

# **How the Media Frames Our Understanding of War through Biases and Representation**

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## Abstract

This study critically examines the role of media in shaping public perceptions of war, with a focus on the influence of biases and Orientalist perspectives. Using Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and Robert Entman's framing theory, the research delves into how Western and non-Western media frame international conflicts, particularly the Iraq War. By analyzing online newspaper articles (n=15) from major outlets such as Al Jazeera and The New York Times with content analysis, the study reveals that media narratives construct a political discourse and political discourse. It was found that Al Jazeera's coverage emphasized the humanitarian crises and global opposition to the war, while The New York Times focused on strategic justifications and moral imperatives. Both sources, however, employed elements of Orientalism, portraying Eastern societies in a manner that reinforces Western superiority. The findings underscore the necessity for critical media consumption and enhanced media literacy to recognize and challenge inherent biases. This research contributes to the broader dialogue on the role of the media in international relations, highlighting the need for more nuanced and balanced reporting.

**Key words:** *media bias, orientalism, media framing, Iraq War*

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## CHAPTER 1 – Introduction

In an era where the deluge of information shapes the contours of our collective consciousness, I find myself drawn to a critical investigation of the media's role in this dynamic landscape, particularly through the lens of orientalism and media framing. The impetus for my inquiry emerges from a recognition of the profound influence that media narratives wield on public perceptions, often influenced by the legacy of orientalist thought. By reviewing the current literature on the topic, this exploration delves into the mechanisms through which the media, acting both as a conduit and a constructor of reality, shapes our comprehension of global conflicts, potentially perpetuating stereotypical narratives that echo orientalist perspectives.

Edward Said's 'Orientalism' provides a crucial theoretical backdrop to my paper, highlighting how Western media often depict 'the East' in a manner that reinforces a sense of superiority and otherness (Said, 1978). By intertwining Said's insights with Entman's framing theory, I aim to dissect the layers through which media not only represents wars but also how these representations are imbued with cultural biases that can skew public understanding and discourse (Entman, 1993).

Malcolm X's assertion that "the media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses," (Aljazeera news online, 2022, par. 7 & 8) resonates with the core of my research, underscoring the media's ability to shape perceptions and, by extension, the political and social narrative surrounding war and peace. This statement underlines the transformative power of media narratives, echoing the orientalist tendency to frame conflicts in a manner that aligns with preconceived notions and biases.

In navigating the intricate web of media, war, and orientalism, my research aims to unravel the intricate ways in which media framing, influenced by historical biases and cultural narratives,

shapes our understanding of global conflicts. Through a meticulous analysis of media narratives, I aspire to contribute to a broader dialogue about the role of media in perpetuating or challenging the orientalist paradigm and its impact on public perception of war and peace. In doing so, I hope to foster a more informed and critical media consumption that acknowledges and transcends the deep-seated biases that shape our view of the world.

This research is important for me because I am from Ukraine, where there is currently a war, of which I am a witness and I have also witnessed how different media in different contexts highlight the war in my country. Therefore, understanding the frames and biases of the media help me understand how public perception is shaped and influences foreign policy. By analyzing how these media portray conflicts, I aim to identify biases and stereotypes that distort public understanding. Evaluating the framing strategies used by Western and non-Western media might help improve critical media literacy by enabling audiences to recognize and question biased reporting.

## CHAPTER 2 – Review of Literature

### The Main Definitions

In my work, I delve into the theoretical underpinnings of key terms like media bias, orientalism, and media framing to understand how they shape our perception of news and events. *Media bias*, as theorized by scholars like Entman (1993), involves the media's tendency to present information in a way that serves their interests or reflects their ideological standpoint. Entman suggests that media bias is not just about what is reported, but also how it is framed, emphasizing that “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient” (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

*Media framing*, according to Entman (1993), is the process by which the media highlight certain aspects of a story to shape public perception and interpretation. This selective emphasis can influence how audiences understand and react to news events, effectively guiding public discourse. Entman's framework underscores that framing involves both inclusion and exclusion of information, thereby affecting the narrative constructed around an event (Entman, 1993).

*Orientalism*, a concept developed by Edward Said (1978), critically examines how Western narratives construct the East as the ‘other,’ often depicting it as backward, exotic, and fundamentally different. Said argues that orientalism is a form of cultural imperialism that reinforces Western dominance by establishing a dichotomy between the civilized West and the barbaric East (Said, 1978).

