

# **MEDIA POWER AND AMERICAN MILITARY STRATEGY: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF NEGATIVE MEDIA COVERAGE ON US STRATEGY IN SOMALIA AND THE IRAQ WAR**

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**Abstract** – Since the Vietnam War, the opinions expressed by the American news media have been considered by many politicians and members of academia to be a powerful agenda-setting device. The term “CNN effect” has come to signify the power of the news media to “move and shake” American foreign policy, determining when to enter into and when to pull out of military conflicts. Despite the level of scholarship on this concept, very few works have examined the influence of news organizations on military strategy. This study attempts to redress this failing by examining the influence of negative coverage of American military strategy in Somalia, from 1992 to 1993, and the early stages of the Iraq War, from 2003 to 2005. This paper argues that, despite the high level of negative media coverage of these conflicts from both television and newspaper sources, this coverage had no discernable impact on American military strategy in either conflict.

## **Introduction**

Beginning with the Persian Gulf War of 1991, the United States news media has had the capacity to report military engagements from around the world in real time.<sup>1</sup> Instantaneous and pervasive news coverage has helped to inform the American public and politicians of ongoing military operations, which has led to obvious questions about the possible influence of news on military strategy.<sup>2</sup> This assumption has only gained popularity following the 1991 Gulf War, Somalia, and the Balkan conflicts, which has prompted increased study of a possible connection between US military strategy and the mass media.<sup>3</sup> Steven Livingston of George Washington University’s assessment of this termed “CNN effect,” which hypothesizes a causal link between media reporting and politico-military decisions, is typical of CNN effect’s supporters who propose that the viewing of images on television “undeniably influences the evolution of events.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret H. Belknap, *The CNN Effect: Strategic Enabler or Operational Risk?* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 2001), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ingrid A. Lehmann, “Exploring the Transatlantic Media Divide over Iraq: How and Why U.S. and German Media Differed in Reporting on U.N. Weapons Inspections in Iraq: 2002-2003,” [web page] [http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/Research\\_Publications/Papers/Working\\_Papers/2004\\_1.pdf](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/Research_Publications/Papers/Working_Papers/2004_1.pdf), [Accessed October 8 2005], 3.

<sup>3</sup> Eytan Gilboa, “The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations,” *Political Communication* 22 (January-March 2005): 27-44, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Livingston, “Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention,” [web page] [http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/Research\\_Publications/Papers/Research\\_Papers/R18.pdf](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/presspol/Research_Publications/Papers/Research_Papers/R18.pdf), [Accessed October 8 2005], 14.

However, proponents of the CNN effect have frequently failed to engage the important role of military strategy in modern conflict.<sup>5</sup> Recent studies of media reporting have brought near exclusive focus on policy outcomes, instead of the strategic planning that occurs during the course of operations. This failing may be particularly evident in the cases of Somalia and the Iraq War. Indeed, despite extensive negative media coverage of US military strategy during these conflicts, the course of US strategy seemingly changed only in response to occasional variations in operational dynamics; rather, than consistently negative reporting.<sup>6</sup> I propose to assess the explanatory failings of the CNN effect by illustrating the high degree of strategic certainty behind the US-led military operations in Somalia and the Iraq War.

This paper will examine the following question: to what extent has news media reporting on US military operations in Somalia and the Iraq War influenced the course of American military strategy during these conflicts? In response to this question, it is first hypothesized that, despite extensive negative reporting on American military strategy in the Iraq War and Somalia, a high degree of consensus among American politico-military decision makers over the proper course of US military strategy has largely precluded the media from influencing the course of US strategy. Second, it is hypothesized that the relative success or failure of military operations flowing from a chosen strategy is the primary determinant of changes in the course of military strategy. To put it in more general terms, it is hypothesized that the mass media has relatively little influence on the course of military strategy in conflicts where a general consensus exists among politico-military elites over the proper course of military strategy and that strategic realities are the primary drivers of strategic course corrections.

Developing this approach is important for several reasons. First, pursuing it helps to assess the utility of the CNN effect in wartime. As discussed above, supporters of the CNN effect have thus far assumed causal links between media reporting and military outcomes. Second, this approach is ultimately concerned with improving the understanding of negative media coverage on strategic operations, which is important because potential affects of negative coverage on strategic planning has not been tested. Indeed, if a connection between highly negative coverage and strategic operations can be identified, than the CNN effect could be supported as an influential factor in wartime. If the mass media does not demonstrate an impact on the strategic operations in wartime, then the assumption that the mass media drives US military planning will need to be reevaluated.

The rest of this paper is made up of four major sections. First, it details the theoretical assumptions underpinning these hypotheses. Second, it outlines the theoretical framework and important concepts for this study. Third, it tests the hypotheses in the context of Somalia and the Iraq War, placing particular emphasis on negative reporting of US operations in both conflicts. Finally, it concludes with a summary of findings and some concluding remarks.

### **The CNN Effect**

In order to determine the impact of the “CNN effect” on US decision makers, it will need to be properly defined. The term was originally created to deal with the absorbing coverage of the CNN cable news channel during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.<sup>7</sup> Advances in communications

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<sup>5</sup> Robinson, Piers, *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 30.

<sup>6</sup> Robert S. Lichter and Linda S. Lichter, “George Bush’s Postwar Blues: TV News Coverage of President Bush Since the Iraq War,” *Media Monitor* 17 (November/December 2003): 1-6, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 2.

technology allowed the network to cover the conflict in real time, and its reports were used as a primary information resource by the major broadcast networks.<sup>8</sup> In the current context, this term has come to signify the ability of real-time communications technology, in the form of the news media, to provoke major responses from political and military elites to national and international events. In this respect, the concept has been used to characterize the role of the general news media in foreign policy making and world politics.<sup>9</sup> While newspapers are not printed in real time, the internet has enabled all branches of the media to publish stories instantaneously. Therefore, the debate that has centered on the concept of the CNN effect does not concern one specific network, but the whole of the news media, including such television networks as NBC, CBS, and FOX News and print media like *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *The Los Angeles Times*.<sup>10</sup>

Senior officials in post-Gulf War conflicts have acknowledged the increasing presence of the international news media. Speaking on the power of the news media in world politics, former Secretary of State James Baker III wrote in 1995 that “In Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Chechnya, among others, the real-time coverage by the electronic media has served to create a powerful new imperative for prompt action that was not present in less frenetic [times].”<sup>11</sup> Similar statements have been made by international actors, including former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who once remarked that, “CNN is the sixteenth member of the security council.”<sup>12</sup> These compelling observations of media power in modern conflict have led to an active debate between scholars and policy makers on the actual influence of the news on world affairs.

