DO ‘GOOD’ INTENTIONS JUSTIFY ‘BAD’ TACTICS? A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF THE IRAQI MEDIA NETWORK IN THE WESTERN PRESS

by

ALLISON WEISS

(Under the Direction of Leara Rhodes)

ABSTRACT

The Iraqi Media Network is the United States’ multi-million dollar effort to create an example of a free press in Iraq. The network has been plagued with difficulties, the most crippling of which is its lack of credibility. This study examines the Western media’s representation of the Iraqi Media Network, focusing specifically on how this representation relates to the Western media’s notions about the proper role of the press in society. A textual analysis of 57 news items in five major Western newspapers forms the foundation of scholarship on the Western media’s representation of the Iraqi Media Network. Findings show several troubling patterns within the text, including the notion that propaganda disguised as news is acceptable in Iraq (so long as it supports Western aims), the representation of the Iraqi Media Network as supreme over all non-Western media and an attitude of condescension toward Iraqis.

INDEX WORDS: Iraqi Media Network, Iraqi media, Western theory of the press, Representation, Textual analysis
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family during this difficult, life-changing time we’ve found ourselves in. You have always taught me to care for my spirit and to look for meaning in everything, and it is these values that will carry us through this terrible valley.

“I’ll love you forever,
I’ll love you for always,
As long as I’m living,
My family you’ll be.”

I also dedicate this thesis to my dear fiancé Ward, who has patiently honored my many requests not to visit me “because I have to work on my thesis.” You have always regarded my academic pursuits with enthusiasm and respect, and you’ve cheered me on as I’ve sought after my dreams. Happiness is knowing I will wake up next to my true love every day for the rest of my life.
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The Beginnings

On March 20, 2003, the United States invaded Iraq in what the Bush administration claimed was an effort to fight terrorism and prevent Iraq from using weapons of mass destruction. In the months prior to the invasion, plans were already under way at the Pentagon to establish a U.S.-sponsored media system in Iraq once Saddam Hussein’s regime fell. Pentagon officials envisioned a public broadcasting network similar to PBS or the BBC (Daragahi 45, North 1). According to the Index on Censorship, the Pentagon wanted the media system to both “promote...excellence” in journalism and “provide a service” to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Officials hoped the media system would aid in uniting Iraq by establishing credible news and public affairs programs in regional stations that could then be rebroadcast on a national network, allowing political and religious factions to hear each other’s points of view (North 3). The media system the Pentagon envisioned was dubbed the ‘Iraqi Media Network’ (IMN).

In February 2003, the Pentagon hired Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) to operate the IMN. SAIC is a defense contractor with little broadcasting experience and a history of entering into contracts with the Department of Defense
According to the Center for Public Integrity, SAIC’s contract to run the IMN required it to staff, train and equip a team to develop a “free and independent indigenous media network consisting of radio, television and print media components” in Iraq. The contract also called on SAIC to train “indigenous journalists” and to “make maximum use of local labor to the extent feasible.” SAIC’s contract to operate the IMN was worth $82 million (Auster and Fang 27).

By mid-April, SAIC had assembled a team of more than two dozen people who waited in Kuwait until the major fighting stopped, then entered Iraq and established two television stations, two newspapers and several local and national radio stations. The IMN went on the air with radio on April 10 and with television on May 13. *Al-Sabah*, an IMN newspaper produced in Baghdad, released its first issue on May 15, and *Sumer*, a second IMN newspaper produced in Kuwait, began its distribution in Baghdad on May 28.

*The Problems*

From its onset, the IMN was beset with troubles. First, the IMN displayed a lack of cultural sensitivity that infuriated many Iraqis. From refusing to begin telecasts with a reading from the Koran (a traditional practice in the Islamic world) to using Hussein’s last name on-air (an act many Iraqis considered to be a defilement of seventeenth-century Iraqi hero Imam Hussein’s last name), many Iraqis felt the IMN both disregarded and disrespected their culture (Jaffe 11).
In addition, SAIC appeared to grossly mismanage its funds, resulting in what many perceived as sloppy, sub-par journalism. Despite the estimated $4 million a month SAIC received to operate the IMN, journalists complained they were not allowed to purchase basic supplies such as camera batteries, tripods or editing equipment. Many members of the IMN staff quit after being denied higher wages. The average IMN reporter was paid the equivalent of $120 a month (North 2), while, according to the Center for Public Integrity, IMN’s “senior executive management consultants” were paid $273 an hour and several “executive management consultants” were paid more than $200 an hour.

The IMN also faced stiff competition in a newly flooded media market. By December 2003, some 290 publications, 20 broadcasters and countless radio stations were operating in Iraq (Carroll 63). These included Az Zaman, a London-based newspaper with an Iraqi edition, and Xebat, a daily newspaper operated by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (Carroll 64). Few of Iraq’s burgeoning media outlets were independent, a fact that could mainly be attributed to economics. Iraq’s fragmented media outlets did not raise funds through advertisements; instead, they were financed by political parties and thus were openly run with a political agenda (Carroll 64). One of the only independent media outlets in Iraq was the weekly newspaper Iraq Today, which was supported by subscriptions but closed its doors in March 2004 due to a lack of funds (Carroll 63).

Despite the explosion of new media outlets in Iraq after Hussein fell, the IMN’s greatest competition did not come from within the country, but from satellite networks based elsewhere in the Middle East. Banned during Hussein’s rule, satellite dishes
quickly became regular fixtures in many Iraqi households after U.S. forces took control of Iraq. The enormous popularity of satellite dishes, even among Iraq’s poorest citizens, served to pit the IMN’s slipshod programming against such polished channels as al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya and Abu Dhabi (Block 5). Of these Middle Eastern satellite networks, al-Jazeera consistently commands the largest viewership in the Arab world (el-Nawawy and Iskandar 49). The Qatar-based network offers around-the-clock programming and employs a news style similar to that of Western satellite news networks (el-Nawawy and Iskandar 31). It houses a staff of more than 350 journalists and 50 foreign correspondents working in 31 countries, including the United States. Like many Middle Eastern media outlets, al-Jazeera is not self-supporting and relies on the Qatari government to provide almost $100 million a year to sustain it (el-Nawawy and Iskandar 34). Al-Jazeera and other Middle Eastern satellite networks are often accused of containing pan-Arab biases, and surveys have shown that despite these networks’ claims to the contrary, most Iraqis believe they are not independent (Carroll 64). Indeed, studies have indicated that al-Jazeera and Abu Dhabi demonstrate unequivocal support for Palestinian uprisings and are mostly critical of U.S. policy in the Middle East (Ayish 148). Despite these criticisms, Middle Eastern satellite networks are undeniably popular among Iraqis: an October 2003 U.S. State Department survey revealed that among Iraqis who owned satellite dishes, 63 percent turned to either al-Jazeera or al-Arabiya for their news, compared to just 12 percent who tuned in to the IMN (Jayasekera 9). Overall, the vast majority of the media available to Iraqis after the U.S. invasion had a decidedly anti-American bias (Kitfield 3109-10).
Given this fact, the CPA was desperate to offer Iraqis a reliable news alternative. But of all the reasons the IMN could not attract an audience, the most crippling was its lack of credibility. Though U.S. officials claimed they wanted the IMN to be an example of journalistic integrity and press freedom, Iraqis ultimately perceived the IMN as a mouthpiece of the CPA. IMN journalists were required to air all CPA news conferences, interviews and photo ops, and editing or analyzing these events was prohibited (North 2-3). U.S. Civilian Chief L. Paul Bremer III used IMN broadcasts twice a week to deliver pro-U.S. messages dubbed in Arabic. Rebuttals were not permitted (Jayasekera 8). An hour-long British government program, “Toward Freedom,” was broadcast daily, despite the strong objections of many IMN journalists who took issue with the IMN’s refusal to publicly disclose that the program had been wholly funded by the British government (North 2-3). In addition, IMN’s management banned journalists from using the word “occupation” to describe the CPA’s presence in Iraq, and the IMN made it a practice not to report Iraqi insurgents’ attacks on the coalition (Sipress A15). Not surprisingly, an October 2003 BBC study showed what many in Iraq already knew: audiences did not trust the IMN (Block 4). As one former IMN advisor put it:

Iraqis conditioned by 35 years of Saddam’s state television recognize propaganda when they see it (North 3).

