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**THE BRITISH PRESS COVERAGE OF THE NORTHERN
IRELAND ISSUE AND THE WAR OF IRAQ (2003)**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgment is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

Date: 27 September 2011

Signature

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Abstract

There is no doubt that biased news stories resulting from the non objective portrayal of power relations, dominance and hegemony, regional and international conflicts and wars, social injustice and inequality, discrimination and racism, and so forth are daily embedded in the print media. More importantly, the press reaches large segments of population who are, to some extent, still unconscious of the implicit ideological maneuvers incorporated in the legitimization of certain polarized viewpoints. Since language is the medium whereby ideology is crafted, the critical study of language therefore becomes a cornerstone to any purposeful examination of the underlying processes and mechanisms of the ideological persuasion in the written discourse. Although the study of ideology is an old subject, the authentic challenge to this field has come from the findings of Critical Discourse Analysis which paved the way for a more critical based approach.

This research work examines the ideological perspectives of the British quality newspapers with regard to the Northern Ireland issue and the War of Iraq (2003) using Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodological tool. In the frame of this research work, views and contributions of some leading scholars like Teun A. Van Dijk and Roger Fowler, which are central tenets in modern CDA, specifically in the study of news discourse, form the backbone of the adopted methodological approach.

Table of contents

Declaration	III
Acknowledgments	IV
Abstract	V
Introduction	1
1. Chapter one: The press in Britain	
1.1. A historical overview	10
1.2. Press ownership and politics	20
1.3. The regulation of the press	31
2. Chapter two: The language of political journalism	
2.1. News and the social construction of reality	36
2.2. Ideology and propaganda in the news	44
2.3. The press agenda-setting and the public opinion	50
2.4. The analytical framework	57
3. Chapter three: The British press coverage of the Northern Ireland issue	
3.1. Background to the struggle of Northern Ireland	64
3.2. The press coverage of Ulster's issue	70
3.3. Critical linguistics	85
4. Chapter four: The British press coverage of the Iraq War (2003)	
4.1. Background to the Iraq War	90
4.2. The pre-invasion press coverage	96
4.3. The press coverage of the war period (19 March- 1 May 2003)	106
4.4. Critical linguistics	114
Conclusion	118
Appendix	
List of tables and figures	125
Acronyms	126
Bibliography	127
Abstract in Arabic	134

Introduction

It is not surprising that in times of wars and conflicts, the press, as well as the other media outlets, being a conduit of mass communication, would inevitably receive a uniform pressure most specifically from the government which represents the voice of the established power. In order to get public support and sympathy, the official authorities seek to legitimate their own political outlook, and eventually their subsequent actions, through exploiting the potential framing benefits of these communicative devices. Theoretically speaking, in a capitalist democracy like Britain, which idealizes the diversity of opinion and the freedom of expression, the press is assumed to be a neutral third place where all the conflicting perceptions and contested understandings of a given situation take place, without slant to any predetermined position. Indeed, this ideal orthodox view of the press as a neutral arbiter is no longer a truly valid belief.

In contemporary research studies, mass media and communication scholars have pointed out the enormous influence of the elite, such as political leaders, media proprietors, political parties, in addition to the various active interest groups and lobbies in society, on the media discourse. This would lead us to assume that the press is a purveyor of an oriented set of ideologies rather than simply an objective reporter of events. Moving further to a narrower scope, the role of journalists and editors themselves in the making up of these ideologies is also vital. The process of production and reproduction of ideologies is, after all, handled through a subtle exploitation of the vast possibilities of expression and meaning offered by language. Hence, the critical study of language use constitutes a strong platform for a better understanding of the mechanisms of these processes in the print news.

The concern of this dissertation is to examine the ways in which different ideologies are carried out by journalists and editors in the news discourse. We believe that this could be best served through the use of a set of Critical Discourse Analysis techniques and strategies in analyzing the newspapers' output. Britain's involvement in the occupation of Iraq in 2003 along with the enduring conflict in Northern Ireland, which was dramatically escalating following the civil rights movement campaign, might be interesting topics in addressing this issue. It has been noticed that both of

these cases have been subject to much debate and ongoing political disputes in UK and abroad. Our analysis might show how the press has been eventually immersed in the conflict or war and eventually has adopted a skewed ideological stance in favor of, or against the conflicting parties.

The primary goal related to the topic of this research work is to find a satisfactory answer to the following question: How did the British quality press cover the issue of Northern Ireland and the war of Iraq (2003) and presented them to the public? In other words, was the press coverage balanced/biased? Indeed, answering the dissertation question basically requires answering other secondary and intertwined questions. Does the press sector in Britain act independently from the surrounding socio-political factors? What is the underlying ideological basis that characterized the press attitudes towards the issue of Northern Ireland and the war of Iraq? The aim of this study, therefore, is to assess the structure of language in the content of the press, the depiction of the various war and conflict actors, as well as the frequent topics and themes, in order to carefully examine their tacit ideologies and how they have eventually been legitimized.

As it has been suggested earlier, the British press is not totally neutral. While its definition and interpretation of the two case studies did not necessarily reflect the official line, yet still did not offer a balanced and objective representation of the events and the actors involved. However, it is important to stress the fact that these preliminary observations are too general and loose to represent the British press discourse, either in relation to the Northern Ireland issue, or the Iraq War. We assume that the outlined methodology will place one in a better position and cast more light on the hidden mechanisms of the press in forming its ideologies, thus clarifying the ways in which those ideologies were legitimized and promoted in the public discourse.

What has initially struck my attention to this subject was the series of violent events that followed a qualification football match to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa between the Algerian national team and its Egyptian opponent. Many

journalists paid considerable attention to the stoning of the Algerian national team bus in Cairo that left four players slightly injured. Remarkably, the emotionally charged reporting helped to create tension and widespread popular discontent that rapidly developed into serious political dispute and frustration between the two countries. The overall conditions of the event and its aftermath could be taken to illustrate not only the capacity of the press in shaping public opinion and mobilizing the masses towards action, but also the potential to urge politicians into taking decisions which they may not consider under normal circumstances. This shows the reciprocal interaction between politics, the press and public opinion. The aim of our research, however, is not to measure the collective effects of the press on the public, but more precisely to analyze the British press content in order to bring to the fore their ideological positions with regard to the aforementioned cases, and show the ways in which a certain biased depiction of a theme is being made legitimate.

Indeed, this interest was further stimulated by the unexpected social uprisings in a number of Arab countries which were extensively reported by the local and international media. In fact, the role of visual media (TV and Internet) and to a lesser extent, the print media, provided vivid images of propaganda and bias, either pro-establishment as the state managed media showed, or an anti-establishment stance backed by private owned newspapers and TV channels, particularly those outside the countries concerned with the conflicts. For example, Aljazeera channel has been continuously very critical of the ways in which the peaceful popular demonstrations were considered by the official authorities, and therefore offered a truly alternative and highly disturbing voice.

This study will undertake a qualitative, and to a lesser degree, quantitative content analysis to examine the ideological perspectives that permeated the discourse of some British broadsheet newspapers in their coverage of the Northern Ireland issue and the Iraq War (2003). It was evident that these two separate events had a significant political impact on UK's political landscape. We believe that Critical Discourse Analysis as an analytical framework- in addition to historicism that will be employed particularly in the first chapter- will be very useful to attain the goals of this research

work. It should be mentioned in passing that CDA, as will be shown, is an interdisciplinary approach towards the study of different aspects of texts in a variety of study fields, because it borrows from various different disciplines, especially linguistics, applied linguistics, pragmatics, cognitive psychology, and sociology. It is also successfully applicable to a wide range of research fields, such as media discourse. Therefore, there is no specific theoretical model to be strictly adhered to; however, a special reference will be attributed to a cluster of devices and tools classified by leading scholars in news discourse studies (Roger Fowler and his associates, in addition to Teun A. Van Dijk).¹

The corpus of this study includes three well circulated British broadsheets: *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. The selection of these national quality titles is threefold. Those newspapers are highly circulated, reaching a large portion of audiences at home and abroad. *The Times*, for example, owned nowadays by the giant media group News Corporation, has been one of the prestigious quality papers and among the top leading national titles for more than two hundred years of existence. According to the National Readership Survey in UK, *The Times* had an average daily circulation of 1,565,000 copies from January to December 2010, and *The Guardian* and *The Independent* with an average daily circulation of 1, 103,000 and 532,000 copies respectively.² Furthermore, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* have an online readership that far exceeds the other newspapers circulation with millions of readers around the globe.

Moreover, those titles endorse different ideological affiliations. While *The Times* is traditionally conservative in its overall tone, with a recent shift to support New Labour in 2001 and 2005, and eventually came to switch again to the conservatives, *The Independent* and *The Guardian* are, more or less, supporters of centre left ideology, albeit with a more liberal political orientation. It is also believed that the quality

¹ Roger Fowler and Teun A. Van Dijk are among the founding figures of CDA, while Fowler and his associates (see Fowler Roger, Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress and Tony Trew, Language and Control and Language as Ideology 1979) pioneered by the inception of Critical Linguistics which became later CDA, Teun A. Van Dijk enriched this field by broadening the scope of analysis to consider other socio-cognitive dimensions.

² "NRS Readership Estimates-newspapers and supplements AIR- Latest 12 Months:January- December 2010," National Readership Survey, August. 2011 < <http://www.nrs.co.uk/toplinereadership.html>>.

newspapers in Britain, unlike the mass market popular press, do not resort to direct propaganda in their coverage. Most of the time, their ideological biases are likely to be less stated and subtly drawn. The sample of texts selected will incorporate editorials, front page articles, headlines, news reports and articles retrieved from the official web archives of the selected newspapers.

It is worth noting, then, that this research work has, inevitably, some limitations that need to be acknowledged. The main problem lies in the fact that our focus will be drawn to only the three British quality newspapers mentioned before as a source of data. Other well circulated newspapers like *The Daily Telegraph*, the middle market and tabloid papers, which also have a large stake of audiences, will not be taken into consideration which makes any generalization about the findings of this research partially true, and not wholly representative of the British press ideological standpoint with regard to the two cases addressed here.

In an attempt to find out possible and satisfactory answers to the previously highlighted questions, the body of this study, which contains four thematic sections, will proceed with a succinct overview of some basic notions within media studies and explaining the outlined theoretical framework that will be followed, then progresses to the examination of the corpus of data.

The first chapter begins with an analytical survey of the history of the press in Britain, and refers particularly to the important long-term effects that the press underwent in an attempt to identify exactly why history matters in shaping the current status of the British newspapers. This chapter will be developed into three main related sections. The first part takes a historical overview about the press by briefly looking backward to the early beginnings of the newspaper in Britain, and especially illustrating its propagandistic character and referring duly to its enduring struggle to acquire more autonomy from the challenge posed by the subsequent established British authorities. Secondly, analysing the status of the press in the twentieth century from an economic perspective, that is strongly believed to play a fundamental role in

determining the ideological and political biases of the press. The third part is devoted to the regulatory policies and its possible effects on the freedom of opinion in UK.

The theoretical and conceptual framework on which the research is based on is explicated in the second chapter. In order to fully set the background for fruitful debate, this chapter, therefore, will address four main concerns: First, it opens a discussion on the news gathering routines, journalistic interactions and points particularly to the illusive nature of news reporting and the ways in which reality is socially constructed rather than simply being reported. Attention will also be drawn to the factors that contribute to make some events rather than others more likely to be published. Second, an attempt will be made to illuminate the complex theoretical assumptions about the concept of ideology and ideological workings to best situate this notion within a news context without negative or positive connotations.