These theoretical perspectives are crucial for analyzing how media representations, especially in the context of international conflicts and cultural encounters, are influenced by underlying biases and framing strategies. By understanding these concepts, I aim to critically assess how



media outlets construct narratives that can perpetuate stereotypes, influence public opinion, and shape international relations.

## **Theoretical Foundations of Media Framing and Orientalism**

In response to my growing concern about the impact of media on public perception, I feel the need to explore how media shapes our understanding of war through framing and Orientalism. This personal interest stems from observing the media's powerful role in influencing and molding public opinion, especially in the context of international conflicts. By bringing these ideas together, it is important to identify the relationship between media framing and Orientalism and how they together influence the way we see and understand international conflicts. Through this research, I seek to understand how the media not only depict wars, but also actively participate in the creation and maintenance of certain narratives that can distort or deepen our understanding of these events. Overall, my paper establishes a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between media framing and Orientalism in the context of war and conflict. This foundation allows me to further analyze how the media influences our perception and interpretation of international events.

To get started, we need to understand what media framing is: Scheufele (1999) claims that framing is the choice of which aspects of an event media force us to pay attention to. It is as if, out of the whole picture of the world, we are shown only a piece that the media considers important. He says that it is a process in which “certain aspects of reality are made more visible in a communicative text” (Scheufele, 1999, p. 103), which means that the media can shape our perception of wars by emphasizing certain details and hiding others.

I next turn to the work of Reese (2007), who expands the concept of framing, emphasizing its importance in areas ranging from politics to culture. He argues that framing links different approaches to understanding the impact of media on society, making it a powerful tool for analyzing social processes (Reese, 2007). This implies that media framing is not just a news tactic, but a broad method of influencing public opinion.

Said describes Orientalism as a way of thinking that divides the world into “East” (Orient) and “West” (Occident), emphasizing that people often see East and West as two completely different parts of the world, with different cultures and values (Said, 1978). This division is not always based on reality, but rather on perceptions and stereotypes, as a consequence of which the media might portray wars in Eastern countries in certain ways. For example, they may use stereotypes to show the East as a place of constant conflict or as a region that always lags the West. Such perceptions influence how we perceive these countries and their conflicts, often making our perceptions one-sided or biased.

### **The Changing Role of Media in War (Causing Biases)**

In my exploration of the changing role of media in the context of warfare, I delve into how media has increasingly played a pivotal role in shaping narratives and influencing public opinion, often leading to significant biases. This transformation is not merely about the shift from traditional to digital media but also reflects the deepening intricacies of media's involvement in the dynamics of war and peace. Therefore, the next section discusses the way in which role of the media has changed over time.

Historically, it might seem that the media served as a straightforward conduit for information from the battlefield to the public. However, many scholars argue that media has always been

influenced by various interests, including state and political agendas. As I analyze further, it becomes evident that the function of the media has evolved dramatically, becoming an active player in the creation and perpetuation of conflict narratives. This evolution is marked by a transition from merely reporting facts to framing conflicts in ways that resonate with or reinforce certain political ideologies or cultural biases. This perspective aligns with the concept of orientalism, which suggests that media representation has long been a strategy of depicting "others" in a way that supports existing power structures and cultural prejudices. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for my research, as it sheds light on how media influences public perception and foreign policy through biased reporting and strategic framing.

The concept of media bias in war coverage is multifaceted and deeply rooted in the media production and consumption. Vallone et al. (1985) illustrate through the 'hostile media phenomenon,' how individuals with strong preconceived notions about a conflict often perceive media coverage as biased against their viewpoint. This cognitive bias underscores the challenges media faces in presenting war narratives that are perceived as neutral or unbiased. Further complicating this landscape is the strategic use of media by political and military entities to frame conflicts in a manner that garners public support or opposition. Entman's (2007) framing theory posits that by emphasizing certain aspects of a conflict while omitting others, media can manipulate public perception, effectively distributing power and shaping the political discourse. This manipulation often leads to a skewed public understanding of war, influenced not by objective reality but by the media's portrayal of it.

The role of media in shaping public opinion and policy is profound and far-reaching. The coverage of the Iraq War, for example, showcased how media narratives in different geopolitical contexts were influenced by local biases and political agendas, leading to diverse public perceptions of the conflict. Studies like those by Trivundza (2004) and Maslog et al.