It is this particular issue—the IMN’s lack of objectivity and the CPA’s heavy interference with the IMN’s content—that inspires this thesis. In it, I explore how the IMN was represented by the Western media, specifically as this representation relates to
the Western media’s notions about the proper role of the press in society. Did the Western media condone the IMN’s blatant diversions from Western journalistic ideals because the IMN’s goal was to promote democracy? Was the Western media model portrayed as dispensable in Iraq? According to the Western media’s depiction, did the democratic ends the CPA desired justify its employment of undemocratic means?

The Shakeup

In November 2003, the Pentagon completely revamped the IMN in an attempt to salvage the network’s reputation among Iraqis. It changed the name of the IMN’s major broadcasting network to ‘Al-Iraqiya’ and issued a call for bids on a contract to operate the ‘new’ IMN beginning in 2004. One objective for the bidder, the call for interests said, would be to show that the ‘new’ IMN leads “all mass media in providing comprehensive, accurate, fair and balanced news and public affairs to the Iraqi people.”

In addition, the bidder would be required to train an Iraqi workforce that would take over independent operation of the network within two years (Jayasekera 11). In January 2004, the Pentagon awarded the $96 million contract to Harris Corp., a major American manufacturer and supplier of broadcast equipment and technology. SAIC did not bid.

Despite these changes, the IMN remains plagued by credibility problems. “Hopes for the U.S.-backed IMN...have dimmed...” said a March 2004 Los Angeles Times news article (Sanders A6). In May 2004, most of the editors and reporters at al-Sabah, an IMN newspaper, quit and formed their own newspaper, citing continued U.S.-interference with editorial content (Williams, “Staffers” A19).
Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN), the U.S. Foreign Relations Committee chairman, has vowed to step up oversight of the network. In January 2004, he was quoted in *U.S. News and World Report* as saying:

> We know that the viability of democracy is dependent on a free press. To do this in Iraq and the Middle East, we need the vision, the strategy and the mechanisms in place to ensure that a free, fair, and legally protected media is the result. All of those things are now lacking (Auster and Fang 27-28).

This thesis will examine the Western media’s representation of the IMN, a network that held much promise but has thus far failed to establish the credibility necessary to attract an audience. This study will explore the ways in which the Western media represented this failure to Western audiences, the influence Western notions of the proper role of the press had in these representations, and what kind of ideological work these representations performed.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Media as a Tool of Modernization

According to the modernization theory, the importance of establishing a credible free press in Iraq cannot be overstated. According to one of the fathers of the modernization theory, Wilbur Schramm, the media can help speed economic growth in developing countries by mobilizing human resources behind the national effort (27). Schramm also holds that the free information provided by the media is a necessary requirement for social change (ix). Daniel Lerner, another father of the modernization theory, looks specifically at the ongoing modernization of the Middle East and asserts that when adequate media have become available in certain Middle Eastern countries, the citizens of those countries have gained access to vicarious geographic mobility, meaning they have been able to use the media to learn what other societies say and do without ever leaving their homes. Calling the mass media the “Mobility Multiplier,” Lerner contends that the vicarious geographic mobility afforded by the media eventually leads to greater social mobility, thus helping to stimulate the modernization of Middle Eastern countries (43-54).

It is important to note that the modernization theory is not without its critics. Some argue that pro-Western developing countries have used the modernization theory as
an excuse to restrict freedom of expression and justify political indoctrination, an assertion supported by a wealth of historical literature and, arguably, current CPA policies in Iraq. The modernization theory has also been called “media imperialism” because critics contend that it leads to the erosion of local cultures and fosters dependency on American capitalist values and interests. However, this criticism does not take into account the possibility that those whom the United States seeks to “modernize” might resist such efforts (Curran and Park 4-6). This study relies on the modernization theory to underscore the importance of establishing a free and credible press in Iraq and to justify the need for examining how the Western media represented the CPA’s troubled efforts toward this end.

Representations of Islam in Western Media

In order to understand how the Western media represented the Iraqi Media Network, it is helpful to understand how the Western media have represented related subjects, such as the values associated with democracy, Western countries, Iraq, Islam and the efforts of Western leaders to use media diplomacy in developing countries. Of all these subjects, only the Western media’s representation of Islam has received attention from scholars. However, the Western media’s positioning of its own values is implicit in much of its representation of Islam (Poole 17).

According to Elizabeth Poole, the Western media have constructed Islam as the new enemy of the West. Though Western media outlets may not always use the term
‘Islam’ directly, they have made those who practice Islam the scapegoats for the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks (16-17). According to Poole:

...the meanings and values attached to Islam in recent times are reproduced to demonize the enemy, even where the signifier ‘Islam’ remains unused (16).

In addition, Poole asserts that the representations of Islam in the Western media are dominated by ethnocentrism:

Muslims are homogenized as backward, irrational, unchanging, fundamentalist, misogynist, threatening, manipulative in the use of their faith for political and personal gain, and yet with politically unstable governments and movements (18).

Kai Hafez contends that images of Islam in the Western media are often confined to terms like “fanatic fundamentalists” or “anti-Western terrorists” (xi). Waseem Sajjad holds that Islam is poorly represented in the Western press because of both historical animosities and negative messages sent by some members of the Muslim world, adding that the Western media fail to report positive events associated with Islam (81-86).

According to Poole, the Western media’s negative representation of Islam serves to position the West as supreme. There is an “us” versus “them” assumption among
Western journalists, and it goes so far as to exclude even Muslims born in the West as “them” (17-19).

In this study, I explore the Western media’s representation of the IMN, as well as this representation’s underlying inferences about Iraqis. Did Western journalists question the ability of Iraqis to establish and sustain a free press? Did they use paternalistic language or imply that only Western nations are capable of such a feat? Did they condone the IMN’s digressions from the Western media model, and in so doing suggest that Iraqis are not, at least for the time being, deserving of the same press freedoms Westerners enjoy?

The Media as a Tool of Public Diplomacy

The IMN is widely considered a failure because most Iraqis do not trust it (Block 4). This lack of credibility may be at least partly attributed to the IMN’s conflicting tasks. While the IMN was charged with serving as a free and independent media network in Iraq, it has also been used as a vehicle of public diplomacy for the CPA (Auster 27). In fact, Senator Lugar has described the IMN as “the most important public diplomacy issue now underway” (Pincus, “Army’s” A23). In his study of censorship in Baghdad, Jayasekera cites U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld as saying:

We are in a war of ideas...ideas are important, and they need to be marshalled, and they need to be communicated in ways that are persuasive to the listeners (Jayasekera 9).
Scholars have defined public diplomacy as a nation’s attempt to “challenge the worldviews of foreign audiences and to bridge the gap between areas of cultural apartheid” (van Ham 433). Public diplomacy also allows a nation to clarify its positions, defend its interests and convince others to support its actions (Gilboa 275). In recent years, the media have experienced a dramatically increased role in public diplomacy (Gilboa 276). Politicians, keenly aware of the power wielded by media images and stories, have begun harnessing the media as a tool for promoting their values and interests among foreign audiences (van Ham 433).