Third, this chapter will also draw a special emphasis on the agenda-setting research findings through a commentary on the intricate relationship between the press, politics and audiences, and especially demarcating the confines of the press possible effect on the public perceptions. Fourth, to explicate the methodological tools that will be adopted in analysing the output of the British quality newspapers addressed in this research work, and show how these tools can effectively unveil the expression of tacit ideologies in the discourse of the press. In other words, the aim is to show where and how ideologies preferably manifest themselves in news articles and reports through the subtle use of language. Ideology and ideological processes will be tracked based on the theory and methods of Critical Discourse Analysis, with special reference to critical linguistics paradigm developed by Roger Fowler and his colleagues, in addition to the socio-cognitive framework dimension elaborated by Teun A. Van Dijk, which explicitly deal with ideological news structures in much detail. One has to keep in mind that all their theoretical contributions lie under the rubric of Critical Discourse Analysis research that has widened in the last forty years.

The bulk of the two final chapters will be devoted to the analysis of the newspapers content with regard to the Iraq War (2003) and Northern Ireland issue. A cluster of

questions could be adequate and appropriate with regard to both cases: What were the topics mostly handled and those which have been ignored? and why? How is language being used in this context? Was the press complicit with the aims of the government's plans? In what terms are these issues discussed by the British press? Did the press encourage people to view reality of these controversial issues in a certain way? How did the press depict the conflicting parties in its coverage?

The first part of the third chapter starts with a broad historical overview of the Northern Ireland issue by tracing the most important events in the history of the conflict, its origins and the multiple socio-political conditions that accompanied the crisis and promoted it. The second part concentrates on identifying the major themes dealt with by the British press (*The Times* and *The Guardian*) during the troubled history of Ulster starting from the 1970s, a period which witnessed the re-emergence of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) as a real threatening force in the British political scene. This will cover important stages of the conflict, tackling subjects like the tension between Catholics and Protestants, popular protests and demonstrations, Bloody Sunday, and the early beginnings of peace settlements during the 1990s. Moreover, the third section of this chapter will assess the use of grammatical structures (*Nomalization* and *Passivization* in particular) in headlines and leading sentences, with reference to the attribution of agency and its ideological function.

As in the case of the Northern Ireland issue, the fourth and final chapter will proceed with a brief survey on Iraq, and the overall political circumstances that led to the war of 2003. Then, focus will be directed, in the second part, to the pre-war press coverage (*The Independent* and *The Guardian*) by looking at the editorials and leading articles during the whole month of September 2001, and the subsequent comments on the historical Texas summit in April 2002 where the plan for the invasion of Iraq was set. Thus, in the third part of this chapter close emphasis will be placed on the press value judgments expressed during the war period (from the 19th of March up to the first of May 2003) through an analysis of related articles and editorials. The closing section of this chapter, will handle the headlines and leading sentences by unravelling the complex ideological traits in the management of grammatical constructions.

Chapter One

The Press in Britain

1.1. A historical overview

A better understanding of the current status of journalism in Britain -taking the broad traditional definition of journalism as being the profession of collecting and distributing news stories through a print medium to popular audiences –requires, in the first place, a careful scrutiny and exploration of the various progressive historical trends of news publishing in the United Kingdom. This concern might not appear easy to handle as the nature of reporting in the press, and its function within the British society varied significantly from one period to another. Therefore, it was related and largely dependent upon the different political, social and economic situations that contributed in formulating its nature and purpose.

Indeed, the historical examination serves to use a set of network ideas in order to elucidate and explore the changing patterns of the newspaper in its modern history. It also helps to trace the causal elements, some being of an oscillatory effect, in their interaction to bring about the newspaper of the day. In another sense, subjects like ownership structure, state/private control and censorship, as well as the political partisanship to specific ideologies and parties might be conceivably relevant to the debate about the British press true value. It is crucial to investigate the possible impact of these factors on the press credibility and objectivity in covering domestic and international events, particularly those that fall under the rubric of ‘national security’, or those of high sensitivity on the British political arena.

This chapter, then, is rather an attempt to outline a map for some fundamental thematic issues that relate directly to the press developmental stages, and in some way, squeezes a long period of continuous change which touches on the nature of news reporting in the British newspapers starting from its early beginnings till recent days. This will be made on the assumption that it would facilitate a good grasp of the different factors and the mechanisms that might possibly influence and determine the content of the journalistic texts. In this respect, some cases of overt political bias will be used as examples to demonstrate the use of ideology and propaganda in the press in

order to allow this central concern to be further examined and investigated at a deeper level in the following chapters. It could be initially advocated that there is no much difference between the methods and purposes of ideology and propaganda being firm features of any news item. However, one has to keep in mind that ideology is a cluster of ideas and perceptions which are neither wrong, nor true, and most of the time not clearly stated or observed. Propaganda, on the other hand, is emotionally charged and fundamentally imbued with more discernible images of distortion and deception. A journalist might propagate a specific ideology by considering just one side of arguments, which eventually result in an unbalanced picture of any given situation.

In retrospect, the seventeenth century, more particularly the second part of it, could be considered as the real starting point of the press in England. It was the era when news began to be printed more regularly and within periodical publications. It was also during the second half of the century that the first germs of professional newspapers were laying the foundation for the press industry. Tracking the history of the British press prompts a constellation of conceptual questions about broader political, economic and social conditions that accompanied the evolution of the British print press from “a miserable sheet of flimsy paper”³ to become, if one borrows Knight Hunt’s words, the “Fourth Estate” and one of the most circulated and credible news source in the world. This long outstanding image has, however, received serious cracks over the past few decades.

Lengthy and diverse historical evidence intended to support the assumption that the newspaper originated first in a distant land from England, and was primarily a European rather than simply an English offspring. English contribution, nevertheless, was important and peculiarly distinctive. The London press, according to the historian Bob Harris, played a fundamental role in the development of British journalism claiming that “through its press, London provided the national focus for the expression of views and transmission of information.”⁴ In fact, political newsletters were only known during the sixteenth century appearing especially at the turn of the

³ Alexander Andrews, *The History of British Journalism: Volume 1*, 1847 (London: Routledge, 2000) 1.

⁴ Bob Harris, *Politics and the Rise of the Press: Britain and France, 1620-1800* (London: Routledge 1996) 37.

century. They were, in fact, ephemeral and short-lived periodicals which did not keep continuity and regularity of production. Thus, Ronald H. Fritze and William B. Robinson clarified that “newsbooks appeared as early as 1513 and were published infrequently until 1590. For the next twenty years, some 450 appeared, dealing mainly with foreign news, they were usually eight to twelve pages, inelegant, and crowded.”⁵

In addition to being the first news pamphlets recorded and typical pioneers of the more modern English newspaper, those newsbooks displayed the optimum shape of classical propaganda that became clearly recognized as a constant feature of a significant political importance in more advanced eras. There can be no doubt that the press purveyors, directly or indirectly, employed their news publications as a tool of persuasion, seeking a similar endorsement of political commitment and determination by their own target readers. According to media expert and critic Martin Conboy, the first English newsbook published in 1513 under the title: “*hereafter ensue the trewe encounter or Batayle lately done between Englande and Scotlande,*” which was launched and supported by the royal authority, had been noticeably used “as much for propaganda as for informational purposes.”⁶ In the following years, a number of titles appeared and lasted until well the turn of the century.

It must be emphasized that early on the royal authorities fixed their attention on the growing printing business as a whole. Several proclamations and separate laws were issued to control the content of newsheets and limit the news dissemination among the masses for several years to come. One of the reasons for this seems to have been the disturbance created by the religious controversies of the time, which were very truly political in character. The Tudors through the Stationers’ Company⁷ outlawed any attempt to publish news without a license through which they sought to curb the printing trade and administer the economic policy, and more importantly, to strengthen their political authority amidst the internal religious division already evident across the country. The strict measures of censorship and sanctions, however,

⁵ Ronald H. Fritze and William B. Robinson, eds. Historical Dictionary of Stewart England, 1603-1689 (USA: Greenwood Press, 1996) 424.

⁶ Martin Conboy, Journalism: A Critical History (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004) 10.

⁷ Founded in 1403 and held a monopoly over the publishing business as a whole.

did not impede individual publishers, who turned out to provide strong grounds for resistance by publishing their own newsletters secretly, and therefore continued to challenge authority and served as an authentic conduit for change.

There is a common agreement among historians that the earliest forerunners of newspaper recorded in Britain goes back to the 1620s dubbed *Corantos*, book-like pamphlets which were translated, in most cases, from Dutch and printed in Amsterdam dealing mainly with the religious strife and wars that had broken in the Continent.⁸ Indeed, the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War in 1618 created cautious attitudes towards the publication and dissemination of parliamentary debates and discussions of home affairs were not allowed to be published.

In fact, Britons were paying considerable attention to the tensions and religious upheaval in Europe which was the staple of public discussion. This was at a time when newssheets and periodicals were the only available instrument that seemed to satisfy the public excitement and thirst after news. Martin Conboy, again, noted that the interest in war which created an extraordinary increase in public interest in international affairs along with the printers profitability were driving forces behind the widespread and success of the corantos and periodicals in the 1620s. The British author Frederick Knight Hunt, in his vivid description of the early newsletters, states:

They were mere pamphlets –catch- pennys, printed one now and another then without any connection with each other, and each giving some portion of intelligence though by its author to be sufficient interest to secure a sale. The weekly news was distinguished from them all by the fact of its being published at fixed intervals, usually a week between each publication, and that each paper was numbered in regular succession, as we have news numbered in the present day.⁹

Although the dissemination of domestic news and printing activities were fettered by the Royal Act on the 24th of December 1620¹⁰ due to the ideologically charged

⁸ The earliest recorded single sheet of surviving coranto entitled “*The New Tydings Out of Italie Are Not yet Com*” bears date the 2nd of December 1620, an account of news of the Thirty Years' War then raging in Europe. Less than a year later, the first coranto to be printed in England appeared. The newsbook “*Newes from Italy, Germany, Hungarie, Spaine and France*” dated September, 1621 was the first ‘coranto’ to be printed in England by Nathaniel Butter.

⁹ Frederick Knight Hunt, *The Fourth Estate: Contributions Towards a History of Newspapers, and of the Liberty of the Press*, 1850 (USA: BiblioBazaar, 2009) 10.

¹⁰ A proclamation issued by James I which banned the publication and spreading of news from abroad.

atmosphere in Britain, there appeared other new titles, such as *The Weekly News* which, according to some historians, was the first modern form of the English newspaper. This paper pioneered in carrying the publication date creating a sense of continuity and kept readers' attention to follow the subsequent series. In fact, numbering according to Bob Clarke, "helped to maintain sales by creating the sense of news as a continuing activity."¹¹ It is vital to stress the importance of the corantos of the 1620s and 1630s, albeit they were not circulated regularly and dependent in most cases on the availability and amount of news, they achieved a good commercial reputation and flourished despite the critical situation of the printing industry which was under the firm control of the establishment.

Early in the 1640s, the demand for Corantos and newsbooks increased as the struggle between parliament and Charles I escalated and became discernible leading, for the first time, to an overt and unprecedented publication of domestic news and parliamentary debates. It was clear that without the solid authority of the Court of Star Chamber which was abolished in 1641¹², and most specifically, the diminishing power of the king, the printing industry was set free and became apparently out of control making newsbooks an effective means of transmitting political opinion and debate amongst the people.