Traditionally the impact of media reporting on decision making has been attributed to humanitarian intervention scenarios including Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo, East Timor, Sudan, and Bosnia.<sup>13</sup> Some humanitarian crises which received high amounts of media attention, like Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo also received a US military response. Similarly, some conflicts that allegedly did not receive media coverage, such as those in Sudan and Rwanda, did not receive a US military response. However, basing political and military action simply on levels of media reporting is only one small element that is required to explain why a state engages in military action.<sup>14</sup> Many of these theories assume a causal connection that is never demonstrated. Politico-military elites must weigh important considerations before engaging in any military actions, and to assume that the media played an important role just because of their reporting, or lack of reporting, overstates their power. Indeed, in operations that did not receive the attention of decision makers, such as Rwanda, the CNN effect does not adequately explain the fact that this conflict received highly empathetic, though limited, coverage clearly outlining the extent of the ongoing genocide in 1994, but no US military action was taken to resolve the situation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Gilboa, 28.

<sup>12</sup> L. Minear, C. Scott, and T.G. Weiss, *The News Media, Civil War, and Humanitarian Action* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 4.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, “Focus on the CNN Effect Misses the Point: The Real Media Impact on Conflict Management is Invisible and Indirect,” *Journal of Peace Research* 37 (2000): 131-143, 132.

<sup>14</sup> Susan L Carruthers, *The Media at War* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2000), 205.

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Wheeler, *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 238-239.

Therefore, the use of the CNN effect to explain the power of news on decision makers remains hotly contested as an important agenda-setting device.

### Theoretical Framework

This research expands upon the policy media interaction model developed by Piers Robinson. Robinson suggests that in situations of “policy certainty” among US officials, the mass media has little influence on foreign policy regardless of the level of media attention devoted to the crisis.<sup>16</sup> The central tenet of this model is that, once a consensus has been reached among policy actors on a policy or course of action, the resolve to carry out objectives constitutes “policy certainty,” wherein elites are extremely resistant to contrary outside influences.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, a situation where no direct consensus among elites over the direction of policy exists constitutes “policy uncertainty.”<sup>18</sup> With this said, in cases of high policy certainty, decision makers have the resolve to drive policy action despite the tone and intensity of media coverage.<sup>19</sup> This model is used to illustrate both firm and weak policy networks and the relationship the news media has in determining policy action in wartime.

This theory was chosen for expansion over the two other competing models of media influence put forward by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, and Gadi Wolfsfeld. As this research is designed to examine the influence of news on military strategy, a model was chosen that could account for this possible connection when it was observed. Using this criterion, both competing models of media-state behaviour are critiqued in turn.

A wealth of critical literature has been developed against Chomsky and Herman’s “Manufacturing Consent”, or “Propaganda Model.”<sup>20</sup> According to this model, the executive branch of government and the mass media have a high degree of conformity during times of crisis.<sup>21</sup> This model argues that government elites control the media through economic power and, consequently, are able to mobilize the media to gather public support for government policy. In this analysis, the mass media views information through the same political or social constructions of their society that are accepted by political elites.<sup>22</sup> While this theory is capable of explaining the connection between the executive branch of government and mass media it does this in a highly circumstantial way.<sup>23</sup> For example, a study conducted using this model to explain the Kosovo crises was adept at characterizing the tone of American media coverage of the conflict, but it did not draw causal connections between government and media action to demonstrate economic control of media coverage.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Operation Allied Force can be cited as a prime example of media coverage sharing the attitudes of US ruling elites, but this does not directly imply that news was tailored due to economic interests. In fact, during early stages of the operation, newspapers reporting on North Atlantic Treaty Organization operations were critical

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<sup>16</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 30.

<sup>17</sup> Piers Robinson, “Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics: Models of Media Influence on Foreign Policy,” *European Journal of Communication* 16 (December 2001): 523-544, 534.

<sup>18</sup> Robinson, “Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics,” 535.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 30.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson, “Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics,” 525 and Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (Toronto: Random House Canada Inc, 2002), 1-2.

<sup>21</sup> Robinson, “Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics,” 526.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson, “Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics,” 525.

<sup>23</sup> Gilboa, 32.

<sup>24</sup> Gilboa, 32.

of the decision against employing ground troops to end the operation quickly.<sup>25</sup> However, due to the certain belief of US and NATO leaders that the air superiority operation would succeed, the plan was not modified to correspond to media criticisms. In this way, media coverage did not conform to the expectations of the model that the media would take on the same views held by the US executive; rather, the media did exhibit some negative coverage of US planning that was ignored by elite planners.

As this study focuses on negative reporting of media organizations during international conflict, a model must be adopted that can account for the presence of negative media coverage. Although supporters of the manufacturing consent model are correct that the mass media often receives the majority of information from official sources, including press briefings, speeches, and official documents, the information being provided can and often does get interpreted negatively.<sup>26</sup> For the role of negative coverage on political and military elites to be tested, this study will need a theory that can account for an independent media that is not directly controlled by powerful elites, but in some cases can conform to their viewpoint through deliberate action. In this way, the theory adopted in this study will account for the mass media as being a tool of debate during conflict, and that alternative viewpoints exist in media coverage.

Beyond the model of manufacturing consent, Wolfsfeld's political contest model provides another method to discern causal links between news and policy.<sup>27</sup> In contrast to the other models presented here, Wolfsfeld's focuses on how small groups gather media attention to their cause(s) and influence policy outcomes.<sup>28</sup> However, this model's causal framework is weak when explaining direct connections between coverage and outcomes.<sup>29</sup> For example, this model has been used to study the Palestinian Intifada in Israel, and how the resulting media coverage caused American diplomatic intervention.<sup>30</sup> The model does not explain the resulting impact on Israeli policy apart from a short section implying a causal connection that was never fully constructed.<sup>31</sup> As this model does not adequately explain a theoretical link between the mass media and political and military elites that is essential to this research, it is inadequate for the study of the media's relationship with military strategy.