In spite of the growing use of the media as a tool of public diplomacy, scholars are lagging behind in developing a comprehensive model of what many have coined “media diplomacy” (Gilboa 277). Current models show the media as a having a role in public diplomacy, but so far that role has been too narrowly defined. In today’s models, the media’s involvement in public diplomacy is limited to their ability to broadcast the diplomacy efforts of politicians, which in turn serves to influence public opinion about a nation’s foreign policy. This understanding of the media’s role in public diplomacy deals solely with the media’s “capability to broadcast, often live, almost every significant development in world events to almost every place on the globe,” thereby conveying politicians’ public diplomacy efforts to the world (Gilboa 276-277). But more and more, the media are not merely relayers of public diplomacy efforts; they are also channels for public diplomacy in themselves, a fact that is overlooked in current public diplomacy models.

A wealth of academic literature has noted many difficulties associated with public diplomacy. Perhaps public diplomacy’s greatest challenge lies in its inherent
“schizophrenic nature” (Hachten 112). Most public diplomacy professionals are quite comfortable describing an opponent’s public diplomacy as “propaganda.” However, they would prefer to call their own public diplomacy “information” or “truth” (Hachten 104). Of those who acknowledge they deal in the business of propaganda, many resent the negative connotations associated with the term. Just because a message is propaganda, they argue, does not mean it is untrustworthy, tainted, or false (Fortner 20). Despite these defenses, propaganda is met with even stronger criticism when it is blended with journalism that purports to be objective. As Fitzhugh Green, a onetime officer of the United States Information Agency, says in his book about American propaganda:

It can be frustrating. The demands of journalism and the disciplines of diplomacy intersect and clash... (xii).

In other words, responsible journalism demands objectivity, but propaganda usually seeks to explain just one point of view. For this reason, when journalism and propaganda are merged (as in the case of the IMN) their goals often conflict.

In addition to the difficulties posed by the very nature of public diplomacy, there are often a number of practical challenges associated with it as well. Government policies, rules and procedures are not always well-defined, and the field lacks a sufficient number of both regional specialists and foreign-language experts (Green 177-178). Budgetary constraints are also a problem for most public-diplomacy efforts, although in the case of the IMN, few have questioned whether SAIC’s $82-million budget for operating the IMN during its first year was sufficient (Auster and Fang 27, Green 181).
The Media as a Tool of U.S. Public Diplomacy in Non-Occupied Countries

Perhaps the most widely studied of the U.S.’ media diplomacy efforts are those in which the media were used to influence the citizens of countries the United States did not occupy. Vast amounts of literature have examined Voice of America (VOA), which began broadcasting in 1942 and, according to the official VOA Web site, can still be heard by approximately 96-million people in 44 languages. VOA was originally intended to explain American war aims to citizens of Axis countries during World War II, and its success in doing so prompted U.S. officials to maintain VOA after the war ended. During the Cold War, VOA was by most accounts highly influential in promoting American ideology in the Soviet Union (Krugler 1). In addition to VOA, Radio Free Europe (RFE) and Radio Liberty (RL) also sought to bring about the demise of the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Unlike VOA, RFE and RL did not actively promote American ideology, but instead simply served as radio alternatives to Soviet-controlled stations, providing a forum for the free exchange of ideas and serving as examples of free press in action (Puddington x). A number of similar U.S. media diplomacy efforts have taken place over the last century, including the creation of Radio and TV Marti for Cuban audiences, Radio Free Asia for Asian audiences and Radio Sawa for Middle Eastern audiences. The key difference between all of these efforts and the IMN is that they were aimed at countries over which the United States did not have military control.
In the past century, the United States has occupied several countries for various periods of time, usually following military conflicts. A handful of scholars have written about U.S. attempts to use the media to influence audiences in those countries, with most of this research focused on such efforts during the U.S. occupation of Japan from 1945-1952, Germany from 1945-1949 and Iraq from 2003-present.

Buckley, Nishi and Schaller all briefly explore America’s use of the media to influence occupied Japan, but most available research focuses more on the U.S.’ economic policies in Japan than on its media policies. More information is available documenting the U.S.’ use of the media to influence post-Nazi Germany. Tent writes that the United States had two objectives for the media in occupied Germany: reeducation and denazification. Merritt asserts that Germany had no history of an unbiased free press and that the U.S. government took advantage of this fact by using media propaganda to teach democracy. This led to an obvious dilemma: could the United States teach democracy by following an undemocratic media policy (291-313)? And Gienow-Hecht examines how one of Munich’s U.S.-backed propaganda newspapers was a very influential tool of public opinion and a model for successful cultural transmission in postwar periods. Finally, only a very limited amount of scholarly research has thus far been conducted to examine how the United States is currently using the media as a tool of public diplomacy in Iraq. According to van Ham, the United States is attempting to “communicate a better and more durable understanding of the country’s essence” through media channels (433). Western values such as individual freedom and unlimited
opportunity are heralded in U.S.-sponsored media, and “Brand USA” is aggressively marketed (433). As cited in an article in *Foreign Policy*, Secretary of State Colin Powell said:

We’re selling a product. That product we are selling is democracy.

(“Brand USA” 19).

In this study, I seek to examine the ways in which the Western media have represented the U.S.’ major media diplomacy effort in Iraq, the IMN.
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis is guided by the Western theory of the press, a normative theory outlining what many in Western societies believe the press ought to be and do. The Western theory finds its roots in Siebert et al.’s 1956 landmark study, *Four Theories of the Press*. In it, four basic theories of the press are set forth: authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist. The Western theory represents a fundamental alternative to the authoritarian concept and contains elements of both the libertarian theory and the social responsibility theory (Hachten and Scotton 148). For the purposes of this study, I will only outline the elements of the libertarian theory and the social responsibility theory that combine to form the Western theory of the press. These elements do not represent the entirety of the theories from which they originate; indeed, many elements of the libertarian theory and the social responsibility theory are contradictory and cannot be merged. However, the Western theory of the press contains a number of compatible elements from both theories that together form a highly salient media model in contemporary society (de Smaele 175, Hachten and Scotton 152-154, Scammel and Semetko xii).

It is important to note that *Four Theories of the Press* has been criticized for its authors’ lack of global perspective when attempting to summarize the world’s media systems (Curran and Park 3-4). However, for the purposes of this study, I am only
concentrating on the Western theories of the press set forth in the book—the libertarian theory and the social responsibility theory—elements of which combine to form the Western theory of the press. Most academics have not discredited these two theories because Siebert et al. did indeed possess a thorough understanding of their own Western media systems, if not the systems of other societies.

Some scholars have also derided *Four Theories of the Press* as unrealistic and have modified or expanded its typology (Hachten and Scotton 148, Merrill, *The Imperative* 36). Despite these criticisms, *Four Theories of the Press* seems to have survived its many critiques and remains a “major point of reference” for media scholars (de Smaele 174). According to Colin Sparks,

*Four Theories of the Press* continues to sell and to win converts...The fact is that, like it or not, the framework proposed by Schramm and his co-thinkers back in the depths of the Cold War has entered the collective unconsciousness of the profession, and it remains firmly lodged even in the minds of many of its sternest critics (36).