It was also assumed that the English Civil War had a deep and lasting impact on the formulation of newsbooks. In addition to boosting the desire for news, it had given those newsbooks new political and economic functional dimensions as "they did something of probably even greater consequence. They selected a target reader, and addressed this reader, assuming that he shared an ideological community with the writers."¹³ It was also a commonplace amongst both parliamentarians and Royalists to use newsbooks for propagandistic purposes. While *Mercurius Aulicus* supported King and court, most London based titles, such as *Mercurius Britannicus*, aligned themselves with the parliament cause. Moreover, they displayed a wide range of subjects

¹¹ Bob Clarke, *From Grub Street to Fleet Street: An Illustrated History of English Newspapers to 1899* (UK: Ashgate Publishing 2004)15.

¹² A court of law which dates back to the medieval period that was considerably empowered during the reign of Henry VIII who used it, as James I later, as a weapon to quell any political opposition to the royal authority.

¹³ Conboy, op. cit., 26.

commenting on public life. Bob Clarke further explains, “In 1642 there were 64 separate titles, of which 30 appeared for only one issue. In 1643 the number of titles had reduced to 39, and by 1645 there were less than 30 titles in circulation.”¹⁴

Under Cromwell’s attempts to cease scandalous and unlicensed publications, a series of restrictive regulations were imposed which, indeed, failed to prevent seditious printers to find their way onto the streets. However, the end of the Interregnum, with the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660, had an adverse impact on the press which was then subjected to tight and strict mechanisms of control. It is perhaps because of the potential role of the newsbooks during the Civil War that there had been so much oppression and restriction to any form of opposition to the established authority. Meanwhile, recognising the political and economic potential of the newspaper, the royal authorities launched a number of pro-establishment titles starting with the half sheet of paper the *Oxford Gazette* in 1665, succeeded by the *London Gazette* in the following year. This latter, appearing twice a week, is considered to be the first modern form of newspaper, though the term newspaper as such was not coined till 1670.

Aside from the increasing and widespread popularity of the press, the high amount of unlicensed material in circulation proved an utter failure of the licensing system of direct official censorship that was practically ineffective. Therefore, the later period, as Professor Joad Raymond commented, “can be seen to lead directly to the journalism of the eighteenth century, when the newspaper became an established factor in the British politics.”¹⁵ Actually, the eighteenth century brought the press to another turning point. With the abolishment of the Licensing Printing Act in 1695¹⁶, the number of new titles increased again, and several successful newspapers were established. Moreover, various innovative developments were being attributed to the newspaper which was supplied on daily basis.

¹⁴ Clarke, op. cit., 17.

¹⁵ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 159.

¹⁶ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (USA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987) 6.

It could be argued that the comparatively political stability of the eighteenth century created an ideal atmosphere that laid down the foundations for newspapers to flourish, especially with the diminishing intensity of direct state surveillance. Yet, early in the century there emerged a serious debate about the necessity for a new mechanism of regulation to organize the press growing business. It seemed that the comparative success and high average circulation of newspapers were to be muzzled again by a series of restrictive financial restraints exemplified in duty stamps -best known as “Taxes on Knowledge”- which were used by government, as mass media expert Ralph Negrine declared, “to limit the growth, circulation and distribution of the press in general and of the radical press in particular.”¹⁷ The taxes were to increase at regular intervals.

Parallel to this was a pervasive increase in the unstamped papers, notably those of radical views which were dramatically outselling the stamped newspapers, leading subsequently to the debate over the viability of state managed policy. Part of the answer lies not only in the relatively intensifying readership among the large working classes of the Industrial Age, but besides, the advocates of the radical reform, who were critical of the aristocratic landed society, were irrevocably committed to their cause to challenge the status quo using a well organised network to the spread of their socialist ideals. The newspaper, then, was more than necessary to the survival of the Chartist Movement within the working population.

It could be noted that the continuous governments’ attempts had been vainly trying to blunt the spread of the radical and unstamped papers that reached their peak during the first half of the nineteenth century. The then circumstances coincided with a campaign launched by some MPs, correspondents and reformers who gave the most powerful impetus to the liberation of the press sector. They advocated that newspapers should be liberated from the clutches of the governmental control so that they can provide a free market place of ideas for the enlightenment of the people.

¹⁷ Ralph Negrine, Politics and the Mass Media in Britain, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1989) 41.

The dispute between the reformers and those who stuck to their traditional views about the press regulation was still significantly larger than the debate on any other political issue. It should be mentioned that the real motives of both sides need to be placed in the wider political context of the time. The claim that the reformers were largely motivated by libertarian ideals is debatable. Labour and media critics James Curran and Jean Seaton noted that “the parliamentary campaign for a free press was never inspired by a simple libertarian commitment to diversity of expression.”¹⁸ With the inevitable collapse of the state control over the high volume of illegal newspapers that threatened the press system as a whole, the repeal of newspaper taxation was thought necessary to the spread of the principles of free trade that would best replace the archaic and already falling mechanism of state repression.

The general point here is that the ‘free press campaign’ successfully led to the birth of the self regulatory approach after the lifting up of the advertising duty, stamp duty and paper duty during the first half of the nineteenth century. In fact, the repeal of the ‘Taxes on knowledge’¹⁹ had symbolically marked the emancipation of the press and its move into a new phase of commercialization which further helped its expansion. By the late Victorian era, Professor of journalism and politics Mick Temple commented, “a new generation of national newspapers was created and local daily papers were established in all Britain’s major towns.”²⁰

There were certainly a wide range of elements which stimulated a fairly flexible widespread of the print press. The most important factor of all is perhaps the changing nature of education in Britain which helped to spread literacy and went beyond the upper classes and the bourgeoisie, incorporating a large segment of middle class and working class population. Remarkably, “literacy rates varied across class lines with the middle classes having nearly succeeded in expelling illiteracy from the basic social networks.”²¹ With the drastic rise of a literate working class, likewise, some radical

¹⁸ James Curran and Jean Seaton, Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting and New Media in Britain, 6th ed. (London: Routledge, 2003) 32.

¹⁹ Despite the rigorous campaign against the increasing taxes on newspapers and pamphlets which reached its high in the 1830s, it was only until 1861 that all the remaining stamp duties were completely abolished.

²⁰ Mick Temple, The British Press, (USA: Open University Press, 2008) 23.

²¹ Mark Hampton, Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950 (USA: University of Illinois Press, 2004) 27.

papers, which were set to influence and presumably represent the working classes, and defend their interests, came to the surface and achieved a considerable circulation.

Furthermore, the rapid development of cities meant that England, by the 15th century, was becoming more an urban country of large populations rather than a distant rural island. As a result, there was widespread interest in promoting the press that could be mass produced. Thus, the nation was turning into more complexity and diversity; a dynamic and rapidly changing societal environment stimulated the need to a more efficient system of communication. Apparently, the old methods of news transmissions in the medieval society that were based on hand written letters and the spoken word were becoming increasingly less important.

Another key element that had a dramatic impact on the development of newspapers publication was the new technological shift in the methods of printing. It is widely assumed that printing was first conceived and developed in China. In Europe “the publishing industry can trace its antecedents to the Middle Ages when the first hand produced manuscripts were made and read by the religious elite.”²² In the middle of the fifteenth century, the revolutionary technological advancements and refinements introduced by the German Johannes Gutenberg, as it was argued by many historians, helped to facilitate an easy and comparatively rapid exchange of ideas and knowledge. The new printing machine with a movable metal type created faster and more reliable printing, and had a prominent impact on the development of news at the time. In England the merchant and printer William Caxton is credited with introducing the first printing machine in 1476. It was clear that “although printing was not journalism or even news in itself, it constituted part of the social and economic changes which would create the conditions and in which printed news and early versions of journalism could emerge and then flourish.”²³

Interesting enough is the liberating force initiated by the soaring revenues of advertising that played a crucial role in maintaining a relative political independence

²² Jane C. Stokes and Anna Reading, eds. The Media in Britain: Current Debates and Developments (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999) 10.

²³ Conboy, op. cit., 9.

of the press from the state shackles. Indeed, the growing market forces and economic prosperity accelerated the expansion of press industry, more specifically, during the second half of the nineteenth century. British New Left critic Raymond Williams claimed in his book The Long Revolution²⁴ (1961) that the expansion of the newspaper, particularly of the daily and the new emerging popular press, was an outcome of the mass advertising. It was also observed that the lack of advertising funding was instrumental in closing down several well circulated titles which were unattractive to advertisers, such as the radical *News Chronicle* and *Daily Herald* in the 1960s. It was also remarked that popular press which is concerned with the so called 'light news' and entertainment is less beneficial from advertising than the more sophisticated quality titles that are connected with serious political debates. Paradoxically, some press commentators held the view that advertising was often a counter-productive on the autonomy of the newspaper. They argued that advertisers may influence the editorial policy of their target newspapers; hence, the rise of advertising was regarded as another shift towards a more complicated and effective system of censorship. This assumption has, however, been described by others as being artificial and dubious in the absence of sturdy empirical evidence.

In sum, the early forerunners of the modern English newspapers lacked a sense of professionalism and were amateurish in essence. Moreover, the amount of political intervention in information dissemination scaled down the development of the press, which was usually used merely for propagandistic purposes, particularly by the royal authorities. Indeed, the newspaper faced consistent oppression which ranged from direct censorship, to statutory and legal control, to severe financial restraints. Nevertheless, a parallel nonstate backed press with much larger circulation was beyond the reach of government, due to a strong resistance from different segments of the public. As a result, the liberation of the press intensified and changed the nature of British journalism to become more participatory element in the political sphere.

²⁴ For further details see, Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution .1961.(Canada: Broadview Press, 2001)

1.2. Press ownership and politics

One of the most highly influential and dynamic players in the British press arena is the ownership structure. In a broader statistical view, British media landscape is heavily dominated by just a handful of gigantic media corporations and transnational firms. Such a hybrid model has been believed to help empower the owners with substantial political potential that these corporations wield. It is to be emphasised in this respect that the increased concentration of ownership into the hands of a few proprietors is a distinctive feature in the development of the British newspapers business. Indeed, similar levels of concentration existed in the magazine and periodical market, as well as, albeit to a lesser rate, in the British Television and broadcasting systems. This economic tendency might exert a paramount influence on the editorial policy of the press, and eventually hamper its proper function.

In fact, this phenomenon is not a mere coincidence, but a long-term tradition that goes back to the early beginnings of this growing business field. Increasingly, newspapers -being products of capitalist evolution- were part of a competitive marketplace. While the free market orientation is believed to lead to pluralism and diversity, it does not necessarily safeguard the objectivity and neutrality of the press. This, indeed, exemplified some of the critics' worst fears and worries about the intimate connection between the owners and the editorial practices, which might possibly deteriorate the press from its ethical frameworks in a democratic society. Regardless of the commercial and political considerations that constitute a firmly established character of the press, the newspaper sector in Britain was also supposed to have a positive social contribution and responsibility towards the civil society and the government alike. This approach idealises the freedom of press as being a cornerstone that would best facilitate the provision of a more professional journalism.

Indeed, the debate about the threat to undermine the very foundation of the democratic principles under the current economic structure of the media and the future repercussion of this tendency, which is by no means moving steadily towards more

convergence, has been a recurrent theme of debate in the UK. In order to find out possible answers to the real effects of concentrated ownership, one may first ask, who owns the press in Britain? Does it really matter who runs the press? Do proprietors influence the editorial policy and the content of the press? Equally important is the investigation of the relationship between the different players- proprietors, journalists and politicians-in the journalistic practices. This might reveal some of the clues that would help to grasp the intricate exercise of power.