As stated above, this study will expand on Robinson's policy media interaction model, by focusing on the impact of the mass media on military strategy; rather, than government policy. In contrast to Robinson's near exclusive focus on foreign policy decision making by political elites in his model, the model proposed here focuses on the direction of military strategy set by political and military elites. Robinson's core concept of policy certainty is supplanted in this modified model by the concept of "strategic certainty;" however, the basic logic of the original concept remains. Put simply, the concept of strategy is defined as a guidance plan to achieve particular ends.<sup>32</sup> Strategy is created by a complex decision-making process of ideas,

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<sup>25</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 100.

<sup>26</sup> Narasimhan Ravi, "Looking Beyond Flawed Journalism: How National Interests, Patriotism, and Cultural Values Shaped the Coverage of the Iraq War," *Press/Politics* 10 (Winter 2005): 45-62, 47-48.

<sup>27</sup> Gadi Wolfsfeld, *Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Robinson, "Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics," 539.

<sup>29</sup> Robinson, "Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics," 540.

<sup>30</sup> Robinson, "Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics," 540.

<sup>31</sup> Robinson, "Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics," 540.

<sup>32</sup> David H. McIntyre, "Statement of Dr. David H. McIntyre (COL, USA, Ret): February 3, 2004 House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations," [web page] <http://www.iwar.org.uk/homesecc/resources/counterterrorism/McIntyre.pdf>, [Accessed November 17 2005], 2.

expectations, and goals, which result in a plan for achieving these goals through military action. Thus, the first core preposition of the Media-Strategy Interaction Model proposed here is that, in situations of “strategic certainty,” which is a consensus on the proper direction of military strategy among politico-military elites, the mass media will have little influence on the course of strategy, regardless of the level of media attention devoted to it.<sup>33</sup> The second core preposition of the Media-Strategy Interaction Model is that operational realities, meaning the relative success or failure of the military operations flowing from a chosen strategy, are the primary determinants of changes in the course of military strategy.

The research proposed here will address two major issues. First, it will address the applicability of the Media-Strategy Interaction Model to Somalia and the Iraq War. This will be crucial to demonstrating Somalia and the Iraq War as cases of strategic certainty among the American politico-military elite. Second, this research will examine the impact of media reporting on American military strategy during these conflicts. This paper will therefore assess the influence, or lack of influence, of media reporting on American politico-military elites tasked with deciding the course of American military strategy in both these conflicts.<sup>34</sup>

### **Negative Tone of Media Coverage in Somalia and the Iraq War**

As this study is chiefly concerned with a possible connection between negative media coverage on the US executive, this section will briefly outline what is implied by negative coverage in these two conflicts. Often media reporting of any given topic can be gauged as positive or negative coverage depending on the perception the media takes on events. In both the Iraq War and Somalia, the tone of coverage during major setbacks in military operations was directed in opposition to the actions of the US executive or the armed forces. Television and print media coverage that highlights the mistakes or failures of US forces would be considered to have a negative focus.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, coverage that focused on the positive aspects of both operations, such as military or political successes, and discussed the actions of the armed forces and US executive favourably would be considered positive coverage.<sup>36</sup> In addition, coverage which simply reported the events of a military operation and did not impose any overtly subjective wording or images to present the story as positive or negative towards the US executive or armed forces could be considered neutral. However, it is important to note that media organizations are interested in business returns from their information. In both these conflicts, reporters made stories that were appealing to their business interests and would be watched and read by the public. Robert Entman argues this point in his concept of news framing. He asserts that certain criteria are selected in the formation of a newscast, and some information is almost certainly left out.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps then, the information being presented by news organizations cannot be entirely neutral, and can present a positive or negative slant depending on the images, wording and event being presented. With this said, media coverage during both these conflicts has been focused on largely negative presentations of US officials, which will be made clear in subsequent sections.

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<sup>33</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Livingston, 10.

<sup>35</sup> S. Aday, S. Livingston, and M. Hebert, “Embedding the Truth: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Objectivity and Television Coverage of the Iraq War,” *Press/Politics* 10 (Winter 2005): 3-21, 10.

<sup>36</sup> Aday et al, 10.

<sup>37</sup> Aday et al, 11.

## The Strategy for Rebuilding Iraq and the US Strategy in Somalia

In order to determine the impact of the mass media on US strategy during the two conflicts, we must briefly outline the military strategies of both here. From the outset of military operations in Iraq, the strategy for rebuilding post-Saddam Iraq was based on two primary goals. First, the US military is tasked with defeating the insurgency and terrorist threats against US and Iraqi forces.<sup>38</sup> Second, the US will train and build the Iraqi forces for eventual turn over of security to their forces.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the US strategy for the stabilization and then rebuilding of Iraq has been reported since 2003, and has been repeated frequently by senior US officials to support the course of operations there. Perhaps the best example of the reinforcement of this strategy has come from recent statements by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who describes the strategy in Iraq using simple key words, “clear, hold, and build.”<sup>40</sup> The use of simple terminology to describe US strategy has been part of the Bush Administration’s plan to get its message to the public and media throughout the conflict.<sup>41</sup> Similar wording and phrases have appeared throughout the Iraqi operation to describe the US strategy.<sup>42</sup> The reinforcement of basic tenets of the US strategy by officials during strategic operations constitutes strategic certainty in this case. Efforts by US officials to reinforce the basic tenets of securing Iraq from the insurgent threat, to the building and transferring of authority to Iraqi Security Forces has been frequently reinforced and carried out by senior US officials and the armed forces throughout the operation.<sup>43</sup> Despite critical reporting of the results of the US strategy to defeat the insurgency, the strategy has remained in place and been reinforced through briefings, statements, and speeches by senior US officials.

