq was typified by one superannuated military officer who rejoiced with "Slam, bam, bye-bye Saddam" as missiles struck Baghdad (quoted in Goldstein, 2003). Any links to arms-trading are rarely divulged, and never discussed as relevant. Retired Lieutenant General Barry McCaffrey, employed in this capacity by NBC News, points to the *cadre's* 'lifetime of

experience and objectivity.' In his case, this involves membership of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, a lobby group dedicated to influencing the media, and the boards of three munitions companies that make ordnance he proceeded to praise on MSNBC. Could these ties constitute conflicts of interest (Benaïm *at al.*, 2003)? Perhaps not when NBC itself is owned by one of the world's biggest arms suppliers, General Electric.

This says something about US journalistic practice more generally. Emad Adeeb, the Chair of *Al Alam Al Youm* and host of *On the Air!* in Egypt, summed up US foreign-correspondent techniques like this:

you come and visit us in what I call the American Express Tour – 72 hours. ... You stay at the same hotel where the 150,000 colleagues before you have stayed. You eat at the same restaurant because you've been given its name. You have the same short list of people who have been interviewed ... you buy the same presents for your wives or girlfriends or mistresses, because you have the same address from your friends before you. You don't do anything out of the norm, and you come writing the same story with the same slogan – a minute-and-a-half bite, or a 500-word story – and you think that you know the Middle East. ... And then when a crisis happens, you are interviewed as an expert (Pew Fellowships in International Journalism, 2002)

In editor Fuad Nahdi's (2003) words, dumping 'young, inexperienced and excitable' journalists in the Middle East who are functionally illiterate and historically ignorant means that the US media depends on 'clippings and weekend visits' of dubious professional integrity. No wonder that CNN's Jerusalem Bureau chief, Walter Rodgers insensitively proclaims that '[f]or a journalist, Israel is the best country in the world to work in ... [o]n the Palestinian side, as is the case in the rest of the Arab world, there is always that deep divide between Islam and the West' (quoted in Ibrahim 2003: 96). He seems to think there are no Israeli Arabs and no Christian Palestinians. CNN reached what might be termed its Middle Eastern *nadir*, and lost viewers to al-Jazeera and others, when one of its reporters stated that some nomads would be thunderstruck by seeing 'camels of steel' (cars) for the first time (MacFarquhar, 2003). This makes CNN's rejection of Ted Turner as a war correspondent because of his inexperience entirely laughable (Auletta and Turner, 2003).

Attempts to provide a different story met swift rebukes. The noted CNN foreign correspondent Christiane Amanpour told CNBC after the war:

I think the press was muzzled, and I think the press self-muzzled ... I'm sorry to say, but certainly television and, perhaps, to a certain extent, my station was intimidated by the administration and its foot soldiers at Fox News. And it did, in fact, put a climate of fear and self-censorship, in my view, in terms of the kind of broadcast work we did



She was immediately derided by Fox as 'a spokeswoman for Al Qaeda' (quoted in Zerbisias, 2003). And because MSNBC's Ashleigh Banfield occasionally reported Arab perspectives during the 2003 conflict, Michael Savage, then a talkshow host on her network, called her a 'slut,' a 'porn star,' and an 'accessory to the murder of Jewish children' on air, for which he was rewarded by NBC's executives by being named as their 'showman' (quoted in Lieberman, 2003). Banfield told a Kansas State University audience during the Iraq invasion that 'horrors were completely left out of this war. So was this journalism? ... I was ostracised just for going on television and saying, 'Here's what the leaders of Hezbollah, a radical Moslem group, are telling me about what is needed to bring peace to Israel'" (quoted in Schechter, 2003). She was immediately demoted and disciplined by NBC for criticising journalistic standards.