There is no doubt that the overall situation of journalism nowadays has considerably changed from what was in earlier eras. Traditionally, this profession was practiced by non-professional people and consumed by somehow a limited public through print materials. The new change was, in essence, due to the huge impact of the technological revolution and electronic advancement that provided more sophisticated and instant means of communication. It seems quite reasonable that, at the time when newspapers served as the dominant communication channel, the early press barons had enjoyed a great potential to influence policy making and stand against the will of politicians. In this sense, their impact on newspaper development could not be underestimated. The barons' financial interests intermingled with their political motivation setting the ground for an economic monopoly in the press sector.

Among the early leading figures that had a great success in controlling the press and held a state of monopoly for many years was the founder of the popular press Alfred Harmsworth (ennobled later Lord Northcliffe) whose acquisition of different titles enabled him to target the different social classes. Northcliffe's mass-market *Daily Mail*, established in 1896, "sold well over 200,000 copies daily in its first years and reached half-a-million sales after three years."²⁵ Moreover, he was keenly interested in publishing cheap series of periodicals and newspapers that addressed female readers, such as the *Daily Mirror* in 1903. He was a talented journalist who sought to integrate social gossip into the content of newspapers driven by his ruthless commercial motivation that enabled him to build what was seen then as the largest periodical publishing empire in the world the 'Amalgamated Press'. With his landslide

²⁵ Negrine (1989) op. cit., 58.

success came the desire for politics, using his papers for political goals and exerting pressure on the government, a role which many political commentators considered to be behind the downfall of the Asquith Government in 1916.

It was also strikingly evident that the entrepreneurs in the newspapers business were driving it towards an increasing concentration. This trend was remarkably accelerating especially at the turn of the nineteenth century as James Curran explains:

Between 1890 and 1920 there was a rapid acceleration of newspaper chains incorporating national as well as local papers. By 1921 Lord Northcliffe controlled the Times, the Daily Mail, the Weekly (later Sunday) Dispatch and the London Evening News; his brother, Lord Rothermere, the Daily Mirror, the Sunday Pictorial, the Daily Record, the Glasgow Evening News and the Sunday mail...their brother Sir Lester Harmsworth had a chain of newspapers in the south of England. Together they owned newspaper with an aggregate circulation of over six million.²⁶

Such levels of near-monopolistic concentration were noticeable at the turn of the century which was a period of exceptional opportunity, especially under the libertarian view that Britain advocated with no clear regulatory policy. These conditions also prevailed in the following decades. More importantly, newspapers were becoming tightly interlocked with business. Hence, the commercial advertisement became a central part of finance allowing newspapers to cover their cost and achieve significant revenues. Yet, with the tremendous rise of sales, newspapers were beginning to be exposed to the commercial constraints leading therefore to a harsh competition between the newspapers over winning readers which made it increasingly momentous for new entrants into the newspaper market to survive. The media sociologist and cultural commentator Brian McNair clarifies, “by 1910, Lords Pearson, Cadbury and Northcliffe between them controlled 67 per cent of national daily circulation, establishing a trend of concentration of ownership that has persisted in the British newspaper industry ever since.”²⁷

²⁶ James Curran & Jean Seaton, op. cit., 54.

²⁷ Brian McNair, News and Journalism in the UK, 5th ed. (UK: Routledge, 2009) 87.

	% of Total Circulation	
	Morning	Evening
Northcliffe (Mail, Mirror, Times)	39	31,3
Morning Leader Group (Express, Standard)	15,5	34,5
Pearson (Leader, News)	12,4	16,8
Total	66,9	82,6

Table1. Concentration of ownership by circulation in the metropolitan press, 1910²⁸

It could be said that very little, if anything, has changed over the course of the inter-war years. The press ruled supreme and was big business still owned by a few proprietors, notably the Canadian Beaverbrook and Northcliffe's Brother Harold Harmsworth. Seemingly, the newspapers were still, as they used to be in much of their history, "mere engines of propaganda manipulated in order to further their political ambitions."²⁹ This feature was likely to prevail within the social and political unrest that characterized the 1930s. Apart from the rising challenge of the newly established British Broadcasting Company that threatened the press supremacy, the circulation war between newspapers was extremely fierce, and paradoxically reflected a political consensus between the barons who were uniformly conservative and generally hostile towards the Labour party and trade union activism.

After Harmsworth's death in 1922, his brother Rothermere, a firmly anti-Socialist, took control of the *Daily Mail* in 1922. Thus, Beaverbrook (Known also as Max Aitkin) controlled *The Daily Express* starting from 1916. The two barons seemed willingly to continue to exploit the possibilities of their newspapers on political grounds for the whole period. The same concentrated structure existed for the regional press which was dominated by the Berry brothers, Lords Kamrose and Kemsley. These figures were the chief players who held large shares in the press business then.

²⁸ Negrine (1989) op. cit., 54.

²⁹ James Curran & Jean Seaton, op. cit., 52.

Significant changes have, however, occurred in the aftermath of the Second World War. The press sales dropped dramatically as measured by the percentage of circulation. A number of titles were not profitable and ultimately closed down. In fact, there were several elements that contributed in this unfortunate situation. For example, the steady decline of readership, the harsh competition between the different newspapers, and especially the fierce battle between the national dailies and regional papers, in addition to the technological advancement that led to the emergence of Television and Radio, which attracted bigger audiences. All these elements could be taken to indicate how the press was relegated to a secondary position as a news source. Nonetheless, the newspaper maintained a fairly strong position and was still an important element for political and social change. Within this uncertain and frustrated market environment, newspapers commitment and allegiance for political parties that had been a common practice for quite a long time was becoming increasingly less fashionable.

The illustrative and comparative figures displayed below emphasise once more the fact that although there had been some change in proprietors tendencies, except for the Rothermeres who stayed in the scene for four generations, high monopolistic patterns do still exist with News International in the lead privileged with the biggest selling circulation, notably in the low market. Regardless of this form of ownership, the likelihood of the different groups to merge is also a viable possibility.

	2004	1961
NEWS INTERNATIONAL (RUPERT MURDOCH)		
Sun	3,378,000	n/a
The Times	609,000	253,000
News of The World	3,706,000	6,643,000
Sunday Times	1,289,000	994,000
TRINITY MIRROR		
Daily Mirror	1,817,000	4,562,000
Sunday Mirror	1,570,000	n/a
People	1,022,000	5.450,000
NORTHERN & SHELL (RICHARD DISMOND)		
Daily Express	879,000	4,329,000
Daily Star	919,000	n/a
Sunday Express	914,000	4,458,000

Daily Star Sunday	500,000	n/a
DAILY MAIL & GENERAL TRUST (LORD ROTHEREMERE)		
DAILY MAIL	2,320,000	2,610,000
Mail on Sunday	2,336,000	n/a
PRESS HOLDINGS INTERNATIONAL (BRACLAY BROTHERS)		
Daily Telegraph	871,000	1,249,000
Sunday Telegraph	663,000	700,000
GUARDIAN MEDIA GROUP (THE SCOTT TRUST)		
Guardian	345,000	245,000
Observer	413,000	726,000
INDEPENDENT NEWS & MEDIA (SIR ANTHONY O'REILLY)		
INDEPENDENT	228,000	n/a
Independent on Sunday	175,000	n/a
PEARSON		
Financial Times	395,000	133,000

Table.2. The main press groups in July 2004 with their owners and circulation compared to 1961.³⁰

The recent commonly cited example of press concentration is the American based company News International, a subsidiary of News Corporation owned by the naturalized American Rupert Murdoch whose movement to Wapping marked the end of Fleet Street as the physical centre of the British press.³¹ Murdoch has been ideologically committed and involved in politics and very well known for his arrangement of private meetings with influential politicians. He bought several failing newspapers and made them into an enormously profitable chain, such as the mass circulated *News of the World* (1968) and *Sun* (1969). Indeed, he completely turned them around to become the biggest selling tabloids in the UK. Moreover, he acquired *The Times* and *Sunday Times* in 1981 which subsequently raised deeper and more disturbing concerns. However, the group's reputation has been severely hit by allegations of telephone hacking activities and police bribery scandals during the 2000s.

³⁰ Anthony Sampson, *Who Runs this Place? The Anatomy of Britain in the 21st Century* (UK: John Murray Publishers, 2005) 230.

³¹ Located in the centre of London and the first place where printing publications flourished early in the sixteenth century. It was traditionally seen as the centre of the press industry till the 1980s when more advanced technological printing devices were employed in Wapping and Canary Wharf.

Moreover, Murdoch's newspapers were accused of tailoring their content to curry favour with Tony Blair's government in 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections. This was evident through the overt back up of the last Iraq invasion. Initially, one would ask whether it was a mere coincidence, as British journalist and writer Anthony Sampson noticed, "in 2003 nearly all his 175 editors across the world echoed his support for the war."³² Traditionally, Murdoch's press followed a right-wing political stance starting with its applaud for Thatcher's victory in 1979 to Major's in 1992. Its sudden swing behind the New Labour party prior to the 1997 general election raised considerable fuss.

It is important to stress the fact that the press was largely growing out of the bowels of politics, and therefore wielded immense political power as it represented the appropriate channel for politicians to rely on when communicating with the public. Remarkably, the linkage between the political and journalistic spheres was deep and complicated. Thus, there has been a long tradition of mutual influence. Indeed, the early press barons of the twentieth century had significant impact on the press business. Instances of the alleged alliances between politicians, owners and journalists which were both fluid and personal, can be traced at different periods. Just like Alfred Harmsworth was appointed Director for Propaganda in Lloyd George Liberal government during the First World War, Beaverbrook was very active and joined the wartime cabinet as Minister of Information in 1918, and later Minister of Supply during the Second World War. Ralph Negrine observed that, "there were six or fewer newspaper proprietors in the House of Commons .By 1880 that figure more than doubled to 14 and continued to rise. From 1892 to 1910, there were between 20 and 30 newspaper proprietors in the Commons."³³ Therefore, some British politicians like Lloyd George and his supporters, who purchased the *Daily Chronicle* in 1918, seemed keenly interested to have the press on their side.

After all, it could be argued that the possession of a number of newspapers was normally a matter of necessity rather than prestige, and stemming from the need to

³² Sampson, op. cit., 234.

³³ Negrine (1989) op. cit., 43-44.

design a more strategic approach with regard to communication management. The relationship between politicians and journalists, the specialist in political journalism Mick Temple explained, “went beyond the payment of bribes: then, as now, there was a symbiotic relationship, especially as politicians began to understand the importance of the press as a conduit to the ever-fickle public.”³⁴

It is widely believed among media commentators that while early barons were directly involved in politics, most if not all, proprietors of the second half of the century were commercially motivated in the first place. Meanwhile, they were real prototypes of zealous capitalists who aimed at a large scale of control and monopoly and much of the time were involved in propaganda and the government. It could be safe then to advocate that the owners did shape not only the press, but wielded a nerve-wrecking pressure on politicians and therefore were themselves un-elected political actors.

A long outstanding feature in the British press, which has been considered by some to be undemocratic, was the high partisanship in favour of the right wing political parties. During much of the twentieth century, Labour did not seem to attract the attention of the press except for a few titles like the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Herald* which came to an end in the early 1960s. Arguably, the press hit Labour reputation on several occasions, and pursued a continuous assault on its socialist foundations, most specifically, during election times (see Table 3 in the following page) that many Labour leaders complained about.