For Somalia, the strategy was originally outlined as a humanitarian operation, but as operational security was jeopardized the strategy was changed to take on a greater military role. Both the Bush and Clinton administrations maintained strategic certainty in this operation through the reinforcement of commitments to the security of the aid operation. During the initial stages, this operation was designed to secure humanitarian supplies from attack, and was not designed to engage in major military action.<sup>44</sup> Instead, commitments were made that the United States would lead the operation but would eventually pull out in a few months to make way for a multinational UN force. The United States committed to the use of force on November 25, 1992, with the first American troops arriving in early December.<sup>45</sup> However, the forces marked for deployment as part of the new UNOSOM II were slow in arriving and created increasing difficulties for US planners to protect the aid operation. The Clinton administration demonstrated strategic certainty in this phase of the operation by continuing to secure the delivery of aid,

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<sup>38</sup> George W. Bush, “President Addresses the Nation: Address of the President to the Nation, The Cabinet Room,” [web page] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/09/print/2000907-1.html>, [Accessed November 7 2005], 2.

<sup>39</sup> Bush, President Addresses the Nation, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Condoleezza Rice, “Iraq and U.S. Policy: Secretary Condoleezza Rice, Opening Remarks Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,” [web page] <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/55303.htm>, [Accessed November 10 2005], 1.

<sup>41</sup> B. Fritz., B. Keefer., and Brendan Nyhan., *All the President’s Spin* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2004), 152-153.

<sup>42</sup> Bush, President Addresses the Nation, 2.

<sup>43</sup> George W. Bush, “President Bush Discusses Early Transfer of Iraqi Sovereignty. Remarks by President Bush and Prime Minister Blair on Transfer of Iraqi Sovereignty, Hilton Istanbul, Istanbul, Turkey,” [web page] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/06/print/20040628-9.html>, [Accessed November 20 2005], 1.

<sup>44</sup> Carruthers, 221.

<sup>45</sup> Wheeler, 181.

resolving to increase US forces in the region to combat direct attacks on the distribution of supplies.<sup>46</sup> The escalating attacks during June, 1993, on UN forces from General Aided's militia led to the deployment of US Special Forces in August, and an expanded strategic role for the US forces.<sup>47</sup> Despite the increased force used by the United States, it was not intended to be a long term strategy. The limited reinforcements that the US received from allied nations, and the sharp decline in congressional support for the extended period of the mission, put in motion measures to withdraw.<sup>48</sup>

### **The Effect of the Mass Media on Strategic Operations in Somalia and Iraq**

This paper hypothesizes that the mass media does not play a significant role in the formulation of US military strategy because, even if coverage is highly negative, a high degree of consensus on strategy will preclude direct influence from news media (H1). Through this, critical coverage occurring during any stage of conflict does not directly impact strategically certain operations. The US 1992-1994 Somalia intervention and the Iraq War from 2003 to present are employed as case studies to test hypotheses H1 and H2 because they are two of the most recent US military operations that received largely negative coverage. In addition, the negative media coverage in the Somalia intervention is cited as a major supporting case for the CNN effect thesis, and was, therefore, chosen as a hard case to test hypotheses H1 and H2.<sup>49</sup> Several aspects of the US operations are examined, including the influence of reporting during the early stages of US military involvement in Somalia and Iraq and in the later stages of these operations, including major combat operations in Somalia and US counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. The results of this analysis suggest that highly negative coverage of strategic operations does not directly influence the course of US strategy, and that changes in US military strategy are made largely in response to changing operational realities.

### **Negative Media Reporting During the Early Stages of Somalia and Iraq**

#### *Humanitarian Operations in Somalia*

The early stage of the US Operation Restore Hope in Somalia is a prime example of positive media coverage of a US military operation. Indeed, positive coverage by media organizations during the opening months of the operation helped to solidify support among the public for the use of American troops in assistance efforts.<sup>50</sup> These early media reports were consistent with the expectations of the US executive that positive coverage of the operation would serve to improve public perceptions about it. By taking the lead in a UN sanctioned operation, President Bush hoped to be remembered as a humanitarian at the end of his term.<sup>51</sup> As a humanitarian effort, the strategic course of the operation was clear: to secure aid deliveries from attack and ensure that supplies reached those Somalis that needed them. Media reports

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<sup>46</sup> Wheeler, 198.

<sup>47</sup> Wheeler, 198-199.

<sup>48</sup> Jeffrey McMaster, "The United States and Humanitarian Intervention After the Cold War: Iraq-Kuwait, Somalia and Haiti," [web page] <http://users.skynet.be/JeffreyMcMaster/research/humanit.pdf>. [Accessed November 20 2005], 56.

<sup>49</sup> Livingston, 4.

<sup>50</sup> Theresa Bly, *Impact of Public Perception on US National Policy: A Study of Media Influence in Military and Government Decision Making* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 59.

<sup>51</sup> Carruthers, 220.



during the first month of Operation Restore Hope reflected positively on the US strategy guiding the operation, which helped bolster public support for the operation in the United States.<sup>52</sup>

However, after the first month of the humanitarian aid operation, a Somali militia took hostile action against US forces. Indeed, on January 26, 1993, one marine was killed and the media immediately turned negative.<sup>53</sup> For example, articles printed in *The Los Angeles Times* during this period questioned the presence of the United States in the region, why tax payers should pay for this aid operation, and began to describe Somalia as hostile territory.<sup>54</sup> Similar topics echoed across the print and televised media, with commentators questioning the escalating threat to the US lead humanitarian operation. Although several scholars cite the incident as a possible cause for a change in US strategy, the resulting negative media reporting did not appear to have an impact on the strategy guiding the aid operation. On the same day as the militia attack, the United Nations celebrated the United States led effort with United Task Force (UNITAF) for its contributions of men and equipment and timely delivery of aid to the suffering.<sup>55</sup> These direct congratulatory remarks from the United Nations prevented any negative coverage from impacting US planners in this stage. While the reaction to deaths of American soldiers by the media is not surprising, without direct links to politico-military elites, media criticism was not immediately noticed. With this said, when the mass media cannot gain attention from senior officials, this undermines the capacity of the mass media to drive an operation through negative coverage.