## Alternatives?

So what of other news sources available to US residents, such as foreign television, domestic newspapers, the Internet, and radio? In the first week of the 2003 invasion, the top three terms searched for on the key engine <Google.com> were 'CNN,' 'Iraq,' and 'al-Jazeera,' the Qatar-based satellite news service which only launched an Anglo site in late March (Cox, 2003). On the Lycos engine, al-Jazeera outranked 'Pamela Anderson,' 'POWs,' and 'Dixie Chicks' (Suellentrop, 2003). Al-Jazeera doubled its European subscribers during the invasion – 4 million new viewers in one week (Cozens, 2003) – and was said to command 70% of Arab cable-news viewers worldwide (Fine, 2003). This came as no surprise, given that its personnel recruitment encourages such diversity, with secular, Muslim, Christian, feminist, Marxist, Baathist, and liberal workers (Miladi 2003: 152). But the New York Stock Exchange expelled al-Jazeera during the invasion of Iraq following US Governmental criticisms of it for televising prisoners of war and Arab criticisms of the attack. The official explanation was that for 'security reasons,' the number of broadcasters allowed at the Exchange had to be limited to those offering 'responsible business coverage' (Agovino, 2003; "Al-Jazeera Banned," 2003). The NASDAQ exchange refused to grant al-Jazeera press credentials at the same time, for the same reason (FAIR, 2003b). The Index on Censorship proceeded to honor the network with its free-expression prize (Byrne, 2003; Lobe, 2003b).

Lest we imagine that the print media offer anything better than US television, we should note that whereas 10% of newspaper coverage in 1983 addressed foreign news, this had fallen to 2% by 1998. Covers of *Time* magazine dedicated to international relations dropped from 11 in 1987 to none a decade later, and that period saw its foreign reportage diminish from 24% to

12%. These institutions were adopting the just-in-time techniques of post-Fordism to current affairs (Magder 2003: 33)<sup>2</sup>.

Late in 2003, after Dick Cheney encouraged the unsubstantiated belief among the US public that Iraq was behind the World Trade Center's destruction, even Bush felt obliged to correct this lie. But there was virtually no attempt by the mainstream media to publicise this to the 70% of the population that had believed the original canard. Bush's admission was not deemed newsworthy. Of the country's twelve largest-circulation daily papers, only the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Dallas Morning News* mentioned it on their front pages. The *New York Times* ran it on page 22, *USA Today* on page 16, the *Houston Chronicle* on page 3, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *New York Daily News* on page 14, the *Washington Post* on page 18, and *Newsday* on page 41. There were not enough pages available for the *New York Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* to mention the revelation at all (Porges, 2003).

A 2002 survey of 218 US-newspaper editors found two-thirds admitting that their coverage of foreign news was 'fair to poor' and showed no real engagement with the multicultural and immigrant populations they were serving. This was a stark contrast with the satisfaction expressed over their coverage of commerce. The reason for this neglect of international news was not demand, but supply – their readers were interested, but their owners sought to keep costs down, and their employees lacked the necessary skills (Pew Fellowships in International Journalism, 2002; Pew International Journalism Program, 2002). Meanwhile, the Arab-American media fell into disarray after September 11. Always neglected by large state advertising campaigns, such as public-health initiatives, they instantly lost corporate support (Roy, 2003).

Internet use showed some preparedness amongst US residents to transcend their country's biased media offerings. In the weeks leading up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, 49% of people visiting *The Guardian's* web site and 25% of visitors to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's service were from the Americas. Alternative news web sites in the US reported a 300% increase in readers after the bombing of Afghanistan, while CNN's site visitors declined. Google's popular news page draws on the *Hindustan Times*, the *People's Daily*, the *Toronto Star*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Chosun Ilbo*, the BBC, and Deutsche Welle, *inter alia*. Its methods of selection are not public, but are driven by readers' interests – and the war on terrorism has driven this constituency away from amateur-hour local coverage. The *Independent's* site visits increased by 15% between September 11 and the invasion of Iraq, with a third of the increase coming from the US (Kahney, 2003; Sousa, 2002; Nichols, 2003; Matthews, 2003; Goldberg, 2003). Web logs created by individuals as clearing houses of information from reliable media systems grew in popularity very strikingly.

Was there relief on the radio dial? The Pacifica Radio Network, the only cosmopolitan English-language news outlet in the United States, had a record

fund drive in early 2003, as war loomed. But WABC radio's NJ Burkett compared the Americans preparing their weapons to 'an orchestra on an opening night' (quoted in Rutenberg, 2003). Clear Channel Worldwide, the dominant force in US radio and concert promotion with over 1200 stations, had banned 150 songs after September 11, including "Bridge over Troubled Water." For its Iraq campaign, the company refused permission for protest groups to disseminate literature at an Ani DiFranco concert and organised pro-war rallies and boycotts of anti-war performers, just as it was lobbying for new ownership regulations from Federal Communications Commission Chair Michael Powell, the son of Secretary of State Colin Powell. Another concentration beneficiary, Cumulus Media, rented a 33,000-pound tractor to destroy Dixie Chicks music and memorabilia because the band dared to question Bush. Further, Clear Channel's Board included a Republican activist who had paid Bush vast sums for his failed baseball team, and had handed over public investment money to Bush and his advisers to manage (Grieve, 2003; Krugman, 2003; Kellner 2003: 68; Jones, 2003).