(2006) illustrate how media in various regions framed the Iraq War in ways that reflected local biases and political objectives.

The advent of digital and social media has introduced new dynamics to media bias in war coverage. Platforms like Twitter and Facebook facilitate the rapid dissemination of information and perspectives, often bypassing traditional journalistic vetting processes. This immediacy can amplify biases, as unverified and partisan content circulates widely, influencing public opinion and, at times, hastening political and military responses.

In synthesizing these insights, I recognize the intricate relationship between media, war, and bias. The function of media in warfare has transitioned from merely reporting events to actively influencing the narrative and public opinion about conflicts. This shift has seen a rise in media biases, shaped by diverse political, cultural, and technological influences. Through this comprehensive exploration, I aim to underscore the significance of critical media consumption and the need for a nuanced understanding of the media's role in contemporary warfare, highlighting its impact on public perception and the broader geopolitical landscape.

## **Historical Roots of Orientalism in the Media World**

In researching the work of Amin-Khan, I discovered how the events of September 11, 2001, and the outbreak of war in Iraq and Afghanistan reinforced the new Orientalism in media representation. Amin-Khan (2012) argues that these events have led to increased stereotypical views of Eastern countries as sources of terrorism. The portrayal of these countries as the only sources of terrorism through the reproduction of Orientalist images in the media align with the theories of Said, who argued that Orientalism creates a simplified and one-sided image of the East, which determines the power relations between the West and the East (Said, 1978). Linking

this to Entman's concept of the media framework becomes apparent as media selectively magnifies different aspects of perceived reality, creating a simplified and often distorted perception of war and its perception. Entman (1993) discusses how framing can influence the understanding and interpretation of international events, including the selective presentation of information that may support or challenge power structures and perceptions.

To illustrate this point in detail, I examine a case study on the media resolution of the Iraq War. Through the case of the Iraq War, I can analyze how the media used an Orientalist framework to view the conflict, often turning it into a conduit between the "civilized" West and the "barbaric" East. An analysis of news reports, television programs, and other media material from the period reveals how the media reinforced Orientalist stereotypes by portraying Iraq and other eastern countries as places of instability and terrorism. In the media coverage of the Iraq War, one can see how the media often portrays Iraq and other eastern countries as places of instability, war and terrorism. Trivundza's research (2004) shows that the Slovenian newspaper framed the Iraq War case through the lens of Orientalism, which did not simply reflect Western views, but was also associated with political change and the construction of national identity in Slovenia. Trivundza writes that "...orientalist coverage of war... was the result not only of Western control over images of war, but also especially of sociohistorical factors" (Trivundza, 2004, p. 91). This is achieved by the fact that the media approach to the war often ignores stereotypes, making eastern countries seem more problematic or dangerous.

Futhermore, Kolmer and Semetko's (2009) study provides a detailed analysis of the framing of the Iraq War in various international media, showing how deeply these narratives are rooted in the historical views of Orientalists. The study found differences in coverage between Western media, especially in the US and non-Western sources such as Al Jazeera. Western media tended to focus on military prowess and strategic victories, repeating Orientalist themes about the superiority of the West and the instability of the East. This portrayal is consistent with historical

models of Orientalism, where the Orient is often depicted as a region of conflict and unrest that needs to be controlled or ruled by Western powers.

These examples illustrate that media frames around the world reinforce stereotypes of Orientalism, often portraying Eastern countries as centers of conflict, instability, and terrorism. By examining these cases, we can understand better how media narratives influence perceptions of international factors, and we can gradually take serious stock of media coverage to develop a more complete and objective understanding of world events. Therefore, the Iraq War serves as a profound case study, illustrating the complex and often contentious interplay between media coverage and military operations. The media's influence during the Iraq War was not just in reporting events but in shaping public opinion and national policy, highlighting the evolution of war journalism in the modern era.

## **The Transformation and Strategic Role of Journalism**

The onset of the Iraq War marked a significant transformation in media operations, characterized by the integration of real-time reporting and the strategic use of embedded journalism. This approach allowed journalists to accompany military units, providing firsthand accounts of the conflict. However, this embeddedness raised questions about the objectivity of the reports and the potential for media to become a tool in the military's information strategy.