Partisanship patterns were becoming remarkable starting from the nineteenth century when objectivity was twisted to suit political ends. It was an era during which newspapers were free to make their alliance with political parties, especially when politicians began to be fully aware of the potential of the newspapers to receive a favourable coverage and propaganda. Mick Temple again argued that, “at the start of the nineteenth century, journalists mostly reported news in a biased and openly partisan way: papers generally supported a political party and tailored news to suit the

³⁴ Temple, op. cit., 12.

party line.”³⁵ Radical sentiment then was enhanced by a number of relatively successful working class newspapers, such as the *Political Register*, *Republican* and *Poor Man’s Guardian* which achieved considerable circulation.

1945-79

General election of year	Conservative			Labour			Conservative difference excess over Labour difference	
	(a) Share of circulation	(b) Share of votes	(a)-(b) Difference	(a) Share of circulation	(b) Share of votes	(a)-(b) Difference		
1945	52	40	(+)12	35	48	(-) 13	(+) 25	}AV = 19
1950	50	43	(+) 7	40	46	(-) 6	(+) 13	
1951	52	48	(+) 4	39	49	(-) 10	(+) 14	}AV = 11
1955	52	50	(+) 2	40	46	(-) 6	(+) 8	
1959	54	49	(+) 5	38	44	(-) 6	(+) 11	
1964	57	43	(+) 14	42	44	(-) 2	(+) 16	}AV= 14
1966	55	42	(+) 13	43	48	(-) 5	(+) 18	
1970	55	46	(+) 9	44	43	(+) 1	(+) 8	
1974 Feb	71	38	(+) 33	31	37	(-) 6	(+) 39	}AV=31
1974 Oct	47	36	(+) 11	31	39	(-) 8	(+) 19	
1979	65	44	(+) 21	27	37	(-) 10	(+) 31	
1983	74	44	(+) 30	22	28	(-) 6	(+) 36	

Table 3. Conservative and Labour share of national daily newspaper circulation’s editorial endorsement and share of national votes in general elections.³⁶

While the existence of bias has been fully proved, its nature is still questionable. Partisanship stance might be related to a constellation of different factors that could have a direct or indirect impact in shaping the paper’s editorial preferences. But what was substantially remarkable over the more recent period has been a weakening in the orthodox rigid affinity to political parties. Many conservative newspapers dropped their traditional affiliations and moved to endorse ‘New Labour’ in 2001. Murdoch’s

³⁵ Ibid, 26.

³⁶ Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media in Britain* (USA: Constable, 1983) 12.

newspapers were not an exception, but the norm that other right titles followed, such as the *Daily Express*. Is this sudden shift derived from a sense of responsibility over the revival of the ideal social responsibility of the press? Are papers tempered by financial considerations? Or is it the owner's own political convictions that interfere in producing the editorial ideological choices?

Broadly speaking, it has been clear that the concentration of media ownership has always been a problematic that raises a number of issues at different levels, and it is assumed of engendering inevitably a number of harmful and terrible trends in the long term. One of the most disturbing concerns is the limitation of opinion diversity. Such a threat, which results from high level of concentration, has been feared by many as a serious obstacle to the moral autonomy and freedom of press that is associated, in the first place, with the need for pluralism and diversity, both in newspapers content as well as their owners. It is a recurrent theme that has been considered to be central by the successive established Royal Commissions on the Press. Media scholar Gillian Doyle claimed that "democracy would be threatened if any single voice, with the power to propagate a single political viewpoint, were to become too dominant."³⁷ In another sense, the press owners could, in a way or another, interfere in editorial decisions in order to protect and promote their own business interests. It is conceivable that there is a real danger when the press is run by a limited number of individual owners, or companies that would potentially reduce the circulation of diverse viewpoints.

This line of argument has also been endorsed by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman³⁸ in their system propaganda theory providing a critical account of corporate ownership of media outlets. Central to this thesis is the fact that mass media control content in order to serve the ends of the dominant elite (particularly politicians and business men). Effective censorship according to their propaganda model occurs

³⁷ Gillian Doyle, Media Ownership: The Economics and Politics of Convergence and Concentration in the UK and European Media (London: SAGE, 2002) 12.

³⁸ see, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent: The political Economy of Mass Media (USA: Pantheon Books, 2008)

through the ownership concentration. In short, media ownership is viewed as an effective propaganda filter that determines the output of the press.

While British policymakers were still convinced to preserve the freedom of press from any legal or statutory restrictions they turned, in the wake of the Second World War, to establish the Royal Commissions on the Press as a regulatory body. The recommendations were to stop any single organization having excessive influence over the media to ensure diversity, and that no one owner has a dominant position both commercially and politically.

In this broad reflection on the economic structure of the British press during the twentieth century, it has been clear that the high level of press concentrated ownership was the most important aspect that featured the British newspaper business. This market condition was also regarded as the direct cause behind the overt political bias in favour of the right policies and interests. The radical press, on the other hand, was apparently limited in circulation, and hardly survived due to the lack of sufficient funding and financial support. Indeed, many questions were raised about the journalistic ethical standards and press objectivity in such a circumstance. Therefore, a number of regulatory measures and proposals were eventually considered, as will be shown in the section that follows, to limit the negative impact of ownership concentration on the press ideological biases.

1.3. The regulation of the press

The birth of the newspaper and its growth to its recent status were challenging. The British press confronted the power of censorship and repression at different stations of its development. The legal constraints were exercised by the successive governments on a large scale, most notably during the early years of the emergence of newspaper as a constant unit in the British political life. The goal was to prevent the diffusion of information and news and control the flow of public knowledge as to contain it within the political elite, as Alexander Andrews explains:

Dependent as it was on the progress of public enlightenment, of government liberality, of general liberty and knowledge; checked by the indifference of a people or the caprices of a party; suppressed by a king, persecuted by a parliament, harassed by a licenser, burnt by a hangman, and trampled by a mob, the newspaper has been slow in climbing to its present high.³⁹

Interesting developments have followed on quickly and the print press, by the mid of the nineteenth century, became no longer subject to any specific form of state control on its content and political affiliations. However, with the political frustration of the early years of the Second World War combined with the noticeable rise of the radical spirit among the labour force, things seemed less rosy. The British government under Churchill's leadership generated considerable support for legislation and sought that the press needed to be sorted out with a new form of regulation; the Home Secretary was privileged with substantial personal power, such as the right to cease any newspaper which might hamper war related efforts. The proposal of censorship of the press, especially the leftist newspapers, such as the well circulated *Daily Mirror* that voiced an outspoken critical stance, intensified the dispute about the freedom of press, a debate that had characterized much of the press history ending with a marvellous triumph of the libertarian voice.

³⁹ Andrews, op. cit., 1.

It sounds quite reasonable that concerns about the overwhelming dominance of the press by its proprietors and their explicit interventionist styles came to the surface again by the time of immense involvement of the press, not as an illegitimate pry but rather a partner to mould the national political choices and agenda-setting. In the aftermath of the Second World War, media critics and left-wing politicians launched a direct attack on conglomerate ownership to reduce their effect and to regain press credibility. Self-regulation thereupon had to be made more rigorous.

Under Attlee's Labour government, a number of measures were proposed which gave birth to the Royal Commissions on the Press in 1947. The Commission was charged solely to guarantee the accuracy of news representation and "to inquire into the control, management and ownership of the newspaper and periodical press and the news agencies, including the financial structure and the monopolistic tendencies in control and to make recommendations thereon."⁴⁰ The argument, therefore, was concerned with exactly what would be the consequences of the ongoing concentrated ownership in the long run. While the commission expressed its pro-free market press and underpinned its preference for a voluntary self-regulation, it was not reluctant to accuse the owners and managers of being the only responsible about the excessive bias, particularly with regard to the mass titles, that featured their everyday approach. The Royal Commission recommended the formation of a General Council of the Press in 1953 a self-regulatory and non-statutory body that, in spite of its more activist approach, has been labelled as weak and ineffective body and faced ongoing criticism.

The economic motion of the press in the sixties raised again a debate about the state of newspapers leading to the establishment of the Second Royal Commission in 1961 which, unlike its predecessor, required that the government had to intervene in order to block further newspaper concentration. Eventually, anti-monopoly legislation was passed in 1965 prohibiting substantial purchases of newspapers by big owners and companies. This, however, was not effectively implemented; part of the answer lies in the inability of the Royal Commission to enforce its recommendations within a

⁴⁰ Ralph Negrine, Television and the Press since 1945 (UK: Manchester University Press, 1998) 130.

minimalist and fragmented approach. In short, the commission did not have a clear policy and power to implement its recommendations on the ground.

Following Labour resentment over press impartiality and continuous concentration the 1974 Royal Commission on the Press was established suggesting some strengthening of anti-monopoly legislation. Paradoxically, it was believed that Prime Minister Harold Wilson himself encouraged Baron Roy Thomson⁴¹ to purchase *The Times* in 1966 aiming at more positive press coverage in return. The same scenario was to happen with Mrs. Thatcher who allowed Rupert Murdoch to own the same newspaper (*The Times*) despite his acquisition of well circulated newspapers like the *Sun*. The weight of political intervention echoed the weakness and inconsistency of the Royal Commissions.

Indeed, the political rationale for regulation has been expressed most clearly in Press Complaints Commission that has been established in 1991. It applies a Code of Practice consisting of a set of recommendations that relate notably to accuracy and intrusion into privacy. It was believed that the successive Royal Commissions that shared a common insistence upon truthfulness, diversity and sensationalism did not introduce a coherent and comprehensive policy. But there had been a wide range of regulations (either entirely or largely independent). As noted, the development of the print media was deeply entwined with a continuous struggle to preserve the liberal democratic rights when the old authoritarian and direct state control on the press had been widely regarded as a restriction on freedom of speech. This is exactly why there had been no attempt to establish a comprehensive statute concerning the press.

In sum, this brief historical survey has attempted to reveal that the growth of the British press was essentially tied to the rise of the industrial bourgeoisie and the growth of mercantile capitalism which effectively shaped the press business ever since. After the emancipation of the press in the late seventeenth century, the investment in the newspaper business was becoming highly profitable and property

⁴¹ A successful Canadian media proprietor and entrepreneur and 1st baron of Fleet in 1964 after he acquired British citizenship.

relations were moving towards more a concentrated structure. This tendency accelerated within the free market orientation and the rise of advertisement revenues in addition to the absence of comprehensive statutory regulation, which eventually raised a long dispute about the ethical standards within which the press should operate. It has also been evident that the press state relationship was in a constant change and was characterized in much of its history by direct control and repression. Thus, the combination of restrictive acts used by successive governments to curb the power of the print media led consequently to a campaign calling for the myth of press freedom from the state which in fact stepped big strides in the twentieth century.

The arguments discussed so far provide a number of important theoretical implications. First, the rise of the 'press barons' played a massive part in a relatively high ownership concentration in the press sector which led a number of authors to suggest that such high levels of ownership would enhance their owners' interest and therefore may represent a constant threat to the diversity of opinion and freedom of expression. Second, ideology- taking the term in its broadest sense- has been, in a way or another, incorporated in the press which proved to be an effective propagandistic apparatus. Third, an inadequate legislative and enforcement framework might also hamper the political independence of the press. Therefore, the development of legislation can not merely be directed to legal aspects, but has to be considered in a much broader framework by considering, for example, the repercussions of monopoly, representation of facts and the use of press for propagandistic purposes. Finally, what has remained entirely un-investigated is the pivotal role of journalists who are capable, through using their journalistic skills and strategies, to direct and define the message that they intend to disseminate, their choices of the stories to be covered and the ways in which they are covered constitute the core subject that will be discussed in some detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Two

**The Language of Political
Journalism**

2.1. News and the social construction of reality

It is obvious that journalists and editors, in recent days, are becoming increasingly more powerful than ever, playing a vital role in the production and reproduction of news. However, little had changed about news gathering routines and journalistic practices that remained a mere tradition within the media society. Whilst the assumption that the press owners can actually exert considerable influence on the making up of news can not be fully ignored, journalists and editors still have a paramount responsibility in constructing the news texts. The American sociologist Herbert Gans further explains that “news is not simply a compliant supporter of elites or the Establishment or the ruling class; rather, it views nation and society through its own set of values and with its own conception of the good social order.”⁴² Thus, they hold, as advocated by Professor Kevin Barnhurst, “an advisory and adjunct power, but it is power nonetheless. When news reports interpret war as a reasonable alternative, for example, the impact of such ideas can contribute to state action that destroys lives.”⁴³ It is precisely at this level that, in Roger Fowler’s terminology *skewed*⁴⁴ representation of facts and the mechanisms and patterns of distortion used in the print press can be more accurately observed, and therefore able to be empirically measured.