## Conclusion

Domestic ignorance is not the only cost associated with these tendencies. A study by the International Federation of Journalists in October 2001 found blanket global coverage of the September 11 attacks, with very favorable discussion of the United States and its travails – even in nations that had suffered terribly from US aggression. But the advertising firm McCann-Erickson's evaluation of 37 states saw a huge increase in cynicism about the US media's manipulation of the events (Cozens, 2001), and the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press' (2002) study of 42 countries in 2002 found a dramatic fall from favour for the US since that time, while a 2003 follow-up (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press 2003) encountered even lower opinions of the US nation, population, and policies worldwide than the year before, with specifically diminished support for anti-terrorism, and faith in the UN essentially demolished by US unilateralism and distrust of Bush. 'Which country poses the greatest danger to world peace in 2003?', asked *Time* magazine of 250,000 people across Europe, offering them a choice between Iraq, North Korea, and the United States. Eight per cent selected Iraq, 9% chose North Korea, and ... but you have already done the calculation about the most feared country of all (Pilger, 2003). A BBC poll in eleven countries in mid-2003 confirmed this and found sizeable majorities everywhere disapproving of Bush and the invasion of Iraq, especially over civilian casualties ("Poll," 2003).

The challenge is to right the ignorance of the US public – to ensure that the quality of coverage and comment from the *Washington Post*, CBS, ABC, NBC, CNN and the *New York Times* can begin to approximate what is avail-

able via *La Jornada*, *The Independent*, al-Jazeera, CBC, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, All-India Radio, or *El País*. For now, those of us who live in the US must rely on such outside truth-telling and political pressure. The places that provide the US with bases, *matériel*, personnel and ideological support, must change their tune. There must be pressure within the UN, NATO, OAS, the African Union, ASEAN, the Arab League, and the EU against the US and specifically *contra* Israel's position on territory claimed since 1967 and its anti-Arabism. There must be pressure on totalitarian US allies, such as Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Pakistan, to become genuinely democratic. There must be pressure to open up the US media system to retrain journalists in keeping with best democratic practice and to require internationalist content on the air. We need fewer ugly concepts and more cosmopolitan words: less finance, less emotion, more knowledge.

### Notes

1. Despite the rhetoric of divinity surrounding the event, just 10% of US residents relied on churches to learn about the war (Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2003b).
2. The *New York Times*, for example, was intellectually unprepared to report on terrorism. Because terrorism occurred mostly outside the US prior to 2001, it was not rated as newsworthy. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, reportage of overseas terror took up less than 0.5% of the paper.

### References

- Agovino, Teresa (2003) 'NYSE Revokes Credentials for Al-Jazeera', *Editor & Publisher* March 25.
- 'Al Jazeera Banned from NYSE Floor' (2003) *Reuters* March 25.
- Altman, Eric (2003) *What Liberal Media? The Truth about Bias and the News*. New York: Basic Books.
- Auletta, Ken & Ted Turner (2003) 'Journalists and Generals', *New Yorker.com* March 24.
- 'Battle Stations' (2001) *New Yorker*, December 10.
- Benaim, Daniel; Kumar, Visesh & Priyanka Motaparthi (2003) 'TV's Conflicted Experts'. *The Nation*: 6-7 April 21.
- Berkowitz, Bill (2003, August 28) 'Wounded, Weary and Disappeared.' *TomPaine.com*.
- Bushell, Andrew & Cunningham, Brent (2003) 'Being There', *Columbia Journalism Review*, March/April.
- Byrne, Ciar (2003) 'Al-Jazeera Returns to NY Stock Exchange', *Guardian* May 1.
- Carr, David (2003) 'Reporting Reflects Anxiety', *New York Times*, March 25.
- Chester, Jeff (2002) 'Strict Scrutiny: Why Journalists should be Concerned about new Federal Industry Media Deregulation Proposals', *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 7, no. 2: 105-15.
- Cox, Ana Marie (2003) 'The Un-American Media', *In These Times*, March 28.
- Cozens, Claire (2001) 'Viewers Greet September 11 Coverage with Cynicism', *Guardian* October 26.
- Cozens, Claire (2003) 'Europeans Flock to Al-Jazeera', *Guardian* March 25.
- della Carva, Marco R. (2003) 'Iraq gets Sympathetic Press around the World', *USA Today* March 25, 1D.
- 'Did 9/11 Change Foreign News?' (2002) *On the Media*. National Public Radio March 9.