### ***Embedded journalism and its implications***

Embedded journalism, a prominent feature during the Iraq War, provided unprecedented access to the battlefield, creating a symbiotic relationship between the military and the media. This access was double-edged; it offered a vivid, immediate portrayal of combat operations but also led to concerns over journalistic independence and potential bias. The presence of journalists

within military units arguably led to coverage that, at times, mirrored the perspectives and interests of the military, as discussed in the work of Ahmed Al-Rawi (2012).

### ***Media's influence on public perception and policy***

The narrative constructed by the media had a profound impact on public perception and policy. The framing of the Iraq conflict, often centered on themes of liberation and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, played a crucial role in garnering public support for military intervention. The work of Dimitrova, (2007) and others underscores how the U.S. effectively utilized the media to promote its war agenda, crafting a narrative that emphasized the necessity and justness of the invasion.

## CHAPTER 3 – Methodology

In this research, I seek to analyze how the media views wars through the lens of Orientalism and framing theory. My goal is to explore how Western and non-Western media use these concepts and how biases influence the portrayal of global conflicts, focusing on major media outlets such as Al Jazeera and New York Times.

Al Jazeera offers a contrasting western perspective on the Middle East, highlighting how non-Western narratives provide counter frames that can challenge or reinforce biases in Western narratives. The New York Times, with its historical significance and editorial influence, offers an American lens that shapes global discourse, often revealing subtle biases in the framing of conflicts. To conduct the analysis, I have collected primary data from these sources, focusing on online articles and reports related to conflicts such as the Iraq War. Following this, relevant content points were identified to see patterns in how specific narratives are created and maintained. Articles were selected from official websites to ensure comprehensive examination. These sources provide insight into the biases that shape reporting on global conflicts.

The primary method applied in this study is thematic analysis, using Edward Said's concept of Orientalism and Robert Entman's framing theory to identify recurring themes. Thematic analysis involves several key steps. First, I carefully read the articles and reports several times to gain a deeper understanding of their content. This helped me dive into the material and pick out initial ideas and patterns. I then looked for common elements in the content of the articles, paying attention to what is repeated intensively and frequently in the outlets I had selected. I



noted how these elements appear in these media and try to identify if there are orientalist views in them.

This content analysis investigates the portrayal of the Iraq War across several prominent media outlets, focusing on the primary narratives and framing used during the conflict. The units of analysis for this study were the home pages of two leading news websites, The New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>) and Al Jazeera (<http://www.aljazeera.net>). These home pages were methodically downloaded and archived during the official war period from March 20, 2003, to April 4, 2003, for The New York Times, and throughout 2003 (March-December) for Al Jazeera when they launched an official English-language website. This specific period was selected due to the heightened intensity in media coverage and its pivotal role in shaping both global and local perceptions of the Iraq War. The timeframe encapsulates the initial and most critical phase of the conflict, providing a concentrated view of how media narratives were crafted and disseminated during the peak of public and political interest. This approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the immediate media response and its impact on public perception during the war's most formative moments.

Given the significance of these platforms in shaping public opinion, the study concentrated solely on the content directly visible on the home pages, the most likely point of interaction for internet news users. This approach ensured that the analysis would reflect the immediate information presented to viewers without the influence of embedded or linked secondary articles. During this period, article texts, and other content specifically related to the Iraq War on these home pages were meticulously content analyzed. A total of 15 home pages from outlets were analyzed for detailed examination. This analysis was aimed at understanding how each media framed the war, the narrative consistency across different days, and any shifts in portrayal as the conflict progressed. By focusing on these primary sources of information, the study provides insights into the editorial choices made by Al Jazeera and the New York Times,

offering a comparative perspective on how different media narratives catered to their audiences' perceptions and understandings of the war. See the annexes for the complete list of articles.

Ethical considerations are critical in this work. I tried to approach sensitive topics carefully, avoiding reinforcing stereotypes while ensuring that topics are presented accurately. I have analyzed each publication, considered their editorial goals while highlighting problematic practices and biases. This methodology guided my research into how mainstream media outlets report on conflicts and how biases and orientalism influence their coverage of global conflicts.

## CHAPTER 4 – Results

The following chapter introduces the results and provides an explanation. First the articles are analyzed for content, which is followed by a reflection.

### Content Analysis

For an easier understanding, the articles quoted are referred to by numbers from the previous tables. For example, a quote from “Green card cannon fodder” will be provided as Art. 3 Table 1 in brackets.