Before setting the background for news analysis, it seems quite relevant to place a special emphasis on the complex nature of news and the ways in which it is being expressed and reproduced by the press. Taking into account that the content of the newspaper is eventually consumed by relatively a large compliant public who consider what is being published as an objective reflection of reality. In this respect, the notion of reality is a key concept in the examination of news accuracy, bias and objectivity which themselves constitute a fundamental part in the nature of ideology

⁴² Herbert J. Gans, Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time (New York: Pantheon Books, 2004) 62.

⁴³ Kevin G. Barnhurst, “News Ideology in the Twentieth Century,” Diffusion of the News Paradigm, 1850–2000, eds. Høyer & H. Pöttker Gothenburg (Sweden: Nordicom, 2005) 239–62.

⁴⁴ The use of the word “skewed” in the study of ideology in the news might be more appropriate than the more straightforward expression “biased representation” without neglecting the possibility of bias as such and its relationship with reality and truth.

and propaganda that a given journalistic text may promote. Indeed, news production is guided by the common beliefs, opinions and understandings of journalists who are themselves influenced by the variant bureaucratic, political and socio-cultural factors acting upon them.

The central purpose of this chapter is to outline a theoretical framework to be followed as a method of analysis in an attempt to find out satisfactory answers to the questions that have been raised earlier. Focus, then, will be directed first towards the identification of a proper definition of the term 'News', its components and the ways in which it is being socially constructed, in addition to a detailed explanation of the theoretical approach, and its methodological tools adopted in analyzing the content of the British quality newspapers. It also aims to shed light on how ideology and the propagandistic features articulate in the news. Moreover, particular attention will be attributed to the agenda-setting theory, a field of research in media studies which has received serious academic interest and stimulated purposeful debates about the framing processes and their actual impact on the audience. In this respect, the following cluster of questions could be relevant and worth answering: What makes news? What are the newspapers' priorities (newvalues)? What decides the content and style of the newspaper? What strategies are employed? And what is the message they convey to their audience? In brief, this chapter will try to show where and how ideologies are being encoded in the news reports through the use of language. The approach will be based on the technical tools of discourse analysis set forth by some leading CDA scholars-with special reference to Roger Fowler and Teun A. Van Dijk.

Parallel to the several recent developments in the form of the newspaper, there has also been a continuous change in the content focus. A number of scholars, such as Professor Bob Franklin in his book Newszak and News Media,⁴⁵ have pointed out the tremendous shift from serious reporting, or the so called 'hard news', towards gossip, sensationalism and celebrity news notably with the tremendous rise of popular culture in the early twentieth century. This change was exactly what gave birth to the tabloid press. Indeed, this switch carried with it the implication that news is a recurrent and

⁴⁵ Bob Franklin, Newszak and News Media (London: Arnold, 1997) 4.

daily phenomenon regardless of its newness, or importance. This view goes beyond the narrowest commonly used definition of news that limits this latter to whether there is a new and important event worth to be published, which indicates that the concept of news is fluid and somehow changeable.

Accordingly, whether news is a mere reflection of reality or a product of news organization, that is to say journalists and editors, is a concern that has been elaborated on by media critics Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester who stated that media are “not an objective reporter of events but an active player in the constitution of events.”⁴⁶ Seemingly, any purposeful discussion of what constitutes ‘News’ must be informed by the underlying assumptions inherent in the concept. Therefore, it is necessary to stress that the manufacturing of news is a multidimensional process and can be approached from different political, sociological and cultural perspectives.

So far, a large body of theoretical research has been conducted on news content and the different organizational and ideological forces that shape it, albeit the various and multiple approaches are not wholly separated. The ideal journalistic conceptualization of news as being a typical reflection of reality has been challenged by the works of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966)⁴⁷ which were grounded within a sociological perspective. With the introduction of the social construction of reality concept, attention was directed towards a more critical stance. The suggestion, then, is that while news possesses a point of view of the journalists who are capable of constructing them by adding, editing, and changing information they are rarely neutral, and therefore could be seen as a production of reality instead.

Broadly speaking, news production can be defined as a systematic and consistent process of choices, selection and transformation of events which are assigned a certain meaning and interpretation based on a set of personal, or shared societal beliefs

⁴⁶ Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, “Accidents, Scandals and Routines: Resources for Insurgent Methodology,” *Critical Sociology* 25 (1973): 247–259.

⁴⁷For further information see, Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge, 1966 (USA: Penguin Books, 1991)

knowledge and opinions. Shoemaker and Reese (1996)⁴⁸ clarify that news routines are a series of repeated practices and forms that journalists follow to deliver, in a professional way, the most acceptable product to the public. In this respect, journalists implicitly or explicitly, reproduce images of the world that give events particular meanings and connotations. In other words, the images created by the press do not simply reflect the world; they engage in practices that define reality. In short, events which are being reported undergo a process of selection and transformation before being made for public consumption. This process *per se* follows numerous criteria of beliefs and ideas which can be socio-cultural, political, economic and even historical conditions and not necessarily an abstract reflection of facts.

It is precisely the final phase of news production that undergoes an intricate process of formulation which is influenced by a bewildering array of structural factors, ideological, social, cultural, political and even personal whims. Practically speaking, the decision making process of selecting events and presenting them to the public has also to consider some technical restraints, for example, the limits on the time and space. Moreover, a journalist selects a particular event from a number of others to be reported. In most cases the journalistic text that reports an event undergoes major stylistic changes by the writer, or might be copied directly if it is taken from supposedly credible sources like the court or police. However, in most cases it is the job of the journalists to reformulate and summarise the different aspects of a given situation by highlighting only the most important information. This strategy involves several practical techniques of deletion, presupposition, generalising and transformation. Importantly, the selection of what is presumably considered to be the most compelling information the audience is required to know about is a very subjective act, because it is assumed to involve a great scale of personal judgement and evaluation.

This view has been widely adopted by a number of mass communication scholars. British sociologist Stuart Hall and others, in an article entitled: “*The social construction of news*,” define news as “the end-product of a complex process which

⁴⁸ Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, Mediating the Message (NY: Longman, 1996) 105.

begins with a systematic sorting and selecting of events and topics according to a socially constructed set of categories.”⁴⁹ By calling attention to some matters while dismissing or downplaying others, the press is deliberately controlling what its target audience think about. Moreover, the way an event is being reported is also questionable. The press could present stories with possible interpretations telling its readers not only what to think about, but also how to think about a certain covered event, and in this way contributes largely in enhancing one sided view of reality that might be considerably false and distorted. It should here be noticed that instances of ideological biases could be more discernible and possibly measured at the level of language and discourse. This will be treated in more detail in this chapter.

Similarly, the change that a journalist attributes to his text is not solely semantic, but it is stylistic as well, because language offers the possibility of saying the same thing in many different ways. For example, the vocabulary choice, the inclusion of stereotypes and labels, the recurrent use of exaggeration and metaphors will have a paramount effect on the general comprehension of the reported event. Obviously, it is fundamentally basic to explore and investigate the link between language and ideology, because language is the medium that provides the representation of reality and a specific world view. The British linguist Roger Fowler elaborated on this theme by arguing that “News is a representation of the world in language; because language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of values, social and economic in origin, on whatever is represented.”⁵⁰ To put it more precisely, it is not language *per se* that delineates the ideological features, but rather the language use in specific ways by those who want to exercise various modes of persuasion on others either for social, political or economic gains. This position was similarly endorsed by the British literary theorist Terry Eagleton who adds that “it concerns the actual uses of language between particular human subjects for the production of specific effects.”⁵¹ As in semiotics, meanings cannot exist in isolation, the social contextual dimension of any

⁴⁹ Stewart Hall, et al., “The Social Construction of News,” Media Studies: A Reader, eds. Paul Marris and Sue Thornham (UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) 424.

⁵⁰ Roger Fowler, Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press (UK: Routledge, 1991) 4.

⁵¹ Terry Eagleton, Ideology: An Introduction (UK: Verso, 1991) 9.

discursive discourse (language use), either verbal or written, is therefore fundamental in the overall understanding of the ideological processes.

Mass media professionals strategically attempt to select stories and make their own decision about the aspects of selected stories. One would ask, then, what makes an event newsworthy for the journalist and readers as well? And what guides the inclusion and exclusion of events? And why? Of primary relevance was the work of the Norwegian researchers Johannes Galtung and Marie Ruge⁵² that had clarified a set of multiple variables that potentially affect and intervene in the process of news production. They set up a model containing a check list of factors which best defines news worthiness and the weight of events that will be eventually news events. News values, critical discourse specialist Professor Teun A. Van Dijk argues, "reflect economic, social, and ideological values in the discourse reproduction of society through the media."⁵³ Working as a filter, these features largely help to determine whether an event should be viable to be reported or not. That is to say, the more an event matches the criteria, the more likely it would be news worthy. These parameters are classified as follows:

F1 Frequency (incidents of relatively short term time-span best fit the frequency of the press)

F2 Threshold (the scale of a given event and the extent of its impact on people)

F2.1 Absolute intensity

F2.2 Intensity increase

F3 Unambiguity (the more an event is made simple for the public the likely it attracts more attention)

F4 Meaningfulness (issues or events that refer to the culture of the audience)

F4.1 Cultural proximity

F4.2 Relevance

F5. Consonance (journalists tend to cover what might correspond to their expectations about a particular event or incident)

⁵² Norwegian Sociologists Johannes Galtung and Marie Ruge pioneered in introducing the concept of news worthiness in the field of mass communication studies early in the 1960s.

⁵³ Teun A. Van Dijk, News as Discourse (USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988) 120-121.

F5.1 Predictability

F5.2 Demand

F6.unexpectedness (sudden and non ordinary events are likely to attract more attention than other usual ones)

F6.1 Unpredictability

F6.2 Scarcity

F7. Continuity (subjects that are likely to continuously engender new dilemmas and other related issues)

F8. Composition (refers to the journalistic imperative to provide a balanced coverage that incorporates different kinds of stories and events)

F9. Reference to elite nations (powerful nations or states)

F10. Reference to elite people (such as celebrities, politicians, actors ...etc)

F11. Reference to persons

F12. Reference to something negative ⁵⁴(bad news is likely to be more reported than good news)

Certainly, wars and conflicts, as in the examples in this study, satisfy a number of the above listed elements, most significantly, because of their intensity which impinges on the national security and interests of the British nation. They are also expected to engender much negative news stories of human tragedy and suffering which subsumes them into the 'Bad News' category. Thus, they refer to powerful nations and elite people (USA/ UK, presidents, politicians...) whose actions could leave tremendous impact on the world stage. Above all, both the Iraq War and Ulster's issue left a deep division among the international community driving continuous political disputes and opposing arguments about the situation in each case.