Equally important, the mass media's limited presence in Somalia during the initial stages of the operation reduced the influence negative media coverage could have on strategic planning of UNITAF. Supporters of the CNN effect thesis argue that coverage prior to major US force deployments in late 1992 were widespread and consisted of highly negative empathic coverage of the plight of starving Somalis that was intended to influence American strategic planners to take action.<sup>56</sup> However, CBS News only devoted three minutes of airtime on the Somali situation during the 21 day period prior to the announcement of the US strategy in Somalia. Similarly, the print media, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, produced only two front page articles during the same period.<sup>57</sup> According to one US official familiar with the media reporting during this period, he "did not recall news pressure being a big issue in any policy meeting."<sup>58</sup> Thus, the mass media coverage did not greatly influence strategic planning and certainly did not conform to the predictions of the CNN effect thesis. Only *after* the United States committed to sending a humanitarian aid force to the region in November, 1992, and the arrival of these forces in December, 1992, did coverage of the Somali crisis dramatically increase.<sup>59</sup> According to media analysis conducted following Bush's announcement of the American military operation, "story frequency increased more than five fold."<sup>60</sup> Therefore, the previous negative reporting directed at US planners does not appear to have influenced the

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<sup>52</sup> Bly, 57.

<sup>53</sup> Bly, 60.

<sup>54</sup> Bly, 60.

<sup>55</sup> Wheeler, 188.

<sup>56</sup> Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia, State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention and Strategies for Political Reconstruction*, (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), 31; Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 8; and Carruthers, 219-220.

<sup>57</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 57.

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, *The CNN Effect*, 58.

<sup>59</sup> Carruthers, 220.

<sup>60</sup> Carruthers, 220.

expediency or underlying purpose of the US relief strategy in Somalia. These results strongly support hypotheses H1 and H2.

### *Major Combat Operations in Iraq*

Similarly, coverage of the Iraq War during its initial stages shifted from a positive outlook of US military strategy to negative coverage after a week of fighting. The process of embedding reporters with infantry and armoured units gave reporters the unique ability to develop stories from the perspective of the US military. It also presented the media with an unprecedented opportunity to report negative coverage of the implementation of US military strategy on the front lines, which largely began to appear during the second week of military operations. For example, several stories referring to “two week jitters” appeared across major US media outlets when a major sandstorm slowed the advance of US forces toward Baghdad.<sup>61</sup> Some of these headlines included “Questions Raised About Invasion Force: Some Ex-Gulf War Commanders Say U.S. Needs More Troops, Another Armored Division,” “Allies’ Pre-War Assumptions Fall Short As Iraqi Resistance Stiffens,” and “Sandstorm Brings Forces to Grinding Halt.”<sup>62</sup> Embedded press during this period also expressed concern that US planning was inadequate, particularly with respect to troop and equipment levels, and commented that US strategy was overly ambitious and unworkable.<sup>63</sup> US strategic planners had predicted that a strong strike through southern Iraq toward Baghdad would eliminate Baathist strongholds and undermine the resolve of the Iraqi forces defending Baghdad.<sup>64</sup> However alarming and well reported these negative assessments of US military strategy may have been, they do not appear to have affected the course of the strategy. After the sandstorm lifted, US forces resumed their original strategy of bypassing major cities in southern Iraq to hit Baghdad directly.<sup>65</sup> Senior US military commanders described the weather as being unpredictable and requiring adjustments to counteract the delays, but were resolute that “the overall U.S. strategy remain[ed] on course.”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, statements by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld emphasized the progress made by US ground forces during the opening weeks of the campaign and pointed out that, at the time of heightened media criticism over alleged slow US progress and despite the weather, US forces were within 50 miles of Baghdad.<sup>67</sup> These events not only demonstrate that a tangible

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<sup>61</sup> Kellner, Douglas, “Media Propaganda and Spectacle in the War on Iraq: A Critique of U.S. Broadcasting Networks,” *Cultural Studies/Critical Methodologies* 4 (August 2004): 329-338, 332.

<sup>62</sup> These and other headlines included: Vernon Loeb and Thomas E. Ricks, “Questions Raised About Invasion Force: Some Ex-Gulf War Commanders Say U.S. Needs More Troops, Another Armored Division,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2003, sec. A; Barbara Slavin and Vivienne Walt, “Allies’ Pre-War Assumptions Fall Short As Iraqi Resistance Stiffens,” *USA Today*, March 25, 2003, sec. A; Ellen Knickmeyer, “Sandstorm Brings Forces to Grinding Halt,” *Washington Times*, March 25, 2003, sec. A; Ronald Brownstein, “Iraq Forcing Longer, Conventional War,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2003, sec. A; Richard T. Cooper and Paul Richter, “Former Commanders Question U.S. Strategy,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2003, sec. A; and Thomas E. Ricks, “War Could Last Months, Officers Say,” *Washington Post*, March 27, 2003 sec. A.

<sup>63</sup> Christopher Paul, and James J. Kim, *Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004), 55-56.

<sup>64</sup> Murray Williamson and Robert H. Scales Jr, *The Iraq War* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 195-208.

<sup>65</sup> Romesh Ratnesar, “Sticking to his Guns,” [web page] <http://www.cnn.com/2003/ALLPOLITICS/03/31/timep.guns.tm/index.html>, [Accessed November 21 2005], 3.

<sup>66</sup> Blitzer, Wolf, “Surprises of War,” [web page] <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/03/28/wbr.surprise/index.html>, [Accessed November 21 2005], 1.

<sup>67</sup> Donald Rumsfeld and General Frank Myers, DoD News Briefing - Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers, [http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t03282003\\_t0328sd.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/t03282003_t0328sd.html), [Accessed November 21 2005], 1.

phenomena, the sand storm, could and did have a temporary effect on the prosecution of US strategy, but also that media coverage of the problems created by this phenomenon had no discernable affect on the course of US strategy during this period of the Iraq War. These results strongly support hypotheses H1 and H2.