#### *Al Jazeera*

In Al Jazeera articles discussing the invasion of Iraq, the main arguments for war were about the dangers posed by Saddam Hussein's regime, especially the potential spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) to terrorist groups like Al Qaeda. This argument was used to create a sense of urgency and fear, suggesting that Saddam Hussein could provide WMDs to terrorists, putting the United States in great danger “Iraq continues to develop weapons of mass destruction, and with Saddam Hussein able to provide them to organizations such as al-Qaeda, this puts the United States in imminent danger” (Art. 2 Table 1).

The coverage also focused on the role of “green card soldiers” (Art. 3 Table 1), who are non-US citizens recruited to fight with promises of fast-track citizenship, education, and financial bonuses. These soldiers, mostly from Latin America, were more likely to serve in dangerous frontline positions. According to Al Jazeera, “about one in ten of the 282 soldiers killed fighting for America have been non-citizens, mostly from Latin America” (Art. 3 Table 1). This showed that non-citizen soldiers had a higher risk of dying in combat compared to US-born soldiers.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair supported the invasion but acknowledged the deep divisions it caused. He said, “Iraq has divided the international community. It has divided the party, the

country, the families, the friends. I know that many people deeply believe that the action we took was wrong” (Art. 3 Table 1). This statement highlights the moral and ethical dilemmas faced by political leaders.

“They call this operation Iraqi Freedom” (Art. 7 Table 1). said Ibrahim Amin, a 47-year-old real estate broker, “but our world has become nothing but curfews, barbed wire, searchlights, and soldiers” (Art. 3 Table 1). This statement encapsulates the daily reality faced by many Iraqi civilians during the conflict. Instead of experiencing the promised liberation, civilians like Amin found themselves living in a militarized environment, overwhelmed by constant restrictions and the omnipresence of military forces. The contrast between the operation's name and the harsh realities on the ground highlights the dissonance and growing discontent among the Iraqi population.

The story of Lance Corporal Jose Antonio Gutierrez, an orphan from Guatemala, was particularly poignant. He joined the US Marines seeking a better life but was killed by friendly fire in Iraq. His posthumous US citizenship highlighted the hollow nature of promises made to green card soldiers. His sister, Engracia, expressed mixed feelings: “I do feel proud, because not just anyone gives up their life for another country. But at the same time it makes me sad because he fought for something that wasn’t his” (Art. 3 Table 1).

Human Rights Watch published a report criticizing the behavior of US troops in Iraq. The report, titled “Hearts and Minds: Post-war civilian deaths in Baghdad caused by US forces”, stated that US soldiers were not taking enough care to avoid civilian casualties. Fred Abrahams, the report's author, explained, “Often Iraqi civilians don’t realize that these are soldiers approaching their homes whilst shooting. Some think that they may be looters, and so they shoot back” (Art. 6 Table 1). This confusion often led to tragic consequences.

The report highlighted that many US soldiers were not adequately trained in peacekeeping, resulting in aggressive behavior towards Iraqi civilians. Abrahams noted, “Many of these soldiers have no idea how to keep the peace; they have been trained to participate in combat operations and show aggression to the enemy, and that is what many have been doing to Iraqi civilians” (Art. 6 Table 1). This lack of training in non-combat situations led to numerous instances of unnecessary force and hostility, further exacerbating the already tense relations between the military and local populations.

Additionally, the report pointed out the significant issue of insufficient documentation of Iraqi casualties, which Abrahams argued was crucial for accountability. He said, “Of course it’s important for the US army to document Iraqi casualties. They say that this is difficult to do, but time and energy needs to be invested into documenting this information” (Art. 6 Table 1). Proper documentation is essential to ensure transparency, provide justice for victims, and learn from these incidents to prevent future occurrences. The absence of detailed records undermines efforts to address the humanitarian impact of the conflict and hinders the process of reconciliation and rebuilding.

An analysis of Al Jazeera's coverage of the Iraq War shows that, despite the tendency to criticize Western actions and focus on humanitarian crises, elements of Orientalist views can still be traced in media materials. The constant portrayal of Iraqis as victims of Western aggression emphasizes their vulnerability and dependence. The language and descriptions of the oppressive environment under military presence emphasize Western imperialism, but also present Iraqis as passive sufferers. The vivid imagery supports the idea of a society under siege and control, consistent with Orientalist ideas of Eastern societies as chaotic and in need of external intervention. Thus, Al Jazeera's coverage, while critical of Western policies, reinforces Orientalist narratives, diminishing the active role of Iraqis and perpetuating stereotypes of the East as problematic and dependent on the West.

