

Fighting Objectivity: The Illusion of Journalistic Neutrality in Coverage of the Persian Gulf War

Much of the public discussion about the mass media's role in the Persian Gulf War focused on conflicts the press had with the military and politicians. Should the Pentagon have controlled so closely the ability of reporters to work in the field? Should Cable News Network have continued to broadcast from Baghdad once the war was under way? Did reporters unnecessarily badger Pentagon briefers at news conferences? Despite these criticisms, the public gave the media generally good marks; more than 80 percent of respondents in one poll rated news coverage of the war as good or excellent (*Star Tribune* 1991b, A7).

But from a different perspective, opponents of the war saw the media as engaging in "blatant Gulf War cheerleading and marginalizing of the peace and justice movement" (*Z Magazine* 1991, 2). Which view is the most accurate assessment of the press' performance? Did the mainstream media, struggling with a restrictive Pentagon system, do a good job of providing objective coverage? Or did it help "manufacture consent" in support of the war?¹

This paper looks at the news media's role in the construction of the meaning of some of the language surrounding the Persian Gulf War and uses the war coverage to examine the limits of that canon of journalistic objectivity. By looking at objectivity in war coverage, we can see more clearly how the concept can't help but fail to live up to its promises.

The analysis begins with a discussion of Stuart Hall's concept of the politics of signification and an application of it to the vocabulary used during the Persian Gulf War based on an interpretive analysis of newspaper coverage. A short review of the literature on objectivity and news-making conventions follows, concentrating on Hallin's analysis of coverage of the Vietnam War. From there I will examine the intersection of my personal opposition to the war and my professional duties as an editor on the copy desk of a metro daily during the war.²

Language During Wartime

Scholars from many different disciplines have pointed out the fallacy of viewing language as a transparent description of reality. This paper relies on Stuart Hall's description of the politics of signification to ground a discussion of the language constructed by the U.S. administration and military that was used to describe the Persian Gulf War.

It is widely accepted that "reality [can] no longer be viewed as simply a given set of facts: it [is] the result of a particular way of constructing reality," as Hall (1982) puts it (64). Hall examines how ideology and power are part of that construction, how signification becomes a site of political struggle. As he points out, however, the ideological orientation that results may not be readily observable:

Particular discursive formulations would, then, be ideological not because of the manifest bias or distortions of their surface contents, but because they were generated out of, or were transformations based on, a limited ideological matrix or set. (Hall 1982, 72)

Hall's claim that the media become part of a system that creates and maintains the hegemony of a ruling class or classes does not rest on showing direct control of the media by those classes, and the media's claim to independence need not be seen as wholly fictitious. As Hall (1982) sees it, the media "must be sensitive to, and can only survive legitimately by operating within, the general boundaries or framework of 'what everyone agrees' to: the consensus" (87). And the media become part of dialectical process of the production of consent, shaping the consensus while reflecting it. The boundaries and framework become part of the common sense of the society and usually go unchallenged.

Hall's analysis helps us understand the rhetoric of the United States' latest war and the political implications of that rhetoric. That will be illustrated with several examples from newspaper accounts of the war. This interpretive analysis is based on a daily reading of the *New York Times*,³ the Minneapolis-based *Star Tribune*, and the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, supplemented with less regular examinations of other papers and major news magazines. The *Times* uses its own correspondents almost exclusively. The Minneapolis paper supplemented wire service copy with stories from its Washington bureau and from one of its own reporters in the Gulf. The *Pioneer Press* relied on wire copy, including the Knight-Ridder News Service. The intent is not to claim these papers are strictly representative of the press or that my conclusions apply to all media, but these papers are not atypical examples of the mainstream press and can be used to reach insights about the coverage.

The aim of this paper is to look at the routine use of language and the common frames used to describe the war. In general, newspapers avoided some of the more blatant cheerleading and flag-waving that showed up on television,⁴ confining most of their open support to the editorial and op/ed

pages. But, as Hall's analysis would suggest, newspapers' "straight" news stories also are part of the production of consensus on the war.