According to *Four Theories of the Press*, the libertarian theory values the media’s “watchdog” function. It holds that the press should not be controlled or influenced by the government; it should instead keep the government itself in check, thereby furthering the cause of democracy (de Smaele 175, Mancini 269, Righter 16). In addition, the libertarian theory maintains that a free press enables a diversity of stories and viewpoints to be heard, all of which contribute to the “marketplace of ideas” from which the public
can choose what it wishes to read and believe (Hachten and Scotton 153, Scammell and Semetko xiii, Siebert et al. 3-4).

According to the social responsibility theory, because the media play such an important role in society, journalists should maintain professional standards (Hachten and Scotton 154, McQuail 124). These standards include striving for accuracy in news stories, presenting all sides of an issue, respecting and protecting independence and freedom, acting humanely and being a good steward of the resources that protect journalism and a free society (Lambeth 24, Scammell and Semetko xiii, Siebert et al. 88). Out of this theory also comes the notion of “the public’s right to know” and the government’s subsequent obligation to provide the press with most public records and other information (Siebert et al. 73, 94).

In addition, the social responsibility theory holds the notion of objectivity in the highest regard. The main features of objectivity are: remaining neutral toward the object of reporting, not taking a position on a dispute, making sure all the components of a news story are relevant and complete, and being free from ulterior motives or service to a third party (de Smaele 175, Mancini 272, McQuail 145).

The Western theory of the press combines the principles of the libertarian theory and the social responsibility theory mentioned above to form a cohesive and highly salient media model in contemporary society (de Smaele 175, Hachten and Scotton 152-154, Scammel and Semetko xii). The Western theory is one of five normative theories of the press found in the world today. The other four are: authoritarian, communist, revolutionary and developmental (Hachten and Scotten 148). According to Hachten and Scotten, the ideological conflict between these theories has subsided in recent years, and
it is possible that only the authoritarian and Western theories continue to be viable. Of these, the Western theory of the press has clearly taken the lead in molding how most journalists, and especially Western journalists, report the news (Hachten 164, Mancini 276). According to Mancini, the Western theory has become the measuring stick by which all journalistic behaviors and models are judged, and it represents the “ideal norm to which each practitioner is expected to refer” (268). Though many Western journalists may not be conscious of it, the Western media model and the theoretical assumptions on which it is based permeate every aspect of how Western news is produced (Curran and Park 36). The Western theory of the press also exerts a strong influence on how Western journalists view the media dynamics of the non-Western world (Sreberny 63). The enduring ethic of Western journalism was summarized more than a century ago by an editor of *The Times of London*:

> The first duty of the press is to obtain the earliest and most correct intelligence of the events of the time, and instantly, by disclosing them, to make them the common property of the nation. The duty of the journalist is to present to his readers not such things as statecraft would wish them to know but the truth as near he can attain it (Hachten and Scotton 32).

This study is rooted in the Western theory of the press because it adheres to the notion that Western journalists, either consciously or subconsciously, are guided by this theory’s tenants. This study holds that Western journalists believe, among other things, that the press should be free from governmental interference, present all sides of an issue
and remain objective in its reports. According to the Western theory of the press, Western journalists believe that these standards should be upheld in all parts of the world, not just in Western nations (Sreberny 63). Therefore, if the CPA seeks to control the IMN’s editorial content and cloak state propaganda under the guise of a free press, the Western theory of the press maintains that Western journalists will not represent such actions favorably. The purpose of this study is to examine any patterns and themes among Western journalists’ coverage of the IMN that do just the opposite of what we would expect. I am concerned with discovering any patterns within the text in which Western journalists seem to justify the IMN’s disregard for Western press values. Such patterns would send the message that democratic or ‘good’ intentions justify non-Western or ‘bad’ tactics.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Research Questions

1. How was the Iraqi Media Network represented in the Western media?
2. What influence did Western notions of the proper role of the press have in these representations?
3. What kind of ideological work do these texts perform?

Textual Analysis

For this thesis, I employed the method of textual analysis to explore how the Iraqi Media Network was represented in the Western press. Textual analysis attempts to penetrate the latent meaning of a text, noting recurrences, emphasis, tone, placement—in sum, “why-the-content-is-like-that” (Hall 15-16). In the words of Stuart Hall, this approach views a newspaper as a “structure of meanings, rather than as a channel for the transmission and reception of news” (17). Like Hall, I believe the media play a key role as a “social educator,” particularly during periods of rapid change (11). Beyond simply reporting these changes, newspapers also provide a scheme for interpreting them:
Even when events have a meaning of their own, those meanings are modified, and sometimes transformed, when they enter an already formed discourse or linguistic ‘space’ (Hall 18).

In this way, the Western media does not merely relay information about the IMN to Western audiences; it also molds the ways those audiences perceive the network.

Textual analysis helps reveal these ideological dimensions within a newspaper’s text (Lester 8). This method does not delve into issues of production, author intention or audience readings; it simply focuses on the text itself (Lester 6). Textual analysis first requires a “long preliminary soak” in order to identify patterns and select representative examples for analysis (15). According to Hall, textual analysis requires researchers to:

...employ evidence: they point, in detail, to the text on which an interpretation of latent meaning is based; they indicate more briefly the fuller supporting or contextual evidence which lies to hand; they take into account material which modifies or disproves the hypotheses which are emerging; and they should (they do not always) indicate in detail why one rather than another reading of the material seems to the analyst the most plausible way of understanding it (15).

In this thesis, I adhered to Hall’s above criteria, with one notable exception: I did not seek to negate alternative interpretations of the text. Instead, I held to Dow’s postmodern view that it is neither necessary nor helpful to claim that my interpretation of
the text is either the most accurate or the most comprehensive one possible (4). Unlike
content analysis, which analyzes a text’s manifest content, textual analysis is concerned
with a text’s latent content. Due to this fact, textual analysis is never entirely replicable
because it is not necessarily the only way a text could have been understood. Textual
analysis is an interpretation, an argument (Dow 3-4, Rose 2). There is no one “right”
way to see a text. Simply put, textual analysis finds it value in discovering the possibility
of meaning, and it should be the researcher’s goal to enrich others by compelling them to
see the text through his or her eyes, while never assuming theirs is the only way of seeing
the text (Dow 4, Rose 2). To be sure, each researcher approaches a text with his or her
own unique experiences and perspectives, and these factors certainly influence the
researcher’s interpretations and arguments (Dow 3). However, just because textual
analysis is interpretive does not mean it lacks value:

The error is to assume that because content analysis uses precise criteria
for coding evidence it is therefore objective in the literal sense of the term:
and because literary/linguistic analysis steers clear of code-building it is
merely intuitive and unreliable...Content analysis assumes repetition—the
pile-up of material under one of the categories—to be the most useful
indicator of significance. Literary/linguistic and stylistic analysis also
employs recurrence as one critical dimension of significance, though these
recurring patterns may not be expressed in quantifiable terms (Hall 15).
One way textual analysis is made powerful is by the strength of its evidence (Dow 5). For this reason, I followed Hall’s advice and quoted the text as often and as extensively as possible throughout my analysis (Hall 16-17). I also considered “every significant stylistic, visual, linguistic, presentational, rhetorical feature” to be meaningful (Hall 23). However, it is worth noting, as Hall does, that not all patterns and themes that emerged from the text are present in every article (24). Instead of looking for one coherent structure of meaning, I sought to discover “overlapping structures of meaning” within the text (Hall 24).