### *The New York Times*

Examining The New York Times articles during the early stages of the Iraq War reveals how media narratives shape and influence public perceptions of conflict. The language in these articles often highlighted coalition forces' progress and tactical movements, portraying them as decisive and dominant. For example, phrases like “collect such intelligence as we can find related to terrorist networks in Iraq and beyond” (Art. 5 Table 2), conveyed imminent military success.

The articles frequently addressed potential threats posed by the Iraqi regime, particularly focusing on the possibility of using chemical weapons. Statements such as “Prevent use of chemical and biological arms” (Art. 8 Table 2) justified the invasion as a defense against imminent threats. This narrative framed military action as a necessary precaution and protection measure, emphasizing the urgency and danger of chemical warfare. The term “threat” (Art. 1 Table 2) was central to this narrative, creating a sense of immediate danger that necessitated a proactive “response” (Art.1 Table 2) on danger by coalition forces. This focus on potential chemical warfare established a narrative of urgency and danger, emphasizing the need for intervention to protect coalition forces and global security.

The portrayal of the Iraqi leadership was critical, with descriptions of Saddam Hussein and his regime losing control. For example, The New York Times reported that “Saddam Hussein and his supporters are beginning to lose control of their country” (Art. 5 Table 2), suggesting the regime's collapse under coalition pressure. This depiction of a weakening enemy bolstered support for the invasion by suggesting that success was not only achievable but imminent.

The coverage often used humanitarian language to describe the invasion's objectives. The goal of “liberating the Iraqi people” (Art. 5 Table 2) presented the military intervention in a benevolent light, framing it as part of a broader moral mission. This formulation aimed to gain

domestic and international support by emphasizing altruistic intentions, portraying coalition forces as liberators and justifying the war on moral grounds.

Despite of such tones, the articles did not shy away from discussing the potential loss of lives. By acknowledging that American troops would “pay a heavy price in blood” (Art. 7 Table 2) the newspaper brought a sobering reality to the forefront, highlighting the serious risks and sacrifices associated with military combat. This recognition added complexity to the narrative, balancing the depiction of military success with the costs of war.

The New York Times also addressed issues of interaction between coalition forces and terrorists, often within broader discussions about military strategy and post-invasion challenges. By staging these interactions, the articles highlighted current security concerns and justified continued military presence in the region. This focus on ongoing threats reinforced the rationale for invasion and subsequent occupation as necessary for maintaining regional stability.

Overall, the language and framing used by The New York Times during the early stages of the Iraq War not only supported the rationale for the invasion but also contributed to an Orientalist portrayal of Iraq and its people. By carefully selecting which aspects of the war to highlight, The New York Times employed tactics in discourse that framed Iraqis as both a threat and in need of Western intervention. The frequent emphasis on potential chemical warfare, the portrayal of a collapsing regime, and the framing of military action as a humanitarian mission all serve to create a narrative that aligns with Orientalist perspectives. This narrative underscores the need for Western superiority and control, depicting the Iraqi leadership and society as incapable of self-governance and inherently dangerous. Through formulations such as “liberating the Iraqi people” and images of imminent threats, The New York Times reinforced stereotypes of the East as chaotic and in need of Western order, thus confirming the

theoretical argument that media plays a critical role in shaping public perception through biased and Orientalist representations.

### **Reflection on the strategies**

By analyzing the coverage of the Iraq War by Al Jazeera and the New York Times, one can see how different media outlets report the same events with different emphases and narratives, which influences the conflicting public perceptions.

Al Jazeera's articles focused on the threats posed by Saddam Hussein's regime, especially the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist groups. This method was used to create tension and security. Personally, I believe that this approach served to strengthen anti-war sentiment in the international environment. Particular attention in Al Jazeera's materials was paid to “soldiers with green cards” - non-native residents of the United States who served as a hope for accelerated acquisition of citizenship. This story highlighted the injustices and impacts on the distributed risks of war. In my view, this is important for understanding the social dynamics within the US military and how both private and civilian incentives can be used to speak out in the most dangerous positions. Such criticism concerns the moral and ethical issues surrounding the recruitment of foreign nationals to fight in war.