The news media and American public were not unaware of the way in which military language can construct reality a certain way. It didn't take long for the term "collateral damage," a military euphemism for civilian deaths and destruction of non-military targets, to become a common joke. But critical analysis of the Pentagon's vocabulary in the mainstream press rarely extended beyond that. Also, both the media and public were aware of the power of the video of the alleged pinpoint accuracy of high-tech bombs; much was said about the way in which the Pentagon had turned the war into a video game. But there were countless other ways in which the military was much more sophisticated, and successful, in framing the debate.

A few quick examples taken from two lead headlines in the *Pioneer Press*: "Allies storm forward" (25 February 1991). "Storm" was a popular verb as well as part of a proper noun in this war. The news media rarely, if ever, questioned the use of the dashing, romantic label of "Operation Desert Storm" or its predecessor, "Desert Shield," and often played off the phrase. Most commonly, the media wrote about Iraqi "aggression" against Kuwait, while the United States swept through the war like a desert storm. These labels are not only arbitrary, but have powerful connotations of good and evil.⁵ The U.S. military action just as easily could have been labeled aggression, and in fact was seen that way by many Middle Eastern people as well as anti-war activists in the United States and around the world.

A second example is "Kuwait City freed" (27 February, 1991). This mirrors the media's description of the U.S. military's campaign to "liberate Kuwait." Such terminology implies that Kuwait was once free and then became subjugated. Although news reports did bring up the absence of democracy in pre-invasion Kuwait, the terms "liberation" and "freedom" were consistently used to describe the ouster of the Iraqi army. From another view, again as seen by many Middle Eastern people, the U.S. war simply replaced one occupying army (Iraq's) with another (the Americans, in service of a corrupt family dictatorship). Kuwait was "liberated," it could be argued, to be returned to a state of non-liberation.

There were times when this control of the construction of meaning became almost absurd. For example, much attention was focused on the high-tech weaponry the United States used against Iraq and of the importance of those weapons in limiting U.S. casualties. The administration explained its heavy bombing of Iraq as a tactic designed in part to save American lives. This idea that high-tech weapons could save lives was also trumpeted by the weapons industry, as seen in an ad that proclaimed "Stealth saves lives" (Northrop advertisement 1991). That same idea was the focus of a news magazine cover story headlined, "The New Science of War. High-Tech Hardware: How Many Lives Can It Save?" (*Newsweek* 1991). In this case, "lives" had been successfully defined by the govern-

ment that uses, and the corporations that make, these weapons as “American lives.” The fact that the lives of tens of thousands of Iraqis were not saved by these weapons is conveniently ignored by these definitions.

The critical importance of controlling definitions can be seen in two other examples: the use of the terms “atrocities” and “chemical weapons.” One of the oldest tricks in the wartime propaganda handbook is describing the tactics of the other side as “atrocities.” But when is the infliction of pain or death an atrocity and when is it justified or, at least, forgivable? In the Persian Gulf War, that depended on who was doing the inflicting. The United States did its best to frame the actions of Iraqis in Kuwait as atrocities, and I have no doubt that the label is fair for some of the Iraqi acts against Kuwaitis.

But, consider the following reports of events in Kuwait: “[doctors saw people who were] burned with cigarettes, hit with typewriters and chairs and had their fingernails pulled out . . . a 22-year-old whose face was made unrecognizable by coagulated blood. The victim said he had been beaten for eight hours” (*Star Tribune* 1991a, A7). Also: “Doctors . . . treated scores of men who had been severely beaten, slashed and in several instances shot . . . execution style” (Lorch 1991, A7).