Regardless of the degree of relevance of the elements mentioned above, it must be emphasized here that the selection of what should be addressed is a constant feature in any given discourse. Thus, the use of the word 'bias' to describe the press output with regard to, for example, the two subjects of this research work, might be somehow

⁵⁴ Johannes Galtung, and Marie Ruge, "Structuring and selecting news," The manufacture of news: Social problems, deviance and the mass media, eds. Stanley Cohen and Jack young (London: Constable, 1973) 62-72.

inappropriate. Roger Fowler again points out the fact that “anything that is said or written about the world is articulated from a particular ideological position.”⁵⁵This is simply because no representation of the ‘world out there’ can be totally neutral or objective.

Acting as gatekeepers, editors and journalists depict images of a given subject and their assigned roles and functions trying to produce a text which makes the reader holds the same attitudes/values as theirs; in other words, they provide readers with an idiosyncratic background for understanding these images and the acceptability of the values that they want to disseminate in order to challenge/maintain the mainstream ideology. The partisanship of the press to conservatism or leftist doctrines, especially during the 1970s and 1980s in Britain, as mentioned in the first chapter, could provide vivid instances of propaganda and ideological biases.

The press, therefore, to the majority of its readers, constitutes a place of honesty and credibility where certain ideas and opinions are circulated as the truth, or at least the most acceptable depiction of truth. It is one of the most efficient tools of media in the promotion of certain concepts and can effectively serve as an instrument to win the public support and approval for those activist groups or individuals engaged in the dissemination of their own ideas and interests: politicians, businessmen, scholars, religious groups, military men and so on. Taking into consideration that a large scale of the public take what is being reported for granted, because what lies behind the text is sometimes tacit and hence hard to be easily observed. There, however, is still room for oppositional reading.

In brief, the notion of news as being the product of socially constructed reality is the platform upon which our argument will be founded. It was abundantly clear that news production is a process of selection and interpretation of happenings rather than a typical reflection of reality, which eventually lead readers to ascribe specific meanings and understandings to what has been reported by the press. This is a key component in the concept of ideology that will be explored in what follows.

⁵⁵ Fowler (1991) op. cit., 10.

2.2. Ideology and propaganda in the news

It is not the aim of this chapter to cover all the notions and the numerous influences that grounded the perspectives related to the concept of ideology. Thus, the issue of propaganda could not be considered as a separate entity, or in isolation from ideology. This is partly due to the large amount of scholarly literature on this subject and its idiosyncratic complexity. Therefore, the purpose is to find out the multiple ways in which explicit and tacit ideological processes function in the news discourse to impose a particular world view while, consciously or subconsciously, undermine others. Ideology, then, will be approached within the bounds that fall into the media framework in order to best serve the purpose of this research work. That is to say, to find out manifestations of ideology in the news written discourse and their manipulating effects on the public understanding.

It should be mentioned, however, that the ambiguity and elusiveness which encapsulate the meaning of ideology and ideological processes, even within media perspectives, is a concern that in fact requires a very careful examination of the term and its related connotations. It seems that is undeniably impossible to sustain a firmly non-ideological position this is simply because there is no totally neutral standpoint from which one can talk about what exactly ideology means. Very generally speaking ideology can be defined, as media sociologists David Croteau and William Hoynes put it, “a system of meaning that helps define and explain the world and that makes value judgments about that world. Ideology is related to concepts such as worldview, belief system, and values, but it is broader than those terms.”⁵⁶

A concise historical overview of the intellectual roots of ideology is probably needed to delineate the most ambiguous, multiple connotations and lacunae that have been assigned to this concept since its first use in post revolutionary France. Originally, the term ideology has been coined by the French rationalist philosopher

⁵⁶ David Croteau and William Hoynes, Media Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences (London: Pine Forge Press, 1997) 159-160.

Destutt de Tracy as a 'science of ideas', a new science which was designed to be concerned mainly with the study of ideas and sensations out of the orthodox metaphysical confines. While Destutt's secular contribution was set to organise the civic life during the de-Christianization of the French society,⁵⁷ the work on ideology had been extensive and massively used in a myriad of ways. It was subsequently taken up by different disciplines of social sciences and other related fields of research just to acquire a variety of meanings and interpretations, which are not necessarily related to one another, leading therefore to a considerable terminological flexibility.

The most serious traditional considerations of ideology stemmed from the Marxist materialist understanding of reality. Indeed, the Marxist paradigm outlined a comprehensive approach which is strictly grounded within historical and socioeconomic perspectives that employed the concept in the analysis of the nature and impact of class domination and struggle. This theory, therefore, attributed a firmly scratched and negative conceptualisation of ideology. Interestingly, a number of subsequent Marxist oriented studies attempted to explore the ideological processes and mechanisms in the news and media based on this outlook. However, in spite of the subsequent refinements, it remained a theoretical model which is dependent on a more abstract philosophical background, rather than on a rigid empirical foundation.

In brief, Karl Marx and his advocates claimed that the bourgeoisie -whose ideology is the dominant one - used misleading categories to manipulate the oppressed labour force and control the societal beliefs and values in order to serve their own interests. As it has been mentioned in the first chapter, since the elite control the media industry they use it as a tool of social control in order preserve the status quo of power relations that, of course, serve to maintain their dominance and the subordination of the other classes. This claim frequently reverberated in The German Ideology by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, as quoted by Christopher J. Arthur in the following:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class which is the ruling material force in society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the

⁵⁷ For further information see, Hans Barth, Truth and Ideology (USA: University of California Press, 1976)

same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.⁵⁸

It seems plausible, then, to emphasise the fact that ideology, or more specifically the dominant ideology, in a given society is not limited solely to the economic or political variables, but works also within the societal norms of the community which are of course deep-seated historical accumulations. There is fundamentally a considerable agreement among a specific social grouping to share an instantiated register of cultural values, ordained norms and knowledge that enable them to perceive and interpret things in a peculiar manner which might be substantially different from that of other groups. The socio-cultural dimension of ideologies has been commented on by Professor Claire Kramsch in Language and Culture (1998) who sought to establish an explicit and direct connection between ideology and culture. She indicated the relevance of the cultural dimension in discourse processing by declaring that:

Discourse communities, constituted, by common purpose, common interests, and beliefs; implicitly share a stock of prior texts and ideological points of view that have developed over time. These in turn encourage among their members common norms of interaction with, interpretation of, texts that may be accepted or rejected by the members of these communities.⁵⁹

As far as Britain is concerned, the mainstream ideology, or in Norman Fairclough's words, the '*ideological common sense*' tend to idealise certain concepts such as, capitalism, free market orientations, and individualism. These are some of the long-outstanding values that have been continuously re-affirmed and promoted against other truly non welcomed values such as socialism, communism and dependency throughout much of the history of the nation. However, it is vital to mention that this ideological tendency is massively manufactured and distributed by consent, or as the Italian Neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci puts it *hegemonic* means of persuasion,⁶⁰ rather than coercion and physical violence. The naturalization and legitimization of the existing, strictly speaking, unequal and highly polarized power and community

⁵⁸ Christopher John Arthur, ed. The German Ideology (USA: International Publishers, 1970) 64.

⁵⁹ Claire J. Kramsch, Language and Culture (UK: Oxford University Press, 1998) 62.

⁶⁰ For further information see, Norman Fairclough, Language and Power, 2nd ed.(UK: Pearson Education limited, 2001)

relations in favour of the minority bourgeoisie class- the Establishment and the corporate- against the majority working classes, is remarkably achieved through various social institutions.

Definitely, being the main instrument whereby political ideas are transmitted and consumed by the public, media outlets in general play a crucial function in indoctrinating such values as being axiomatic and by extension sustain, albeit to a relative rate, a tone that protects and systematically further the elite interests, yet undermines, or at least pays less favourable treatment to the opposing views which are not compatible with these norms, notably the voices calling for radical social change. The sociologist Herbert Gans advocated that “it would be fair to say that the news supports the social order of public, business and professional, upper-middle-class, middle-aged. In short, when all other things are equal, the news pays most attention to and upholds the actions of elite individuals and elite institutions.”⁶¹ In so doing, it significantly contributes to the achievement of social control that maintains an ideological system in order to best guard against socialism, communism and fascism which are significantly more likely to be seen out of and in direct confrontation with the mainstream ideology, and therefore perceived as a potential disruptive threat to the norms of community and the social order.

In contrast to the Marxist view that considers the sense of ideology to be strongly linked with wrong comprehension of reality, mystification and false consciousness, the Marxist critic Raymond Williams took a positive account by attributing a somewhat neutral character of ideology going beyond the conservative tradition to consider ideology as a “relatively-formal and articulated-system of meanings, values and beliefs, of a kind that can- be abstracted as a 'worldview'-or 'class outlook.’”⁶² In other words, it is a system for producing meanings and ideas, this view goes hand in hand with the social construction of reality concept.

⁶¹ Gans (1979) op. cit., 61.

⁶² Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (New York: Oxford University Press.1977) 109.

In similar vein, Teun A. van Dijk makes a similar point by suggesting that ideologies are neither true, nor false. In brief, he offers a definition which rests on two central assumptions by advocating that any ideological position is a social, as well as a cognitive representation of an experience. Ideologies are socially shared among members of a specific group of common interests, who select a set of attributes as self criteria for judgment. The belief in these values - in addition to other parameters- defines the members of the group as 'in-group' and those who are out of the group as 'out-group'.

Endorsing the last view would lead one to a more sophisticated regard towards the press role not as a purveyor of one dominant ideology that reproduces the bourgeoisie propaganda, but rather the sphere where debates and contests between different ideological views take place. This is theoretically a valid assumption about the functional framework within which the press should operate, at least in the capitalist democratic societies that design a libertarian model to ensure a proper function of the press. This, however, does not insulate the press from possible passivity and failure in objectivity. Generalisation here, however, would be misleading because the media in general and the press in particular are capitalist products which continuously undergo the economic pressure of the free market, in addition to other institutionalized forces and interest groups. The main point herein is that the news processing still holds an ideological touch regardless of whose ideology is being disseminated.

The ongoing process through which one ideology is privileged among others and, more particularly, the ways in which it is framed and presented as the most acceptable one becomes a far subtler concern. This is partly because ideology, most of the time, is not to be explicitly expressed and therefore hard to be noticed in the news discourse. After all, it has been advocated before that news is a process of meaning making up, ideology then would reside at the heart of the subject matter. Indeed, the systematic ideological analysis of the printed news does not lay solely in the routinely journalistic practices of inclusion and exclusion of stories and sources, but also in the various intricate communicative strategies, both at the level of content and language use, that media professionals follow in their construction of what is assumed to be appropriate

and what is not, as well as the types of distortion whereby a specific world view is effectively dominating and shaping the perception of its readers.

Within an approach based on the perspective of critical linguistics that is heavily drawn from Michael Halliday's systematic functional use of language, the British linguist Roger Fowler in Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press (1991) claims that there are a variety of linguistic discourses that express ideology which many people consider to be natural. He argued that "there is no neutral representation of reality, events, processes, objects and people are always mediated for us. It is not simply a question of objectivity on the one hand, and bias on the other."⁶³ Fowler further highlighted the importance of this consideration by specifying a peculiar range of linguistic structures and devices such as, transitivity, *nominalization*, grammar and vocabulary items that can be a strategic medium through which ideology can be tacitly expressed.