The textual analysis presented in this thesis finds its value in providing a foundational study of how the Western media represented the IMN. While its findings may not be quantifiable, it presents an interpretation of the text that opens the door for future study regarding the Western media’s representation of the network.

Materials Examined

In this study, I conducted a textual analysis of five Western newspapers. I chose to analyze newspapers rather than television news because studies have shown that newspaper stories are not subject to the same severe time constraints placed on television news stories, allowing newspapers to include greater detail and a wider variety of opinions on an issue than can television news (Peer and Chestnutt 89). This ability of newspapers to obtain and report many points of view makes any absence of a diversity of viewpoints all the more significant.
I analyzed newspapers rather than magazines because studies have shown that magazines have become increasingly specialized towards niche markets and therefore few, if any, can claim to be representative (Compaine 98). In addition, because each magazine has a unique format with which its niche audience is familiar, details such as story placement and tone cannot be directly compared from one magazine to another, nor from magazines to newspapers. Newspapers, on the other hand, carry the assumption that each shares a similar format and tone, and that each newspaper category (news, editorial, etc.) means the same thing from one newspaper to the next (Hall 18-19). The newspapers I chose for analysis are *The Times of London & Sunday Times* (*The Times*), *The Guardian*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

In Great Britain, *The Times* and *The Guardian* are two daily newspapers that “together...represent or personify the British character and the best in the nation’s journalism” (Merrill, *The Elite* 161). In addition, *The Times* is noted for its “rich” and thorough coverage of foreign news and its strong adherence to the tenants of the Western theory of the press (Pierre 63, Rice xii).

In America, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times* are all considered elite and highly influential newspapers (Merrill, *The Elite* 41, 254). *The New York Times* is often cited as the most prestigious newspaper in the world, and no study of the Western press is complete without its inclusion (Lichter et al. x-xi, Merrill, *The Elite* 40-41, 255, Rice 24). *The Washington Post* is also considered an exemplary newspaper in the Western tradition and a leader in news coverage (Lichter et al. x-xi). Scholars consider both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* newspapers of record for their foreign affairs coverage (Kim 28, Peer and Chestnut 84).
The Los Angeles Times is considered the West Coast’s largest, wealthiest, most thorough and most reputable newspaper (Merrill, The Elite 254-255). Foreign correspondents for The Los Angeles Times are encouraged to thoroughly develop their stories, paying attention to the “why” as much as the “what” of the story (Merrill, The Elite 258).

It is also necessary to note the practical rationale behind my choice of newspapers. Because of language constraints, I was confined to analyzing Western newspapers written in my native English. In addition, not all English-language Western newspapers ran stories about the Iraqi Media Network. I therefore chose the newspapers scholars consider to be the most representative of the Western press tradition from among the English-language Western newspapers that covered the Iraqi Media Network.

Analysis Process

For the purposes of this study, I analyzed the representation of the Iraqi Media Network in the newspapers mentioned above during the first year and a half of the U.S. occupation of Iraq, from March 20, 2003 to August 20, 2004 (see Appendix Figure 2). In all, 57 news stories, feature articles, editorials, columns and pictures were included for analysis (see Appendix Figure 1). With few exceptions, most of these news items focused primarily on the IMN and Iraqi responses to it; in other words, the vast majority of these news items discussed the IMN in depth. I did not employ different methods of analysis for the various journalistic forms I analyzed (i.e. news stories v. editorials) because textual analysis “works to dissolve distinctions” between these forms,
“recognizing that the text operates aggressively to assert relations between signifiers and signifieds, to construct a reality, and by doing so, to fashion history even as it attempts to record it” (Lester 9).

To summarize the steps of my approach, I first submitted to the aforementioned “long preliminary soak” in the text (Hall 15). I read every news item related to the Iraqi Media Network and/or its affiliates contained in the newspapers mentioned above during the specified time period. I did not include for analysis any stories that were authored by the Associated Press or Reuters, as these newswire organizations often employ non-Western journalists who may not be influenced by the Western theory of the press. I then re-read each item closely with the intent of identifying discursive strategies and patterns. This reading was done in a chronological manner: I read each story in the order of its date, noting my findings in an analysis sheet. Headlines, narrative structure, tone, emphasis, recurrences, placement and size were noted. I did not analyze the quoted text in these news items, so long as the opinions expressed in these quotations were reasonably balanced within the item. In other words, I did not analyze a news item’s quoted text as long as it quoted opinions from more than one side of an issue. The analysis sheets served as “pointers to the text” as patterns were discerned (Feldstein and Acosta-Alzuru 159). The final stage of my analysis involved the interpretation of my findings within the study’s framework.
CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS

This analysis of how the Western media represented the Iraqi Media Network reveals several troubling patterns within the text. The first is the notion that propaganda used to support Western goals in Iraq is information, while propaganda used to undermine such goals is not only untrustworthy, but dangerous. The second pattern is the representation of the IMN as supreme over all non-Western media, despite the fact the IMN did not adhere to the Western media model. The third pattern reveals an attitude of condescension toward Iraqis, both as journalists and as people. This section describes these patterns in detail. For analytical purposes, I will discuss each one separately, although there is some overlap among them. In my conclusion, I will discuss how these patterns work together to structure the ideological text.

Pro-Western Propaganda Is Information/Anti-Western Propaganda Is Dangerous

Throughout much of the text, the Western media condone the CPA’s use of the IMN as a channel for pro-Western propaganda disguised as objective news. Instead of applying the Western theory of the press, which holds that the media should be free from governmental interference, the Western media represent the IMN’s propaganda as mere “information” and assents the CPA’s casting of this propaganda as Western-style news
One-sided IMN propaganda is merely “explaining the efforts the Americans are making” (DeYoung and Pincus A17) and seeking to “present the viewpoints of the United States and the provisional authority” (Pincus, “U.S.”A13). In contrast to the days when Hussein used the media to disseminate his “tirades against the United States,” U.S. leaders simply “appear” on the IMN and are “careful to avoid sounding like conquerers” (Sanger and Rutenberg B1). One photograph that serves to emphasize the IMN’s ‘benign’ nature shows a split-screen television with images of President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair both appearing on the IMN. The caption says these leaders are “telling the Iraqis they would be able to control their own future” (Sanger and Rutenberg B1).

Not only is the IMN’s propaganda simply “information,” it is also a “Pentagon-devised media campaign intended to shape the messages being sent to the Iraqi people and to speed the end of the war” (Sanger and Rutenberg B1). In other words, pro-Western propaganda serves to promote peace and “calm Iraqi disquiet” (DeYoung and Pincus A17, Safire A19). The following quote is included in one article, without a rebuttal:

After decades of living under Saddam, Iraqis are hungry for information (emphasis added). If you do not give it, they will look elsewhere—maybe to sources that broadcast slanted news (emphasis added) that is hostile to America’s role in Iraq...Iraq runs on rumours and conspiracy. If you do not provide good information (emphasis added), it can have serious consequences. It can affect your security (Beeston 14).
If, according to the Western media’s representation, the presence of pro-Western propaganda promotes peace, its absence leads to turmoil. One article laments the relatively small scope of the IMN’s reach: “...the scarcity of U.S.-controlled media outlets in Iraq has been both vexing and dangerous...adding to the postwar chaos and a feeling that the Americans are not on top of the situation” (DeYoung and Pincus A17).