Those accounts describe actions by Kuwaitis against Palestinians who had been accused of being Iraqi collaborators or sympathizers. Not once in the coverage examined for this paper were those instances of Kuwaiti brutality described as atrocities. One *New York Times* story ran under the tag line of “New Casualties,” as if these killings were not distinguishable from battle casualties. Another *Times* story explained the Kuwaitis’ actions as a “ground swell of anger and a desire for revenge” (Hedges 1991, A11). If not admirable, that passage implies, the Kuwaitis behavior was at least understandable. Time also used the term “revenge” carried out by Kuwaitis who had remained in Kuwait during the occupation while “Iraq pillaged and raped their land” (Kramer 1991, 28). As Kuwaiti retribution continued, major media did follow the story, including fairly critical coverage of the kangaroo court trials for suspected collaborators. But in all the coverage examined, the label “atrocities” was never applied to any Kuwaiti action.

In constructing a picture of an evil enemy and good-hearted allies, such subtleties in the use of language are important. The term “atrocities” takes the killing to a new level, one in which strong retaliation is morally justified. The wholesale destruction of a country, for example, would become more acceptable if that country’s soldiers were guilty of committing atrocities. And this discussion of “atrocities,” of course, leaves out the question of whether the U.S. bombing of Iraq might not be considered an atrocity as well.

The question of defining the term “chemical weapon” could have had far reaching consequences, not only for building support for the war but for amplifying the killing. Throughout the war, the U.S. government stressed the threat of Iraqi chemical weapons, mainly gas, and made it

clear that the use of that gas would be justification for stronger action. For example, after the Iraqi surrender, U.S. officials warned that if Hussein used chemical weapons to suppress the rebellion within his own country, the United States would resume its attack. “[W]e are right there in the country and I don’t think morally we could let [Hussein] do it and not do anything about it,” one official was quoted as saying (Tyler 1991, A1). Also, because President Bush refused to rule out the use of nuclear weapons in the war, it is relevant to speculate about whether the administration would have responded to introduction of chemical weapons by Iraq with tactical nuclear weapons. If that was possible, then the definition of chemical weapon was, literally, a matter of life and death for the Middle East, if not for the whole planet.

The emphasis on the danger of Iraqi chemical weapons was crucial to that construction. Most Americans seem to have a hazy understanding that gas was used in World War I and that it was bad. Playing on that conception of chemical weapons, the government continually stressed the threat of Hussein’s chemical warheads, and Israelis were understandably concerned about a chemical attack. But at least two key questions have to be asked about the administration’s framing of the issue.

First is the question of what is a chemical weapon. Is a fuel-air bomb a chemical weapon? These bombs spray a mist of highly flammable fuel over the target area. The mist is then ignited, which produces a huge blast whose shock waves can level buildings and a firestorm that consumes all available oxygen, even sucking the air out of people’s lungs.⁶ Or, consider napalm, a mixture of jellied petroleum, thickening agents, and chemicals that was used extensively in Vietnam. Napalm sticks and burns, and also can remove so much oxygen from the air that it suffocates people in the area. The United States military acknowledged using both fuel-air bombs and napalm in Iraq, although contending that napalm was being used only against structures and fortifications, not against Iraqi troops. Each of these weapons uses chemicals to destroy enemy defenses and kill troops. Yet neither was defined as a chemical weapon, by the military or the news media. A *New York Times* writer did observe that, “some opponents of its use have argued that napalm should be classified as a chemical weapon and banned” (Browne 1991, A8). This was one sentence in one brief story that ran on the bottom of an inside page. In *Time*, the point was made even more clearly. In a take-out box about weapons, the “chemical weapons” heading included a discussion of Iraqi and U.S. weapons, emphasizing the fact that the United States had no chemical or biological weapons in place in the Middle East. A separate heading followed for “napalm,” suggesting that it was a separate category from chemical weapons, deserving different consideration (Beyer 1991). The United States downplayed its use of these arguably “chemical” weapons, concentrating instead of the high-tech wizardry of “smart bombs” and laser-guided bombs. The media, as a rule, didn’t question the military on this point.

The second key question concerns the rationale for the importance of the chemical/non-chemical dichotomy, which allowed the military to frame Iraq's chemical weapons as a new level of threat that would require a new level of U.S. response. That framing took attention away from some of the horribly destructive non-chemical weapons that the United States used in the war, such as cluster bombs, which are canisters that open and spread hundreds of smaller projectiles over an area as large as a football field, literally shredding anyone in the area. The media did not seem interested in asking why a cluster bomb is more humane than nerve gas. Why would the use of nerve gas by a country that had been leveled by "conventional" weapons and ripped apart by cluster bombs be an escalation of the level of violence?