## **Negative Media Reporting During the Later Stages of Somalia and Iraq**

### *Major Combat Operations in Somalia*

Compounding the problem of negative reporting during the early stages of the Somali humanitarian effort, the deployment of major military forces in August, 1993, further increased the volume of critical coverage of US strategy.<sup>68</sup> Following the deployment of Task Force Ranger, the US military presence shifted from a humanitarian operation to a security operation to defeat the Somali militia headed by General Aided. This contributed to high amounts of negative coverage during August, including articles questioning the shift in operations, rising deaths of UN peacekeepers, and the rationale behind continued US presence.<sup>69</sup> These criticisms were particularly important because the United States did shift its military strategy, which ultimately led to questions from the US Congress about the direction of the overall mission.<sup>70</sup>

During this phase of the operation, US troops had begun to observe direct attacks by General Aided's militia on supplies, complicating the aid operation to the point that a strategic shift needed to be made to secure their delivery.<sup>71</sup> The deployment of Task Force Ranger in August, 1993, was made in direct response to the attacks on supplies and to increase operational security. The mass media became critical of the use of US Special Forces troops after their arrival in the country, and the incident served to increase calls from media organizations to end the progressively force oriented operation.<sup>72</sup> However, the growth in US force commitments was made in response to limited reinforcement of UNOSOM II and the delayed turnover of command to the UN. For example, the limited reinforcement of the operation by committed nations Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and India reduced the ability of the United States to properly maintain order in Somalia.<sup>73</sup> In addition, the decline in support from Western powers Germany and Italy, which were reviewing their troop commitments to UNOSOM II, further reduced the ability of the United States to complete their original commitments.<sup>74</sup> The United States was forced to expand their commitments to two fundamentally different operations, which required a greater commitment of forces than they could receive from the United Nations. Taking this into account, the US operations expansion into a security role was driven by circumstance, and that the shifts in strategic direction were mitigated by changes in UN commitments to the mission. Given the choice between ending the operation and risking further attacks on UN forces, the United States decided to extend their mission beyond its original timeline.

Supporters of the CNN effect thesis consider the loss of 18 American soldiers in a single firefight in October, 1993, to have been crucial to President Clinton's decision to end the operation. This position is supported by the images printed in *The New York Times* and seen on television of the dead soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Referring to

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<sup>68</sup> Bly, 60-61.

<sup>69</sup> Bly, 60.

<sup>70</sup> Livingston, 15 and Wheeler, 198-199.

<sup>71</sup> Wheeler, 194-195.

<sup>72</sup> Bly, 60.

<sup>73</sup> McMaster, 56.

<sup>74</sup> Wheeler, 197.

these images, one commentator noted that “the American public was right to want to scuttle the Somalia expedition as soon as American corpses appeared on the television screen.”<sup>75</sup> Following the incident both public opinion and media reporting turned against the operation. Reports described the firefight in Mogadishu as an operational failure and suggested that the US public wanted their troops home.<sup>76</sup> According to an assessment of 16 polls conducted following new reports of the 18 dead soldiers, concluded that “sixty percent of the public lobbied for immediate withdrawal,” and that “the majority did not feel that waiting for either the humanitarian crisis to be solved, a political solution to be reached or Aided to be captured were significant enough to risk further incidents.”<sup>77</sup>

Although these images had an irrefutable impact on public opinion, the event did not modify the direction of existing military strategy. Faced with the prospect of declining UN support, rising military costs, and the stretched timeline for the mission, President Clinton had begun to put in motion plans to withdraw months before the incident in Mogadishu occurred.<sup>78</sup> US operations had been extended beyond the strategy’s original objectives, but American planners did not want to implement an exit strategy that could jeopardize the stability of the state. The decision to withdraw American forces from Somalia was taken in August, 1993, two months prior to the Mogadishu incident, after Clinton met with a bipartisan group of senators that advised the President to begin implementing a plan to remove American troops immediately.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, senior congressmen at the time began to comment that the extended operation should be ended as it had gone beyond its original mandate to provide aid in lieu of a greater UN force.<sup>80</sup> Thus, internal government pressures, driven in turn by the well recognized reality that US military operations in Somalia had by the summer of 1993 become inconsistent with the objectives of the original US strategy, drove the change in US strategy to one of a managed withdrawal from Somalia.<sup>81</sup> In sum, the public and media criticisms of the US strategy in Somalia were noticed by the US executive, but they did not have any measurable impact on the US exit strategy for it had been decided upon months before the sharp rise in negative media coverage.

Moreover, the exit strategy implemented by the Clinton administration is consistent with the original strategy guiding US military involvement in Somalia. Indeed, when Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger presented the original strategic planning to then President Bush, the humanitarian operation was approved due to its limited cost and timeframe for the US deployment.<sup>82</sup> US troops were intended to be used as the initial engagement force on behalf of the United Nations, but were supposed to be replaced by a multinational UN force “after a limited US involvement.”<sup>83</sup> This assessment is supported by Susan Carruthers, who argues that Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell “is reported to have made his consent conditional on a strict time-limit being set on the operation, ensuring its completion before, or

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<sup>75</sup> Dauber, Cori E, “The Shots Seen ‘Round the World: Impact of the Images Seen Around the World,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 653-687, 667.

<sup>76</sup> Bly, 72.

<sup>77</sup> Bly, 68.

<sup>78</sup> Wheeler, 198.

<sup>79</sup> Wheeler, 198.

<sup>80</sup> Wheeler, 199.

<sup>81</sup> Carruthers, 224.

<sup>82</sup> Carruthers, 221.

<sup>83</sup> Wheeler, 182.

very soon after, Clinton took office.”<sup>84</sup> In addition, as discussed above, the Bush administration’s commitments to ending the operation were slowed by delayed UN troop deployments, which forcing Clinton to extend the operation into early 1994 to ensure that aid deliveries remained secure. Consequently, while the strategic objectives in the operation changed, this was in response to changing operational realities and was not directly influenced by the negative media coverage of the later stages of the operation.

The dramatic increase in negative reporting following major military operations in Somalia clearly enhanced the public’s drive to withdraw from Somalia, which, if anything, encouraged strategic planners to adhere to their long-standing strategy of implementing a controlled troop extraction. The media’s coverage of the October, 2003, “Black Hawk Down” incident in Mogadishu merely provided Clinton an easily understood justification to point to when pursuing his plan to withdraw.<sup>85</sup> Taking this into account, the direction of US military strategy in Somalia in the face of increasingly negative media coverage strongly supports hypotheses H1 and H2.

### *Counter-Insurgency Operations in Iraq*

Following the end of major combat operations in Iraq in May, 2003, reporting of US operations in Iraq has become largely negative. Discussing this period is quite appropriate for determining the impact of negative reporting on politico-military elites in this conflict. Indeed, if the period of negative reporting of insurgency operations against US forces shows an impact on American strategy than the CNN effect thesis may be supported in this case.