Al Jazeera also covered the humanitarian consequences of the war, focusing on the suffering and destruction in the world caused by the fighting. This aspect of the view served to strengthen anti-war sentiment and criticism of coalition forces. Personally, I think this is a fair criticism, since war always has serious humanitarian consequences, which are often underestimated when decisions about military action are made.

The Human Rights Watch report, also cited by Al Jazeera, criticized the conduct of US troops in Iraq, pointing to the lack of peacekeeping training and support for global casualties. This report, in my opinion, shows a respect for human rights and ethics even in war. This raises



questions about the need for better soldiers and the level of accountability training to minimize civilian casualties.

The New York Times, unlike Al Jazeera, often focused on the progress of coalitions' military and tactical successes. The use of the phrase created the impression of imminent military success. This, in my opinion, shows how one can maintain morale and justify military action to one's audience, create the illusion of a quick gain, and ensure that the conflict benefits the media. Particular attention was paid to the threat of chemical weapons, which justified the invasion as a preventive measure. Articles often use expressions to justify the need to protect against minor threats. This narrative creates a sense of urgency and compliance, including the need to "react to danger".

Unlike Al Jazeera, The New York Times also used humanitarian language, describing the goals of the invasion as "the liberation of the Iraqi people." This led to military intervention in a more positive world, which was expressed for altruistic purposes. In my view, this is a classic example of the use of arguments to justify such decisions, which can be welcomed as an attempt to mitigate criticism and gain public support.

Despite the general tone of support for the war effort, the New York Times also did not shy away from discussing potential casualties, acknowledging that American troops may "pay a price in blood." This added realism and complexity to the narrative, which juxtaposed success with major risks and sacrifices. Personally, I believe this is important for a balanced portrayal of the war, as it allows readers to see not only the victorious aspects, but also the real consequences of the conflict.

Overall, the content analysis shows that Al Jazeera and The New York Times took different approaches to the continuation of the Iraq War, reflecting their editorial positions and target situations. Al Jazeera focused on criticism of the war and its then-humanitarian consequences,

just as The New York Times emphasized the military action and the need to respond to the threat. Reflecting on this, I realized the complexity and power of media in shaping our understanding of war. The way each outlet presented the facts, chose their emphasis, and framed the narrative had profound impacts on how the public perceived the justification, execution, and consequences of the war. This analysis highlights the need for a critical approach to consuming media, especially in times of conflict, to better understand the underlying motives and potential biases in the reporting.

## CHAPTER 5 – Conclusion

This thesis critically examines the role of media framing in shaping public understanding of war, with a specific focus on the biases and Orientalist perspectives employed by different media outlets. By analyzing the coverage of the Iraq War by Al Jazeera and The New York Times, this study illuminates how media narratives are constructed and the profound impact these narratives have on public perception and policy making.

The research methodology employed in this study involved a comprehensive thematic analysis of articles and reports from the early stages of the Iraq War. This period was selected due to its intense media coverage and pivotal role in shaping global perceptions of the conflict. The analysis revealed that Al Jazeera often emphasized the humanitarian crises and global opposition to the war, portraying widespread suffering and questioning the motives behind the military intervention. On the other hand, The New York Times focused on strategic and moral justifications for the invasion, frequently highlighting the perceived threats posed by Saddam Hussein's regime and the potential use of chemical weapons.

One of the critical findings of this study is the use of Orientalism in media coverage by both Western and non-Western outlets. Edward Said's concept of Orientalism describes how Western narratives often depict Eastern societies as exotic, backward, and fundamentally different. This study found that Al Jazeera and The New York Times, despite their differing perspectives, employed Orientalist elements in their reporting. Al Jazeera highlighted Western aggression and its impacts on Eastern societies, while The New York Times framed Eastern regimes as threats to global peace and security. This portrayal reinforces Western superiority and contributes to a biased understanding of the conflict.

The role of digital media was also explored in this study, highlighting its dual capacity to democratize information and amplify biased narratives. While platforms like Al Jazeera are

often seen as providing alternative perspectives, they can also perpetuate biased reporting. This underscores the necessity for enhanced media literacy, enabling the public to critically evaluate the content they consume and recognize inherent biases.