This is not to suggest, of course, that the use of chemical weapons in the war would not have been cause for great concern. But the administration and the military controlled the definitions and the framing, manipulating the discourse for their own purposes, and that the news media rarely, if ever, challenged those basic definitions or frames. This was made painfully obvious by a story after the cease-fire that discussed the atrocities committed by Iraqi troops trying to quell the revolt against Hussein. Those "atrocities" included the use of napalm and chemical weapons, although it was unclear what type of chemical weapons were at issue (Kifner 1991). It appears that U.S. use of napalm is not an atrocity, but Iraqi use of it is.

A recitation of examples of the administration's control over the language of the Gulf War could go on indefinitely. At this point, the paper will turn to the canons of journalism that gave the administration that control.

Objectivity During Wartime

Much has been written about the conventions of news-gathering and the attendant professional ideology of objectivity. Those works include: Tuchman's (1978) work on the news net and the web of facticity; Fishman's (1980) exploration of the relationship of bureaucratic structures and the news; Gans' (1979) examination of values and the news; and Gitlin's (1980) discussion of the persistent patterns in news frames.

This paper will concentrate on Hallin's (1986) study of news coverage of the Vietnam War, which is especially relevant to the project at hand. In fact, if one were to replace geographical references to "Southeast Asia" with "the Middle East" and ideological references to "the Cold War" with "protection of America's interests in oil and support for the new world order," many of Hallin's observations are as applicable to the Persian Gulf War as they are to Vietnam. A case in point:

[T]hose reporters also went to Southeast Asia schooled in a set of journalistic practices which, among other things, ensured that the news would reflect, if not

always the views of those at the very top of the American political hierarchy, at least the perspectives of American officialdom generally. . . . [And] the reporters also went to Vietnam deeply committed to the "national security" consensus that had dominated American politics since the onset of the Cold War, and acted as "responsible" advocates of that consensus. (Hallin 1986, 8-9)

Hallin describes the professional ideology of the journalist as a type of false consciousness that allows those holding political power to shape the news. That power, Hallin (1986) says, "is exercised indirectly, through the manipulation of symbols and routines of working life that those subject to it accept as their own" (24). The conventions that grow out of that ideology, as identified by Hallin, are: (1) reliance on official sources and deference to their authority; (2) a focus on the president, with the assumption that his newsworthiness overrides any other story; (3) an absence of interpretation or analysis in straight journalism, supplemented by "analysis" pieces that have little more to offer and are usually based simply on better access to better sources; and (4) a focus on immediate and discrete events (1986, 71-5). From the coverage of the Persian Gulf War, it appears little has changed in 20 years.

Hallin also argues that the prevailing ideology that dictated the course of the Vietnam War can be seen in the assumptions about the value of war, which he says were formed primarily in World War II, and the language used to describe the war. Those assumptions include: (1) war is a national endeavor that requires unity; (2) war is a grand American tradition; (3) war is manly; (4) winning is what counts; and (5) war is rational (1986, 142). Again, those assumptions seem to accurately describe the atmosphere in which the United States prosecuted the war against Iraq.

Hallin argues that contrary to the mythology about Vietnam, the press did not lead the nation away from support of the war, either by negative coverage or presentation of the violent reality of war. Instead, the press simply covered opposition to the war when it could no longer ignore the deep divisions in society. In the short Persian Gulf War, such large-scale opposition with representatives from powerful institutions never formed, as politicians ran to jump on the pro-war bandwagon and the anti-war movement struggled against an overwhelmingly pro-war citizenry.