The Iraqi insurgency, which has been active since 2003, has seriously delayed the efforts of US forces to establish peaceful conditions in Iraq. Compounding this difficulty, reporting on the effectiveness of the US counterinsurgency strategy has been largely negative. For example, an article that appeared in *The Los Angeles Times* during the US operations in Fallujah in November, 2004, the largest single operation in the counter-insurgency campaign, commented that, “Iraqi insurgents based in Fallujah presented U.S. military forces with two choices, one bad and the other worse. Marines opted for the bad one Monday, assaulting the city with the understanding that civilians as well as fighters would be killed and Arab passions would be inflamed far outside Fallujah and Iraq.”<sup>86</sup> The coverage of the application of American military strategy in Fallujah is symptomatic of a general trend in coverage of the US counterinsurgency operation in Iraq, wherein the mass media has emphasized US casualties, successful insurgent attacks on Iraqi civilians, and has largely downplayed the success of the strategy in stabilizing most of the country. During Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah, US and Iraqi forces managed to strike against major insurgent bases in Fallujah, clearing house to house of enemy combatants.<sup>87</sup> The combined ground and air operation is credited with eliminating thousands of insurgents in the city during the month of November. However, again, articles published by news organizations like *The Associated Press* argued that the US-led military actions turned Fallujah into a safe haven for insurgents, and alleged that military operations concentrated against civilian

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<sup>84</sup> Carruthers, 221.

<sup>85</sup> Carruthers, 224.

<sup>86</sup> David Walsh, “US media applauds destruction of Fallujah,” [web page] <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2004/nov2004/fall-n17.shtml>, [Accessed November 17 2005], 4.

<sup>87</sup> Christopher M. Ford, “Speak No Evil: Targeting a Population’s Neutrality to Defeat an Insurgency,” *Parameters* 2005 (Summer 2005): 51-66, 60.

targets.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, despite consistently negative coverage of the application of US strategy in Fallujah, the United States resisted changing the course of its strategy.

In addition, when the mass media reported the difficulties faced by US planners due to low numbers of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) participating during the initial stages of the Fallujah assault, this did not directly impact the US strategy of progressively turning over security responsibilities to Iraqi soldiers. For example, during Operation Phantom Fury, the ISF fought and secured the neighborhood of Jolan, and on November 11, 2004, was given responsibility for its security.<sup>89</sup> In addition, under the leadership of the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, the ISF deployed 4,200 soldiers to secure the al Anbar province, which includes Fallujah, and has been progressively delegated greater responsibility for patrols of the Syrian border.<sup>90</sup> The ISF has displayed the ability to protect these areas and maintain secure traffic between the borders of the two states with limited US oversight. These operations are consistent with the strategy set out by the US executive during 2003, wherein US forces would secure territories for eventual transfer to the ISF and have continued despite critical coverage of US and Iraqi casualties, administrative difficulties within the ISF, and the progression of the insurgency operation.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, a statement made by a senior US General in October, 2005, notes that, “we have right now 18 battalions of Iraqi security forces – Iraqi army forces currently working with our folks in this area. I estimate that by November about half of those will be at a level where they will be able to take the lead in such things as planning, coordinating and actually executing operations.”<sup>92</sup>

The United States received similarly negative reporting during its counterinsurgency operation in Najaf. During the month of August, 2004, attempts by US marines and the ISF to attack the forces of Muqtata al Sadr were met with critical reporting of damages to holy buildings in the city.<sup>93</sup> According to Kenneth Payne’s analysis of the media reports of this operation, “media reporting of hardships in the town and of considerable damage to urban environments... [lead to] political pressure to limit the assault quickly.”<sup>94</sup> However, as Donald Rumsfeld counters, the military had the capacity to defeat Sadr’s militia, but decided instead to make a negotiated settlement to end the operation.<sup>95</sup> As al Sadr’s militia’s base of operations was in the city’s major mosque, the US did not want to inflict further damage on a building of religious significance to the population. Instead, the negotiated settlement represented another method for achieving the same end for the operation and ensured that the city could be secured for rebuilding, and be transferred to the ISF. Rumsfeld goes on to argue that coalition forces

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<sup>88</sup> Robert H. Reid, 2004, “Analysis: A Fine Balance,” *The Associated Press*, November 10, sec A.

<sup>89</sup> Global Security, “Operation al-Fajr, (Dawn) Operation Phantom Fury,” [Fallujah] [web page] <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oif-phantom-fury-fallujah.htm>, [Accessed November 22 2005], 1.

<sup>90</sup> US State Department, Section 2207, “Report on Iraq Relief and Reconstruction,” [web page] <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/2207/apr2005/html/44192.htm>, [Accessed November 22 2005], 7.

<sup>91</sup> Pamela Hess, “Iraqi Security Forces Developing – Slowly,” *The Washington Times*, August 5, 2004, sec. A and Josh White, Iraqis’ Readiness Disputed in Hearings,” <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A22248-2005Jan19.html>, [Accessed November 17 2005], 1.

<sup>92</sup> Stephen T. Johnson, “News Briefing with Major General Stephen T. Johnson,” <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20051007-4043.html>, [Accessed November 17 2005], 1.

<sup>93</sup> Patrick J. McDonnell, “Iraqi City Lies in Ruins,” [web page] [http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/iraq/la-111504rebuild\\_lat,0,6690749.story?coll=la-home-headlines](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/iraq/la-111504rebuild_lat,0,6690749.story?coll=la-home-headlines), [Accessed November 22 2005], 1; and Kirk Vick, “Iraqi Holy City Left Broken by Urban Warfare,” [web page] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A37040-2004Aug26.html>, [Accessed November 22 2005], 1.

<sup>94</sup> Kenneth Payne, “The Media as an Instrument of War,” *Parameters* 2005 (Spring 2005): 81-93, 88-89.

<sup>95</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, “Secretary Rumsfeld’s Speech at the National Press Club,” September 7 2004, [web page] <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2004/tr20040910-secdef1286.html>, [Accessed November 22 2005], 1.