According to the Western media’s portrayal, skeptics have no reason not to trust the IMN. In fact, any doubts Iraqis have are “clearly a product of the many newspapers published by political parties and religious groups with little effort at Western-style detachment,” even though IMN officials admit that “some form of propaganda was always part of the plan” (Oppel A1).

Some of the Western media texts even go so far as to paint the U.S.-sponsored IMN as apolitical. Because al-Sabah, an IMN newspaper, does not contain editorials and refuses to print the views of Iraqi politicians, it is cast as being above the political fray:

There are already about a dozen newspapers being produced in Baghdad alone, nearly all products of political points of view. U.S. officials say they do not want to interfere or compete with that free expression...

(DeYoung and Pincus A17).

This text suggests that al-Sabah does not have a political viewpoint, as evidenced by the fact it does not contain editorials. The possibility that biases could be contained in other forms of news stories is not addressed. In fact, it is only when the CPA stops controlling the IMN that the network’s “independence” will be threatened. To calm the
CPA’s fears that an interim Iraqi government might seek to manipulate the IMN, a top Western media executive drew up proposals to ensure that the IMN, “which is currently funded by the Pentagon, survives as an independent network after the transfer of sovereignty to Iraq. It is currently run by an American consortium” (Hellen 2). In addition, the CPA “warned” members of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council not to attempt to control the IMN’s political coverage after the transfer of power. The fact that the CPA itself was exercising an enormous amount of control over the IMN’s content is not mentioned (Pincus, “Speeches” A16).

In sharp contrast to the Western media’s representation of pro-Western propaganda as ‘information’ that leads to peace, anti-Western propaganda is portrayed as dangerous. The fact that Western journalists consider any propaganda disguised as news a problem is certainly in keeping with the Western theory of the press. However, it is quite telling that pro-Western propaganda is justified in the text, while anti-Western propaganda is consistently cast in a negative light. Propaganda that undermines Western forces could “step out of line too much” (Watt and Bowcott 9), contribute to the “intellectual anarchy that has swept the country,” and “agitate an already tense Iraqi public” with “unsubstantiated allegations” against the United States (Moaveni 1). Arab news stations Al-Arabiya and al-Jazeera “incite violence against American forces with their relentless coverage of attacks on soldiers, their sometimes inflated counts of U.S. casualties and their airing of statements purportedly from guerilla groups” (Sipress A15). These stations have “bombarded” Iraq (Ahad 7) and are “unduly critical of U.S.-led forces” (Kamen, “Tough” A41). What is more, al-Jazeera is “little more than a
propaganda organ for al Quaeda” (Kamen, “Tough” A41). The less aligned a vehicle of propaganda is with the CPA’s goals, the more “radical” it is described as being:

Newspapers published by the two chief Kurdish political groups close to the United States put the challenges of rebuilding Iraq in the context of Hussein’s destructive policies. Dailes published by more radical Shiite groups attack the U.S. for being unresponsive and ill-prepared in the early days of liberation (Moaveni 1).

In addition, anti-Western media outlets are portrayed as rapacious, having “planned ahead” to “come in and grab” Iraq’s “virgin market” (DeYoung and Pincus A17). There is “a more sinister side to many of the stories stoking resentment of the occupation forces” (Hider and Farrell 12). What is more, anti-Western propaganda serves to cunningly aid the “increasingly ominous” takeover of Iraqi cities by Shiite clerics (DeYoung and Pincus A17).

Because of the dangers they pose, anti-Western propaganda outlets have forced occupation officials to “impose boundaries” on “inflammatory” news reports and “incendiary rhetoric.” Officials must “corral the news media in Iraq” (Hoffman A17). Journalists who “flout” the CPA’s orders are deserving of their punishment—it is their own fault (Moaveni 1). Sometimes it is necessary for U.S. officials to force anti-Western propaganda outlets to “clean house” (Kamen, “Tough” A41). The duplicitous nature of the CPA’s messages, which both claim to support press freedoms yet justify their restriction, is mirrored in a photo caption that reads:
NEW FREEDOM (caps original): nearly two dozen newspapers have begun circulating following the demise of Hussein’s state-run media. Occupation officials have since imposed boundaries on news reports (Moaveni 1).

Many times throughout the text, the clash of propaganda messages in Iraq is described in almost mythical terms. According to the Western media’s representation, there is a dramatic battle raging between ‘good’ (pro-Western propaganda) and ‘evil’ (anti-Western propaganda), and the consequences of this battle are of epic proportions. The IMN is waging a “battle for hearts and minds against the coverage of Gulf-based television stations such as al-Jazeera” (Hellen 2). This propaganda clash is described as a “dramatic escalation” in a “long-festering dispute” (Shadid, “Iraqi Council” A24), an “information war” (Neuman 20), and a “war for viewers’ hearts and minds” (Sipress A15), complete with a “secret weapon” in the form of an Arabic-speaking interviewee (Safire A19). “The battle for control of Iraq is taking place via the airwaves...” reads one lead (“Mr. Bremer’s Ramadan Address” B4). Depending on the circumstances, the CPA is described as either “winning” or “losing” this battle (Sipress A15).

At the beginning of the U.S. occupation, a videotaped message from President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair is broadcast on newly seized state television facilities as part of the “opening salvo in a Pentagon-devised media campaign” (Sanger and Rutenberg). Meanwhile, “sinister” new papers were established “with the purpose of attacking the coalition” (Hider and Farrell 12). Because of this, the IMN’s
“efforts in Iraq are the most urgent part of a long-range administration plan to blanket
the Arab world with programming promoting American ideals” (Allen A1). Highlighting
the seriousness of this ‘battle,’ one photograph shows a regal-looking Tony Blair
appearing on what is presumably an IMN television program in a White House
conference room. The White House emblem is clearly visible in the background, and two
staffers are busily working next to the television. The caption on the photo reads:
“INFORMATION WAR” (caps original) (Neuman 20).

This battle terminology is even stretched to apply to a time period in which only
the CPA had a voice in Iraq. In an article written at the beginning of the U.S. occupation,
even though “Iraq’s official radio programs have largely disappeared from the airwaves”
and “the Pentagon has the television field mostly to itself,” “the information war is on”
(Neuman 20).

In sum, the Western media often ignore the Western theory of the press when
representing the IMN’s pro-Western propaganda. The IMN’s digressions from the
Western media model are downplayed and at times even glorified for promoting peace.
In marked contrast, anti-Western propaganda that competes with the IMN for Iraqi
audiences is vilified as dangerous. At times this vilification takes on mythical
proportions, with battle terminology used to describe a ‘war’ between the IMN’s ‘good’
propaganda and the ‘evil’ propaganda of anti-Western news outlets.
The IMN as Supreme

Even though the IMN does not adhere to the Western media model, it is still represented as supreme over non-Western media outlets. According the Western media’s representation, the IMN is a “media empire” (Kamen, “Reaching” A21) designed to “bring news to Iraqis” (“A Profile” 2). The network plays a leading role in teaching Iraqis the “basic tenets of Western journalism,” a position which includes instructing Iraqis that “criticism of authority is allowed.” The fact the IMN oftentimes does not allow such criticism in its own news stories is not mentioned. Instead, the IMN helps “foster an independent media that could be an example to the rest of the region, where state censorship is still the rule” (Moaveni 1). Hopes are high that it can also spur “Iraqi news outlets to become more professional” (“America’s Television” A10). In addition, the IMN is hailed for seeking to become a “PBS-style public broadcasting corporation,” (Hoffman A17) and a British media executive envisions it becoming a “beacon for western values” (Hellen 2).