I now want to turn to my own experiences as a copy editor to add an account that illustrates the problem of the canon of objectivity. My argument goes like this: Stories came in from the field that were written in accordance with the rules of objectivity; those stories were rife with pro-war bias, both subtle and overt; from a decidedly non-objective position, I edited those stories to remove the pro-war bias and make an oppositional reading more possible; the result was stories that, it could be argued, were more "objective" than the original version. So, by actively drawing on my anti-war bias, I was able to better meet the standards of the canon I rejected. In summary: Objectivity's objectivity is illusory. Objectivity is easily manipulated. Objectivity left unexamined does more to obfuscate than to explain.

First, since I am using a personal narrative in a scholarly pursuit, I should set out my position on the war. I believe that the reasons given by President Bush for our involvement in the Gulf “crisis” were at best obfuscations, and probably out-and-out lies. The “new world order” is an embarrassing rhetorical device intended to mask old-fashioned Western imperialism in the Third World. I believe that the United States created the climate for a war, pushed for a war, avoided alternative solutions to war, and then prosecuted a war with a brutality that surpasses anything that Iraqi troops did in Kuwait. Hussein is a repressive and ruthless dictator, but I believe he was in some sense set up by the United States. I reject the assertion that opposition to the war means that one supports Hussein. I also reject the implication that opponents of the war do not care about the Americans sent to the Gulf to fight, and I refuse to play the “support the troops” game. With the war over, I mourn the tens of thousands of Iraqi dead just as much as the tens of Americans who died.

Those are the political convictions I took into the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* newsroom on the night of February 25, 1991, from which the following examples are drawn. I made no attempt to hide them from my co-workers or supervisors, and no one (to the best of my knowledge) scrutinized my editing with any special care, probably for two reasons. First, because of the extra copy being processed, no one had time to police a possibly deviant editor. Second, the unstated assumption was that I would not let those opinions affect my work. Indeed, in years gone by, I would have contended that I had kept those opinions out of my editing. But in this war, I openly took sides, at least partly because the copy I saw coming in over the wire seemed so slanted to the administration line.

My job on the desk that night was as a “rim” editor, which meant I edited stories, made any trims in length necessary, and wrote headlines and cutlines. The stories I read had been selected by a wire editor and positioned in the paper by a news editor. From my computer terminal, the stories went to the “slot” editor, who reviewed my work, made any additional changes deemed necessary, and sent them to the production department.

While I tried to change the slant of these stories, I am painfully aware of what a minor effect my editing had. My tinkering at the editing stage accomplished little, since the stories were constructed within the administration’s framing of the story and within the limits imposed by that administration on independent reporting. But I worked hard at my task, partly to make whatever little contribution I could, and partly to keep myself from exploding in anger. What follows are some of the changes I made that night and my reconstruction of the thinking behind those changes.⁷

From an Associated Press story about scenarios for postwar diplomacy: “The war to liberate Kuwait” was changed to “the war against Iraq.” I changed every reference I found to the liberation of Kuwait in keeping with the argument I made earlier in this paper. “The remarkable coalition

put together by President Bush” became “The fragile coalition . . .” The main coalition partners were two other Western countries with a history of imperialism in the Middle East (Britain and France), oil-rich feudal monarchies that had a stake in the maintenance of existing boundaries (most importantly, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), our main Arab client state in the Middle East (Egypt, which receives about \$2 billion a year in U.S. aid), and one dictatorship that saw Iraq as a threat to its status as a regional power (Syria). Although I would have preferred the phrase “corrupt coalition” or “fantasy coalition,” I would argue my more modest substitution was more than justified. The designation “radical” was dropped as a modifier of Iraq and Syria, and “moderate” was dropped as modifier of Egypt. The obvious question here is, by whose standards? The obvious answer is, by the Bush administration’s.

From a Newhouse News Service story about the effect of U.S. military’s success in the war on morale: The military’s “dazzling performance in the Persian Gulf,” became its “performance in the Persian Gulf.” Objections to this modifier could come from many angles. For example, what is dazzling about a world superpower with nearly limitless stockpiles of high-tech weapons bombing a smaller country into submission, then rolling over the decimated Iraqi troops? Or, from a more radical perspective, what is dazzling about mass murder?