The findings suggest that media framing significantly impacts how international conflicts are perceived. Both Al Jazeera and The New York Times used selective emphasis and strategic narratives to shape public understanding of the Iraq War. Al Jazeera's focus on humanitarian issues and The New York Times' emphasis on strategic justifications illustrate how different media can frame the same event in contrasting ways, each influencing public perception according to their biases and objectives.

This research highlights the importance of critical media consumption. By recognizing and questioning biases in media reporting, audiences can develop a more informed and balanced view of global events.

In conclusion, this study revealed the intricate ways in which media framing and Orientalism shape our understanding of war. The media's role extends beyond simply conveying information to actively constructing reality, emphasizing the need for critical engagement with media narratives. This engagement is essential to promote a nuanced understanding of international relations and cultural diversity. The findings advocate for enhanced media literacy as a crucial tool in fostering a more informed and balanced public discourse on global conflicts. Future research should continue to explore the long-term impacts of media framing on public opinion and policy, as well as the evolving role of digital media in shaping these narratives. This comprehensive understanding is vital for addressing the challenges posed by biased media coverage and for promoting more accurate and equitable reporting on international conflicts. As far as the limitations are concerned, one difficulty was the majority of the Al Jazeera articles were written in Arabic, and it was hard to find sources in English.

## **Future research possibilities**

Looking to the future, I see a need for more research that compares media framing across different conflicts and time periods to test the consistency of these practices. Longer studies can help me understand the long-term impact of media framing on public opinion and policy. In addition, experiments could clarify exactly how media consumption influences public opinion and decisions.

Overall, this study deepened my understanding of the strategic use of media framing and Orientalism. It also made me more critical of how the media shapes our views on international relations and cultural diversity. Moving forward, I am motivated to continue to study the influence of media, encouraging both media producers and consumers to critically engage with media narratives to promote a more informed and balanced view of global events.

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## Annex

**Table 1**

Newspaper Articles Used for the Research: Al Jazeera

|   | <b>Title of the article</b>                 | <b>Date of publication</b> | <b>Topic of article</b>  |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| 1 | US Warned of Holy War in Iraq               | 11 July 2003               | Warnings of Holy War   |
| 2 | The War on Iraq: Justifications and Motives | 10 August 2003             | Justifications of Iraq War                                     |
| 3 | Green card cannon fodder                    | 31 August 2003             | Green Card Soldiers: Non-Citizen Troops on the Frontline       |
| 4 | US Plans to Attack Seven Muslim States      | 22 September 2003          | US Military Strategy   |
| 5 | Blair Defends Invasion of Iraq              | 30 September 2003          | Defense of Iraq Invasion                                       |
| 6 | US soldiers trigger happy in Iraq           | 22 October 2003            | Human Rights Watch Report on Misconduct by US Soldiers in Iraq |
| 7 | A Review of Operation Iraqi Freedom         | 7 December 2003            | Iraq War Review  |



**Table 2**

Newspaper Articles Used for the Research: The New York Times

|   | <b>Title of the article</b>  | <b>Date of publication</b> | <b>Topic of article</b>    |
|---|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Threats and responses: Iraq<br>defiant response  | 20 March 2003              | Iraq's Defiant Response    |
| 2 | Threats and responses:<br>Military analysis; Setting the<br>Stage  | 20 March 2003              | Military Strategy Analysis |
| 3 | Threats and responses: The<br>battlefield mood; Rosaries and<br>Bibles in Demand as Troops<br>Face War               | 20 March 2003              | Troop Morale               |
| 4 | Nation at War: Iraqi Defenses;<br>Biological, Chemical Weapons<br>Would be Likely, Slow but Not<br>Stop the Invaders | 21 March 2003              | WMD Threat                 |
| 5 | Nation at War: Pentagon;<br>Rumsfeld Says Iraq<br>Collapsing, Lists 8 Objectives<br>of War                           | 22 March 2003              | Iraq War Objectives        |
| 6 | Nation at War: Baghdad;<br>Staggering Blow Strikes Heart<br>of Iraqi Capital   | 22 March 2003              | Bombing of Baghdad         |

|   |   |               |                          |
|---|---|---------------|--------------------------|
| 7 | A Nation at War: The Iraqi Capital; As Allied Troops Race North, Iraq Warns of a Fierce Clash | 24 March 2003 | Military Movements       |
| 8 | A Nation at War: Tactics; Iraq May Try Defensive Use of Chemicals, Experts Warn               | 4 April 2003  | Chemical Warfare Tactics |