“would have successfully retaken the city. It turned out they didn't have to. The fact that it was clear to Sadr and his crowd, the militia, that they did have the ability to do that is what without question led Sadr to encourage his militia to get out of town.”<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the United States began transferring authority for provincial security of Najaf to the ISF in November, 2004, which allowed Iraqi forces to conduct their own planning and operations outside of the authority of the US Marines.<sup>97</sup> This is, once again, consistent with the US strategy in Iraq to transition responsibility for Iraqi security to the ISF. This transition was completed in Najaf by September, 2005.<sup>98</sup>

The generally negative tone of media reporting, coming from the majority of the American print and televised media, has brought into question the US strategy to remain in post-Saddam Iraq. A study commissioned by Pew Research concluded that the steady stream of largely negative reporting is “significantly undermining support for U.S. military operations there.”<sup>99</sup> Despite this, US political and military decision makers have not changed the direction of military strategy to counter rising criticism. Instead, the US administration has demonstrated resolve in maintaining the Iraq strategy outlined above, which includes destruction of the insurgency operation mounted against US forces. For example, in statements made in 2004 and in the 2005 State of the Union Address, President Bush maintained that, despite the increased violence against American forces, troops would remain to defeat the insurgency.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, in statements made to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in October, 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice argued clearly that, “our strategy – the key – is to clear, hold, and build: clear areas from insurgent control, hold them securely, and build durable, national Iraqi institutions.”<sup>101</sup> These expressions of the Bush administration’s resolve to maintain effectively the same strategy in Iraq that it has followed since the end of major combat operations suggests that, despite the high level of media criticism of the US military strategy in Iraq, the mass media has had little influence on the course of American strategy in this conflict.

Media criticism over the direction of military strategy has continued into late 2005. Statements by US Congressman John Murtha in November, 2005, unleashed a new wave of media criticism of US strategy in Iraq and have added pressure to the US administration to set an end date for operations there.<sup>102</sup> However, repeated statements from members of the US executive suggest that, at least for the present time, a state of strategic certainty exists in the Bush administration’s resolve to reaffirm a long term commitment to the existing counterinsurgency strategy. Furthermore, no end date has been publicly identified for this

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<sup>96</sup> Rumsfeld, “Secretary Rumsfeld's Speech at the National Press Club,” 1.

<sup>97</sup> American Forces Information Service, “Iraqi Security Forces Take Control of Najaf Province,” [web page] [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2004/n11302004\\_2004113003.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Nov2004/n11302004_2004113003.html), [Accessed November 22 2005], 1 and American Forces Information Service, “Iraqi Army Takes Control of Najaf; U.S. Soldier killed by IED,” [web page] [http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2005/20050907\\_2632.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2005/20050907_2632.html), [Accessed November 22 2005], 1.

<sup>98</sup> American Forces Information Service, “Iraqi Security Forces Take Control of Najaf Province,” 1 and American Forces Information Service, “Iraqi Army Takes Control of Najaf,” 1.

<sup>99</sup> Pew Research Institute, *Guantanamo Prisoner Mistreatment Seen as Isolated Incidents. Iraq News Increases Calls for Troop Withdrawal* (Washington, D.C.: The Pew Research Centre For the People & The Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>100</sup> George W. Bush and Iyal Allawi, Bush, Allawi Affirm Commitment to Overcome Insurgency, [web page] <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/tp-20040927-38.html>, [Accessed November 5 2005], 1 and George W. Bush, State of the Union Address 2005, [web page] <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/02/20050202-11.html>, [Accessed November 5 2005], 7.

<sup>101</sup> Rice, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Charles Babington, “Hawkish Democrat Joins Call for Pullout. GOP Assails Murtha's Demand to Leave Iraq,” *The Washington Post*, November 18, 2005, sec. A.

strategy. For example, Donald Rumsfeld speaking in July, argued that “Insurgencies tend to go on five, six, eight, 10, 12 years,” and that “We’re going to create an environment that the Iraqi people and the Iraqi security forces can win against that insurgency.”<sup>103</sup> Likewise, Army Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker stated that the US will prepare for four years in Iraq, departing after President Bush leaves office.<sup>104</sup> Although the numbers provided in these statements differ, they all maintain a multiyear commitment to the existing US strategy. Moreover, on November 29, 2005, President Bush made statements reinforcing the administration’s commitments to its counterinsurgency strategy by stating that US forces will not leave the state “without having achieved victory.”<sup>105</sup> As these statements make clear, the US executive remains deeply committed to its existing strategy and have resisted all external pressure to change course, including those generated by reporting of the mass media. These results strongly support hypotheses H1 and H2.

### Conclusion

This paper addressed an important question: to what extent has news media reporting of Somalia and the Iraq War influenced the course of American military strategy during these conflicts? In response to this question, it was first hypothesized that despite extensive negative reporting of American military strategy in the Iraq War and Somalia, a high degree of consensus among American politico-military decision makers over the proper course of US military strategy in these conflicts largely precluded the media from influencing the course of US strategy. Second, it was hypothesized that the relative success or failure of the military operations flowing from a chosen strategy was the primary determinant of changes in the course of military strategy.

Testing these hypotheses involved two case studies: the US intervention in Somalia from 1992 to 1994 and the Iraq War from 2003 to present. The results of this analysis lend support for these hypotheses and suggest that, in conflicts where strategic certainty exists, the mass media should not have significant influence on the course of strategy. Moreover, the results of this analysis suggest that shifts in the dynamics of operations may precipitate shifts in military strategy that were not perceived during pre-planning stages. Taken together, these results suggest that a reevaluation of the CNN effect thesis may be in order.

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<sup>103</sup> Associated Press, “Rumsfeld braces for more violence in Iraq: Says insurgency could endure ‘for any number of years,’ perhaps until 2017,” [web page] <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8366705/>, [Accessed November 14 2005], 1.

<sup>104</sup> Associated Press, “Army Planning for Four More Years in Iraq: Top General says U.S. military prepared for ‘worst case’,” [web page] <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9022420/from/RL.3/>, [Accessed November 22 2005], 1.

<sup>105</sup> CNN, “Bush: No Iraq Pullout Without Victory: Democratic senator urges president to give ‘unvarnished’ picture,” [web page] <http://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/11/29/us.iraq/index.html>, [Accessed November 29 2005], 1.



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