From a Baltimore *Sun* story about the possibility of war crimes trials against the Iraqis: Following the third paragraph, I added a new paragraph. “As the likely victors, it is doubtful the allied forces would face similar scrutiny of their actions.” My gut instinct was to add: “After the Persian Gulf War, it is unlikely that the United States will be held to answer for its wholesale destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure and mass killing of civilians through bombings that inflicted extensive damage to systems that deliver food, water and power.” But I knew the limits of tolerance of the slot editors. I found the one-sided discussion of war crimes to be one of the most offensive ways in which the media reproduced without critical comment the administration line. The question of war crimes is worth discussing, but not applied to one side only.

From a Chicago *Tribune* story about U.S. military strategy: I removed the lead sentence, “The Iraqi army is being flattened like soft dough under a pastry roller.” This was an interesting simile, one I am sure the military commanders would have appreciated. But it masks the reality that, in this case, the soft dough is the soft flesh of human beings. The U.S. military’s “stunning success” became the their “success.” My thinking is similar to the note above about “dazzling performances.” Except that here, I had second thoughts about even leaving in “success.” I considered changing that to “the ability of the U.S. military to destroy much of the Iraqi infrastructure and kill an unknown number of civilians.” But, again, I did not want to press my luck with the slot editors. “The [U.S.] Army’s 7th Corps, a sledgehammer of four divisions” became “The Army’s 7th Corps, four divisions.” In general, I tried to excise these kind of technical and/or sports

metaphors. As Hallin (1986) points out, they have the effect of purging the war of political and moral implications. War becomes a job to be done or a game to be won (144-45). So, I tried to cut out descriptions of bombers “pounding” the enemy and similar phrases.

As I mentioned, no supervisor challenged my work. I checked the final copy that made it into the paper, and all of my changes made it past the slot editor. If I had been challenged, my strategy would have been to embrace the canon of objectivity and claim that I had tried to inject more fairness and balance into the stories. But that would have been simply a defensive position taken without any conviction on my part. What I believe this account of my editing shows is that any claim to objectivity—by the reporters who wrote them or by me—is naive. The stories had a political bent when they came in, and they had a slightly different political bent when they left. But there is no way I could have depoliticized them. The way in which the stories framed the issues, the sources chosen, the specific language used—all are part of the politics of signification. Those stories were a site of political struggle, and there is no way they could have been anything else.

It seems to me there is a lesson in this tale. How could reporters who were trying to apply the rules of objective journalism honestly end up writing stories that were arguably less objective than an editor who consciously rejected those rules and cynically plotted to hide dishonestly behind those rules? The lesson I take away from that—a lesson that scholars have wearily pointed out for years and many journalists have painfully found out on their own—is that the ideology of objectivity hides more than it reveals.

Conclusion

Up to now, I have not discussed what many have seen as the key issue of coverage of the war, the Pentagon’s restrictions on journalists. While I agree that the pool system and tight censorship enforced by the military limited the news media’s ability to report about the war, this paper suggests that in another way—perhaps a deeper way—the media and the military worked together without argument. At the beginning of the war I heard a professor of journalism suggest that the press restrictions, at least to some degree, showed that the news media were not inseparably intertwined with the establishment powers. On the contrary, I would argue that the war showed us exactly how those connections work and how strong they are.

This paper by no means exhausts the potential criticisms of the media’s reporting on the war. Some important points that have not been developed include: (1) the almost exclusive use of “expert” commentators from the ranks of the retired military, national security community, and the establishment academic community; (2) the absence of serious and substantive

coverage of the anti-war perspective beyond superficial coverage of a few demonstrations; (3) the failure to provide the historical context, especially the post-World War I colonial division of the Middle East, that was vital to understanding the basic issue of Kuwait's relationship to Iraq; and (4) the failure to aggressively pursue the diplomatic moves of the United States before the Iraqi invasion.⁸