- Elkin, Tobi (2003) 'CBS News Chief Bemoans Network 'Sameness'', *AdAge* May 6.
- Eviatar, Daphne (2003) 'The Press and Private Lynch', *The Nation*: 18-20 July 7.
- FAIR (2003a) 'In Iraq Crisis, Networks are Megaphones for Official Views', *FAIR* March 18.
- FAIR (2003b) 'Some Critical Media voices face Censorship', *FAIR* April 3.
- FAIR (2003c) 'Media Should follow up on Civilian Deaths', *FAIR* April 4.
- FAIR (2003d) 'Official Story vs. Eyewitness Accounts', *FAIR* April 4.
- FAIR (2003e) 'TV Not Concerned by Cluster Bombs, DU: 'That's Just the Way Life Is in Iraq'', *FAIR* May 6.
- Fine, Janet (2003) 'Al Jazeera Winning TV Credibility War', *Transnational Broadcasting Studies* 10.
- Fisk, Robert (2002) 'Why Does John Malkovich Want to Kill Me?', *Independent*, May 14.
- Fitzgerald, Mark (2003) 'Study Shows Readership at Crossroads', *Editor & Publisher*, May 6.
- Folkenflik, David (2003) 'Fox News Defends its 'Patriotic' Coverage', *Baltimore Sun*, April 2.
- Friedman, Jon (2003) 'Editors See Success in Iraq Coverage', *CBS Market Watch*, May 8.
- Golan, Guy & Wanta, Wayne (2003) 'International Elections on US Network News', *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 65, no. 1: 25-39.
- Goldberg, Andy (2003) 'The Web at War', *Independent*, March 17.
- Goldstein, Richard (2003) 'The Shock and Awe Show', *Village Voice*, March 26-April 1.
- Greenberg, David (2003) 'We Don't Even Agree on What's Newsworthy', *Washington Post*, March 16: B1.
- Grieve, Tim (2003) 'Shut Your Mouth', *Salon.com*, March 25.
- Higham, Nick (2001) 'Media Confronts a New World', *BBC Online*, September 25.
- Huff, Richard (2003) 'The Nets' Gender Gulf', *Daily News*, March 24.
- Ibrahim, Dina (2003) 'Individual Perceptions of International Correspondents in the Middle East', *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 65, no. 1: 87-101.
- International Federation of Journalists (2001) *Les Journalists du Monde entier Produisent un Rapport sur les Médias, la Guerre et le Terrorisme*.
- Jensen, Elizabeth (2003) 'Network's War Strategy: Enlist Armies of Experts', *Los Angeles Times*, March 18.
- Johnson, Peter (2003) 'Media Question Authority Over War Protests', *USA Today*, February 24.
- Jones, Chris (2003) 'Peter Arnett: under Fire', *BBC News Online*, April 4.
- Kahney, Leander (2003) 'Media Watchdogs Caught Napping', *Wired News*, March 17.
- Kalb, Marvin (2003) 'Journalists torn between Purism and Patriotism', *Editor & Publisher*, March 24.
- Kellner, Douglas (2003) *From 9/11 to Terror War: The Dangers of the Bush Legacy*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Krugman, Paul (2003) 'Channels of Influence', *New York Times*, March 25.
- Lavine, John & Readership Institute (2003) *Beyond Impact: Engaging Younger, Lighter Readers: A Joint Venture of NAA, ASNE, & Media Management Center*.
- Lieberman, David (2003) 'NBC Hopes Big Investment in News Coverage Pays Off', *USA Today* March 24.
- Lobe, Jim (2003a) 'All the World's a TV Screen', *Asia Times*, January 4.
- Lobe, Jim (2003b) 'Press Watchdogs Protest U.S. Killings of Journalists in Baghdad', *OneWorld.net* April 9.
- Lowry, Brian (2003) 'Will the TV Factory Shape a New War?' *Calendar Live*, February 26.
- MacFarquhar (2003) 'Arabic Stations Compete for Attention', *New York Times* March 25.
- Magder, Ted (2003) 'Watching What We Say: Global Communication in a Time of Fear', in Thussu, Daya Kishan & Freedman, Des (eds) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*. London: Sage Publications, 28-44.
- Matthews, Anna Wilde (2003) 'Pacifica Radio Network Becomes Antiwar Voice', *Wall Street Journal*, March 24.
- Miladi, Nouredine (2003) 'Mapping the Al-Jazeera Phenomenon', in Thussu, Daya Kishan & Freedman, Des (eds) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*. London: Sage Publications, 149-60.
- Nahdi, Fuad (2003) 'Doublespeak: Islam and the Media', *openDemocracy.net*. April 3.
- Nichols, John (2003) 'Many Americans Follow War on BBC', *Madison Capital Times* May 9.