In contrast, non-Western media outlets in Iraq constitute a disorganized “free-for-all” (Moaveni 1, Oppel 1) and are criticized because “the line between editorial and news is often blurred” (Moaveni 1). The fact that this can also be said of the IMN is ignored. According to one article:

After 35 years of Saddam’s iron grip, Iraq’s free press has exploded in a frenzy of uncensored, often unreliable, sensationalist journalism. Anyone
with the cash to cover printing costs can launch their own paper, and join
the daily feast of rumor-mongering (Hider and Farrell 12).

Throughout the text, Iraq’s new media outlets are dismissed as nuisances that do
nothing but cause exasperation. The following quote from a “frustrated” Iraqi bookseller
appeared in an article, without a rebuttal:

“Anyone with some cash can now publish a newspaper,” he said, picking
up a tabloid with florid design. “See this? This is published by the owner
of the pastry shop across the street” (Moaveni 1).

While a few of these non-Western media outlets offer “worthy” political stories,
they merely “claim” to be independent and should be regarded skeptically (Hider and
Farrell). In fact, the only contribution of their “bizarre diatribes” has been to create
“some tense moments for the civilian authority” (Oppel A1).

In this way, the text serves to further condone the IMN’s disregard for the
Western media model by representing the IMN as superior to all non-Western media. It
is not just anti-Western propaganda that is inferior to the IMN—it is all non-Western
news.
Condescension Toward Iraqis: as Journalists and as People

Throughout much of the text, a clear pattern of condescension toward Iraqis is evident. In some instances this attitude is aimed specifically at Iraqi journalists, and in others it is leveled at Iraqis as a whole. In both cases, the Western media clearly position themselves above Iraqis, both professionally and generally.

Condescension Toward Iraqi Journalists

In the Western media’s representation of the IMN, the network’s Iraqi journalists are portrayed as its weakest link. Iraqi correspondents “cobble” news together for the IMN, while television footage from worldwide news outlets is simply “blended” and aired on the network (Getlin and Neuman A1). Many of the network’s Iraqi journalists are merely “holdovers from the previous dispensation” (Pincus, “U.S.” A13). A frustrated IMN news director who came to Iraq from the United States has to contend with “energetic but green journalists” (Sipress A15). And a “Western-trained” IMN news editor is paraphrased complaining about the network’s “newly minted” Iraqi journalists “just picking up gossip from friends and neighbours and printing it” (Hider and Farrell 12). If the IMN fails to criticize the CPA, it is the fault of Iraqi journalists who “have yet to shake the media culture of the Hussein era,” despite the fact CPA “management has banned newscasters from using the word ‘occupation’ to describe the presence of U.S.-led forces in the country” (Sipress A15).
In addition to casting the IMN’s Iraqi journalists as incompetent annoyances, the text also implies they are subversive. In one article, it is written as a certainty that IMN journalists who used to work for Hussein’s Ministry of Information “will be a problem” for the network (Pincus, “Army’s” A23). And a Mosul-based IMN station is kept “under the watchful eye” of a U.S. Major General because its Iraqi journalists cannot be trusted when they’re away from Baghdad-based CPA officials (Pincus, “Speeches” A16).

Throughout the text, the Western media’s condescension toward Iraqi journalists does not stop with employees of the IMN; all Iraqi journalists are subjected to this attitude. The work of Iraqi journalists needs to “mature” (Moaveni 1) and “still has a way to go on the road to professionalism” (Sanders A6). According to both a quote and a photo caption in one article, the idea of a free press has not “sunk in yet” for Iraqi journalists (Sanders A6). Iraqi reporters have been “forced” to learn the Western style of reporting quickly, language which implies they’re resisting this approach (Oppel 1). “Experienced” or “seasoned” journalists—journalists who have been trained outside Iraq—can only teach Iraqis to be good journalists once Iraqis “make the mental journey” out of the Hussein era. These “experienced” journalists are constantly frustrated by their Iraqi mentees:

Abdel-Amir (former correspondent for a British newspaper) is training 20 journalists for his newspaper. He puts his head on his desk when asked about the challenges. “Their minds are embedded with Saddam,” he said in a weary tone (Moaveni 1).
According to the Western media’s representation, Iraqi journalists are trying to “push their agendas” and are “little more than mouthpieces for religious and political factions” (Moaveni 1). They “screech about the massive American conspiracy that is part of the grand Western war on Islam, and wail about occupied Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan, and lament the Taliban and Saddam, and demand that some kind of reformation come from inside the Arab world no later than 2150” (Ahad 7). In general, Iraqi journalists contribute little of value to their country and simply serve as dangerous nuisances for the CPA:

...while the U.S.-led coalition has welcomed the emergence of a burgeoning fourth estate, officials are now worried that the often scurrilous reports could be putting coalition lives at risk...journalistic canards have accused U.S. troops of all manner of infidel devilry and anti-Semitism is rife... ‘The lack of professionalism is like a disease here,’ said Ismail Zayer, the editor in chief of the coalition-backed al-Sabah newspaper (Hider and Farrell 12).

Though Iraqi journalists may not like the CPA’s censorship, “for many media professionals (emphasis added) the move is a welcome curb on the distortions spread across the country” (Hider and Farrell 12). In fact, “seasoned Iraqi journalists returning from exile abroad predict that only a handful (of Iraqi news outlets) will survive” (Moaveni 1).
Throughout the text, it is never suggested that the IMN, by failing to live up to its claim of serving as a free press, might be contributing to the difficulties Iraqis are having in adopting Western media values. Instead, Iraqis are shown as bearing all responsibility for Iraq’s troubled media system.

Condescension Toward Iraqis as People

Throughout much of the text, the Western media use paternalistic language and derogatory imagery to portray Iraqis as childlike. Iraqis “complain” the IMN is dull, while austere Pentagon officials “criticize” it (Oppel A1). Washington is attempting to “get its message across” to Iraqis, language which suggests Iraqis lack intelligence—it is far different from saying Washington is attempting to communicate with Iraqis (Beeston 14, Hoffman A17). In addition, a bidder for the IMN contract is interested in “educating people and getting through” (Porter 7). To accomplish its goals, the IMN should avoid using “blatant propaganda” in an attempt to sway Iraqis, which seems to imply that covert propaganda will be effective because Iraqis will not be able to pick up on it (Hoffman A17).

In some instances, Iraqis are represented as sheep, with the United States trying to “shepherd Iraq into a new media era” (Williams, “Staffers” A19). According to the text, Iraqis need to be “blanketed” with the U.S.’ messages, which will bring security, peace and comfort (Allen A1, Safire A19). To protect Iraqis from wandering into danger, CPA officials must “exercise their power to censor” (Williams, “U.S.” A14).
Taking this condescension further, the Western media seem to suggest that Iraqis are incapable of sustaining the kind of free and robust press system Westerners enjoy. Plans to establish Western-style media in Iraq are “ambitious” (Kamen, “Reaching” A21, Hoffman A17, Pincus, “Army’s” A23), as are even simple attempts to replay America’s network news on Iraqi airwaves (Neuman 20). In fact, the IMN is “the most ambitious...foreign media program ever undertaken by the U.S. government” (Pincus, “Army’s” A23). Why is the IMN more ambitious than VOA, Radio Marti and all other U.S.-backed media diplomacy programs in American history? The suggestion is that the IMN’s Iraqi audience is the least capable of supporting Western-style media.