The focus of this paper was on the construction of language and its effect on the canon of objectivity. By linking those two topics, this paper aimed to provide a case study in the poverty of the concept of journalistic objectivity. Given the volumes of work that already testify to that, is such an example needed? For all the scholarly and critical work that has been done, objectivity—whether labeled as such or called another name, such as “fairness”—lives on in the hearts and defense mechanisms of journalists. An example comes from an opinion column in a well-respected American daily I once worked for. A political scandal had developed after a newspaper printed stories about a friend of Florida's governor who was caught feeding at the public trough. A veteran journalist at a different newspaper in the state encouraged readers to trust the journalist to tell the truth:

People aren't fools. When they are asked whether to believe an *objective reporter* or self-serving bureaucrats relying on persons with a stake in what is at issue, they will find the truth. (Pittman 1990, D1) (*italics added*).

Objectivity is the fall-back position of American journalism, the standard defense to charges of bias or shoddy work. Journalists may agree about the limits of objectivity at conferences or in conversation with each other. But when a threat is posed from the outside, it has been my experience that journalists are quick to use the objectivity defense. An example of that phenomena from my own reporting experience at that same newspaper is instructive. At the end of a conversation with my city editor about a particularly sensitive story, he told me to be careful about how I wrote it and to pay particular attention to attributing all information. “Remember,” the editor said, “we only know what people tell us.”

Those examples, I believe, sum up the case journalists make to the public: We only write it down. In the examples in this paper, that means that journalists write down what the generals say and pass it along. On that count, members of the press performed admirably: They seem to have accurately conveyed the words being spoken by those running the war. But that was not nearly enough.

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NOTES

1. Although this paper does not make specific reference to Herman's and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988), that work informs much of this analysis.

2. While working on my Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, I have been a part-time copy editor on the news desk of the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, a Knight-Ridder paper with a daily circulation of about 250,000.

3. References to the *Times* are to the national edition that subscribers in the Midwest receive.

4. Two examples from Minneapolis-St. Paul stations will suffice here: from a KARE, Channel 11 promo (the audio running over pictures of soldiers and flags): "You're standing up for what really matters/We're there with you"; and from a KSTP, Channel 5 song promo called "The Strength of Minnesota": "You are the pride of Minnesota, so loyal and so brave . . . You are the pride of Minnesota, Channel 5 is on your side." But newspapers were not exempt, of course. On March 3, the *Pioneer Press* ran hundreds of mugshots of Minnesota servicewomen and men as a tribute. The front-page note from the editor said: "Whatever your own opinion of the war, you can be proud of these men and women. They risked their lives on your behalf and on behalf of America." Ironically, that "Dear Readers" box ran next to a photo, 6 inches wide and 9 inches deep, of two dead Iraqi soldiers lying in the sand near a destroyed Iraqi tank.

5. The naming of this operation was, of course, not by chance, as evidenced by this account: The choreographing of public opinion was in mind even when commanders chose names for the operation's two phases, as Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the mission's commander, and Gen. Collin L. Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, huddled with aides and swapped suggestions by telephone. "Desert Sword," "Desert Thunder" and "Desert Strike" all hit the discard list before the commanders settled on "Desert Storm." "'Storm' was appropriate to the type of operation we were planning," said General Powell. "And it kind of had a cute angle to it with 'Stormin' Norman,' General Schwarzkopf's nickname" (DeParle 1991, A5).

6. Another interesting aspect of the meaning assigned to these weapons concerns which side has them. The first discussion of fuel-air explosives in the major media occurred when it was thought Iraq possessed and might use such bombs. In those stories, the destructive potential and horror of the weapon was highlighted. But as it became clear Iraq was not using them but the United States was, the descriptions of the fuel-air bombs became much less alarming. For a discussion of this change in coverage, see Kinsley (1991).

7. Printouts of the original and edited versions of these stories are on file with the author.

8. Some discussion of this made it into the press, but it was usually cursory. One notable exception in my reading was the work of the *Star Tribune's* Eric Black, who explored these questions in several stories. Black has unusual flexibility as the paper's "historical perspective" reporter. For detailed treatments outside the mainstream daily press, see Viorst (1991) and Emery (1991).

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