- Pew Charitable Trusts (2002) *Return to Normalcy? How the Media Have Covered the War on Terrorism*.
- Pew Fellowships in International Journalism (2002) *International News and the Media: The Impact of September 11*.
- Pew International Journalism Program (2002) *America and the World: The Impact of September 11 on U. S. Coverage of International News*.
- Pew Internet & American Life Project (2003) *The Internet and the Iraq War*.
- Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2002) *What the World Thinks in 2002: How Global Publics View: Their Lives, Their Countries, America*.
- Pew Research Center for the People & the Press (2003) *Views of a Changing World June 2003*.
- Pilger, John (2003) 'We See too Much. We Know too much. That's Our Best Defense', *Independent*, April 6.
- 'Poll Suggests World Hostile to US' (2003) *BBC News Online*, June 16.
- Porges, Seth (2003) 'Bush 9/11 Admission gets Little Play', *Editor & Publisher*, September 19.
- Project for Excellence in Journalism (2002) *The War on Terrorism: The Not-So-New Television News Landscape*.
- Rendall, Steve and Tara Broughel (2003) 'Amplifying Officials, Squelching Dissent', *EXTRA!* May/June.
- Rotzer, Florian. (2003, January 7) 'The World is What the Media Reports', *Telepolis*.
- Roy, Sandip (2003) 'Arab-American Media still Battered by 9/11', *AlterNet.org*, May 27.
- Rutenberg, Jim (2003) 'Newspapers: Words Reflect Changing Report', *New York Times*, March 25.
- Schechter, Danny (2003) 'The Media, the War and our Right to Know', *AlterNet.org*, May 1.
- Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr. (2003) 'Today, it is we Americans who Live in Infamy', *Los Angeles Times*, March 23.
- Sharkey, Jacqueline E. (2003) 'The Television War', *American Journalism Review* May.
- Sherman, Paul & Vann, Bill (2002) 'The Pennsylvania Mine Rescue and the Human Cost of Coal.' *World Socialist Web Site* <[www.wsw.org/articles/2002/aug2002/mine-a03\\_prn.shtml](http://www.wsw.org/articles/2002/aug2002/mine-a03_prn.shtml)> August 3.
- Smith, Dow (2003) 'TV News Networks better Cure their Myopia', *Newsday*, May 6.
- Sousa, Lisa (2002) 'Alternative Media Break Information Blockade', *Media File* 21, no. 1.
- Suellentrop, Chris (2003) 'Al Jazeera: It's just as Fair as CNN', *Slate*, April 2.
- Taiara, Camille T. (2003) 'Spoon-Feeding the Press', *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, March 12.
- Thussu, Daya Kishan & Des Freedman (2003) 'Introduction', in Thussu, Daya Kishan & Freedman, Des (eds) *War and the Media: Reporting Conflict 24/7*. London: Sage Publications, 1-12.
- Tryhorn, Chris (2003) 'When are Facts Facts? Not in a War', *Guardian*, March 25.
- Tugend, Alina (2003) 'Pundits for Hire', *American Journalism Review*, May.
- Wells, Matt (2003) 'ITC Tackles Fox News Bias Claims', *Guardian*, May 8.
- Wilkinson, Marian (2003) 'POWs Vanish Amid War on Nasty Images', *Sydney Morning Herald* March 25.
- Zerbisias, Antonia. (2003) 'The Press Self-Muzzled its Coverage of Iraq War', *Toronto Star*, September 16.