In much of the text, Iraqis are portrayed as lacking the intelligence necessary to sustain a Western-style media system. Iraqis are “overwhelmed by the choices” and “struggling” to determine which news sources they find credible (Oppel A1). In addition, the IMN’s airing of interviews with scholars “is not exactly what American network schedulers might recommend to entertain the Iraqi public” (Sanger and Rutenberg B1).

According to the Western media’s representation, if a free press is somehow established in Iraq, it will take an extraordinarily long time. According to the logic of one article, The Washington Post and The New York Times took several decades to establish themselves, “and they did not have language barriers, terrorists or the absence of any tradition of free speech to deal with” (Kamen, “Reaching” A21). This implies that unlike Iraq, America had a pure, clean slate on which it built a free press. Anyone with even a slight notion of U.S. history knows that America, too, has experienced extended periods of unrest and violent social uprisings. In addition, to say Iraq has no tradition of
free speech is patently false; feisty political papers flourished in Iraq until Hussein assumed power in the late 1960s (Daragahi 2).

In sum, the text represents Iraqis as inferior to Westerners, both as journalists and as people. Iraqi journalists are shown as the Achilles heel of the IMN, and those Iraqi journalists who do not work for the IMN are portrayed as worthless nuisances. In addition, Iraqis themselves are represented as childlike, in need of Westerners’ help but incapable of sustaining the kind of press system enjoyed by their occupiers.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The Iraqi Media Network: What Is Bad for Us Is Good Enough for Them

The Iraqi Media Network had enormous potential. It could have served as a credible media outlet in Iraq and a source to which Iraqis could turn for objective news. It could have served as an example of a free press in a war-torn country whose fragmented and politicized media outlets were quickly exacerbating existing tensions. It could have sought to overcome Iraqi skepticism by reporting all news events objectively and refusing to serve as the mouthpiece of the CPA. However, by seeking to accomplish the conflicting goals of serving as both a vehicle of public diplomacy for occupation officials and a credible news outlet, the IMN squandered its opportunity to have an impact and now faces nearly insurmountable odds as it seeks to redeem its reputation. In short, the IMN failed to accomplish its mission of providing Iraqis with a credible, objective alternative to anti-Western news outlets.

Obviously, this expensive and controversial network has been a frequent subject of the Western press’ attention, and as this study shows, the ways in which the Western media have portrayed the IMN have important and troubling implications. This study sought to examine the Western media’s portrayal of the IMN by asking three questions:
• How was the Iraqi Media Network represented in the Western media?

• What influence did Western notions of the proper role of the press have in these representations?

• What kind of ideological work do these texts perform?

The answers to these questions are intimately related and continuously reinforce one another throughout the text, and thus I will discuss them together to illustrate the ways in which they structure the text’s latent content. My findings show that throughout the text, the Western media consistently condone the IMN’s use of propaganda disguised as objective news. Were similar tactics currently being used to persuade Western audiences, I firmly believe the Western media would attack such practices with gusto. However, the Western media clearly accept such digressions from Western journalistic ideals when they are intended to influence Iraqi audiences toward Western goals. Instead of advocating the formation of a truly objective media network in Iraq that could spur the creation of a free media system throughout the nation, the Western media seem to suggest that the IMN’s propaganda is ‘good enough.’ In marked contrast, propaganda that does not serve the interests of the CPA is vociferously derided as dangerous. In general, the Western media portray the IMN’s propaganda as ‘good,’ anti-Western propaganda as ‘bad,’ and the lack of a free press system in Iraq as ‘fine.’

What is more, even though the IMN does not adhere to the Western media model and uses media practices Western journalists would normally find disgraceful, the network is still portrayed as superior to all non-Western media, even that which does not have a decidedly anti-Western bias. Throughout much of the text, the Western media
turn a blind eye to the IMN’s propaganda and instead offer scathing critiques of the
“unreliable, sensationalist journalism” (Hider and Farrell 12) of non-Western media
outlets. In this way, the Western media continue their clear pattern of hypocrisy
throughout the text.

In addition, the Western media consistently position themselves above Iraqis,
both professionally and generally. If the IMN has problems, it is the fault of its Iraqi
journalists. If Iraqi journalists lack professionalism and objectivity, it is because they
cannot “make the mental journey” out of the Hussein era (Moaveni 1). The fact the IMN
calls itself an example of a free press but churns out self-serving propaganda is not
considered a contributing factor to the difficulties Iraqi journalists are having in adopting
Western journalistic practices. No, the blame for all of Iraq’s media problems is placed
squarely on the shoulders of Iraqis, who are shown as childlike and slow, easily
overwhelmed and in need of the West’s help. The Western media consistently seem to
suggest that Iraqis are inferior to Westerners, and because of this they may never be able
to sustain a free press system like those in the West. This attitude within the text
reinforces the Western media’s acceptance of the IMN’s diversions from the Western
media model.

The implications of these findings are most disturbing, especially in light of the
fact that newspapers continually take on the perceived attitudes of their readers (Hall 22).
In fact, in would not be possible for the patterns discerned in this study to exist over such
a significant period of time without “reciprocal confirmation” from readers. The process
of news production is a social and symbolic one, and it is “continually underwritten by a
structure of informed but informal assumptions” (Hall 23). Thus, as newspapers interpret
social change for readers, they also reflect underlying social and cultural assumptions. What is more, the ways in which the Western media represent the IMN seem to reflect the mentality of the Western leaders who managed the network. The findings in this study suggest the existence of a pervasive Western belief that Iraqis are incapable of sustaining a free press and thus are undeserving of one. The West need not take any responsibility for the difficulties Iraqis are having in cultivating a Western-style press system, because all of these difficulties stem from Iraqis’ incompetence and their inability to shake Hussein’s brainwashing. While Westerners deserve a robust media system that is free from governmental interference, state-sponsored propaganda is acceptable for Iraqis, and may in fact be all they can handle. According to text’s portrayal, because Iraqis are like sheep, the United States should lead them with media persuasion instead of encouraging the formation of a free marketplace of ideas. Iraq’s media need not meet the West’s standards, so long as it promotes the West’s aims. In sum, according to the Western media’s representation, democratic or ‘good’ intentions justify non-Western or ‘bad’ tactics.

**Opportunities for Future Research**

As discussed in the methodology section of this research, the methodological approach of this study does not delve into issues of news production, author intention or audience readings; it simply focuses on the text itself. Future research could include interviews with the text’s journalists or editors, as well as analyses of audience
perspectives about the text, in order to gain additional insights that can be incorporated into this research.

In addition, a content analysis of the same text could be conducted to see if the arguments presented in this textual analysis are confirmed by the repetition of various key terms and phrases. For example, a content analysis could determine the frequency with which news stories mention terms like “objectivity” and “freedom” in reports about the IMN.

Also, additional textual analyses could be conducted to examine how other Western media forms represent the IMN. For example, a textual analysis could be conducted to determine how Western television news broadcasts represented the IMN during the same time period analyzed in this study. Also of interest would be a textual analysis of how major Western news magazines portrayed the IMN. If the findings of additional textual analyses of other media forms yield similar results to those of this study, the implications of this research will be all the more profound.
REFERENCES


References From News Sample*
*Pictures are not referenced separately


APPENDIX

**Figure 1. Breakdown of Newspapers and News Types Analyzed**

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<th>News Story</th>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Editorial</th>
<th>Column</th>
<th>Picture</th>
<th>Total # of News Items</th>
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Figure 2. Breakdown of News Items by Month

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