Following this survey on the most used implications and related connotations to the concept of ideology, it could be broadly defined in a descriptive and a more factual and critical stance. The latter point can be illustrated by looking at the negative side of the ideological workings of news. That is to say, to trace imagery of distortion and misrepresentation in the news discourse based on the techniques adopted by Roger Fowler and Teun Van Dijk whose considerations are largely complementary in this respect. The aim in this research work is to tackle this concept according to what best serve its purpose by applying the main tools that these scholars set forth in their understanding of the functionality and the employment of ideological values in the news discourse. This will be done on the premise that the ideological analysis through an empirical treatment of news texts would put forward a constructive critique and fill up the gap created by the uncertainty and relativism that characterized the more traditional trends.

⁶³ Roger Fowler, "The Intervention of Media in the Reproduction of Power," Approaches to Discourse, Poetics and Psychiatry: Papers from the 1985 Utrecht Summer School of Critical Theory, eds. Iris Zavala, Teun. A. Van Dijk and Myriam Diat-Diocaretz (USA : John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1987) 67-80.

2.3. The press agenda-setting and the public opinion

What has been discussed so far constitutes a fundamental part of a larger debate within the agenda-setting theory. This latter, in very mundane and broad terms, refers to the framing processes in the media that affect the perceptions of its target audiences by, on the one hand, focussing on a few issues and subjects rather than others, and on the other hand, deciding the way these subjects should be covered and discussed. In other words, it decides the salience or absence of some elements and attributes of a given subject. Systematically, the public are assumed to rate the importance of events, and more significantly, judge them based on that account. The tendency of such a theory offers a particularly valuable tool for understanding the nature of interaction and relationships between the media and the public, which further extend to encompass policy making sphere in a reciprocal interaction (See figure 1).

Agenda-setting theory has witnessed significant and more complex developments in scope starting from its first introduction by the American historians and theorists Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw⁶⁴ in 1972. After conducting an extensive research on presidential elections in the United States of America in 1968 through surveying the opinions of a group of voters about the most important issue at the time, they observed a high degree of correspondence between the voter's ranking and the actual media coverage. The goal was to be able to develop a better understanding of the mechanisms whereby the media frame the facts, and ultimately shape the perceptions of people. To put it simply, it sought to sort out a clear correlation between the media coverage and its direct/indirect effect on the public perception of the conveyed topics. Since the aim here is limited solely to the workings of the press as a pivotal media apparatus, one would ask then to what extent is the public

⁶⁴ Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw investigated presidential elections and introduced the agenda-setting function. For more information see, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(1972): 176–187. These scholars and others argued that the origin of the agenda-setting theory goes back to the early 1920s; journalist Walter Lippmann in his book *Public Opinion* (1922) was the first to raise this issue, i.e. the effect of media messages on the public opinion. Over the years, more extensive research in this field was conducted by other scholars to test the validity of this theory in a number of fields such as: crime, poverty, nationalism...etc.

perception a product of press influence? The attention is drawn to how facts are constructed and whether they do actually influence people's comprehension.

It is still within the agenda-setting theory that answers could be found with regard to the above addressed concern. Generally speaking, agenda-setting could be defined, as political scientist Thomas Birkland would put it, "the result of a society acting through political and social institutions to define the meanings of problems and the range of acceptable solutions."⁶⁵ It is vital to set the limits of the press actual influence on the perceptions and attitudes of its audience, and investigate whether there is indeed a tangible impact of the press on the public agenda. In simple words, does the press influence the public opinion?

Most, if not all, researchers in the field of agenda-setting set two dimensions on which this theory operates. The first level of agenda-setting is concerned with the amount of focus attributed to events and in turn the possible impact of this emphasis on the importance the public relate to these events. For example, covering the issue of Northern Ireland repeatedly in the front pages would form the impression amongst the people to the special prominence of this issue at the time. The second level is a micro category which moves a bit beyond to examine exactly the rhetorical and stylistics ways in which the event under coverage has been shown to the public; that is to say, the focus on some attributes and elements in coverage. If one considers the previous example, journalists and editors would, using a variety of framing techniques that will be discussed in some detail later, tend to concentrate on some attributes of this issue by enhancing their salience over others, such as the emphasis on the negative depiction of the Irish Republican Army leaders during the time of peaceful settlements. This may trigger the likelihood among readers to perceive them as the source of violence and terror in Northern Ireland, and subsequently might hamper the peace process *per se*, or at least justify the use of force against them. Other attributes could also be considered from religious or economic standpoints to explain the causes and possible solution to the crisis.

⁶⁵Thomas Birkland, After Disaster: Agenda Setting, Public Policy, and Focusing Events (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1997) 11.

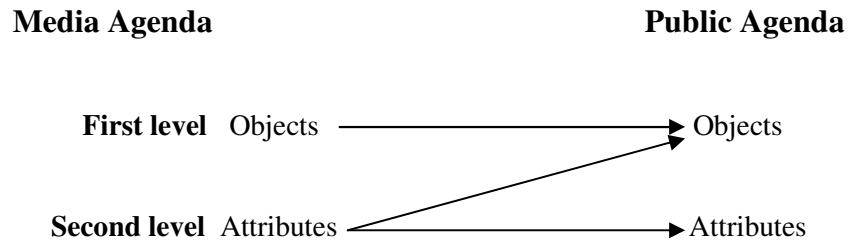


Figure 1. Two levels of agenda-setting and three hypothesised effects.⁶⁶

As the practical effects of the press agenda-setting lead one to move to the public opinion circle, the two concepts of priming and framing would be fundamental assumptions that underlie most research in this line by explaining the kind of political behaviour that would result. The former concept which developed out of cognitive psychology can be described in technical terms as the process by which activated mental constructs can influence how individuals evaluate other concepts and ideas; it enhances an indirect effect of the text by offering the audience a kind of prior judgment and interpretation. Mass media researchers Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder define priming as “changes in standards that people use to make political evaluations.”⁶⁷ From a purely cognitive psychological point of view, priming by definition means the process by which a tacit and unconscious activation of a prior knowledge takes place to retrieve an old information basically through associations with other objects or information.⁶⁸ This process is assumed by psychologists to affect the decisions and choices one makes in similar future situation.

In a real communication context, newspapers prime readers to interpret events or issues covered by handling informational clues that will implicitly guide their interpretation and comprehension. Exposure to press coverage of a specific matter helps making that issue more accessible in people’s minds and this, in turn, encourage people to make their subsequent judgments and base their evaluations on their thoughts about the issue. For example, continuous exposure to heavy press coverage

⁶⁶ Salma Ghanem, “Filing in the Tapestry: The Second Level of Agenda Setting,” *Communication and Democracy: Exploring the Intellectual Frontiers in Agenda-Setting Theory* Maxwell McCombs ,et al., (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997) 4.

⁶⁷ Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, *News that Matters* (USA: The University of Chicago Press, 2010) 63.

⁶⁸ For further information see, Irving B. Weiner, et al., *Handbook of Psychology: Experimental Psychology* (USA: John Wiley and Sons, 2003)

of the economic achievements of United Kingdom during Blair's premiership contributes in enhancing the likelihood of the British to evaluate his performance in relation to these economic issues in later occasions (subsequent elections for example). In other words, through priming the newspapers predispose their readers to be involved in an already pre-oriented judgment. This has a robust correlation with Shanto Iyengar's accessibility bias model who stated that

In general, 'accessibility bias' argument stipulates that information that can be more easily retrieved from memory tends to dominate judgments, opinions and decisions, and that in the area of public affairs, more accessible information is information that is more frequently or more recently conveyed by the media.⁶⁹

To paraphrase Iyengar's quotation, one could state that the frequency and recency of a specific topic would lead people to spontaneously construct their own later evaluations based on the facts they already have learned about these topics, which are of course, predisposed by the media in general and the press as an extension. The association established between Blair and the economic achievement of his government would dominate later public judgments of Blair's reputation as a good or a bad Prime Minister. This is due partly, according to both Jon Krosnick⁷⁰ and Laura Brannon⁷¹ to the fact that ordinary people, when facing complex political issues or events, would retrieve the most accessible information about the subject at hand, and since the media is the source from which they rely on to be informed, it works to drive this accessibly through the selection of news stories whereby only a few possible interpretations emerge.

At various points, the agenda-setting and framing are two overlapping and to some extent intertwined fields. Though this convergence could not be easily demarcated, it is possible to be more specific and identify the points of difference and resemblance of the two spheres in a single complementary paradigm. Framing can be seen as an

⁶⁹ Shanto Iyengar, "The Accessibility Bias in Politics: Television News and Public Opinion," International Journal of Public Opinion Research 2 (1990): 1-15.

⁷⁰ Jon A. Krosnick is a professor in humanities and social sciences, professor of communication, political science and psychology. See Jon Krosnick and D.R. Kinder, "Altering the Foundations of Support for the President through Priming," American Political Science Review 84(1990): 497-511.

⁷¹ Dr. Laura Brannon is a social psychologist. For further information see Jon Krosnick and L.A. Brannon "The Impact of War on the Ingredients of Presidential Evaluations: George Bush and the Gulf conflict," American Political Science Review 87 (1993): 963-75.

extension of priming. In short, frames may guide how people understand the world and thus form judgments. In a very much quoted definition, Professor Robert Entman declares, “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication context, in such a way to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”⁷² For example, to explicitly associate a specific issue with a specific nation and suggest an evaluative implication for that association. A news story could frame a particular country as a supporter of terrorism, thereby suggesting that if one supports a ‘war on terrorism’ then he should evaluate that nation negatively. As the case in a number of countries that are frequently labelled as terrorist regimes. American political communication specialist Jim Kuypers further explains:

Framing, then, is the process whereby communicators act to construct a particular point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be viewed (or ignored) in a particular manner, with some facts made more noticeable than others. When speaking of political and social issues, frames actually define our understanding of any given situation.⁷³

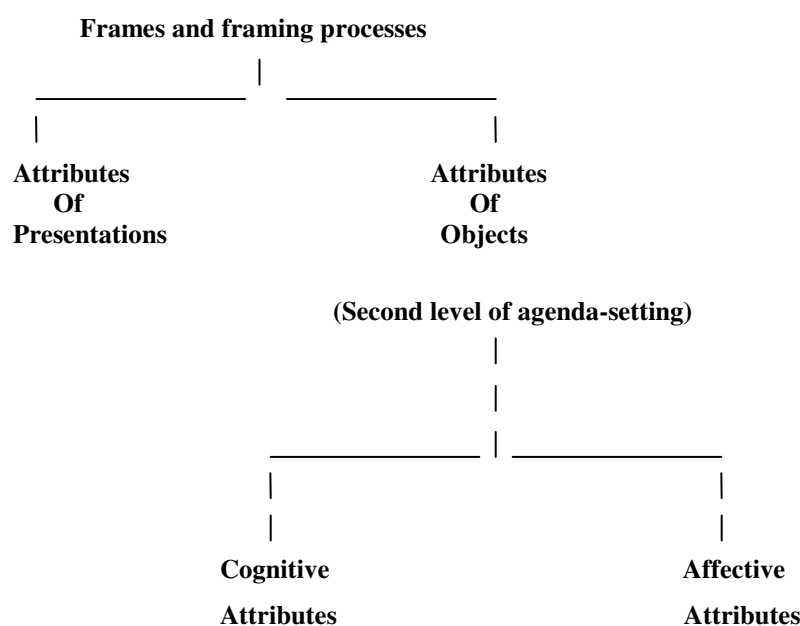
Following such an explicit definition of what framing exactly means, might help to bypass the ambiguity of the broad theoretical definitions forwarded by many scholars and take a more operational view of framing in any communication situation. Thus, this would place framing within the second level of agenda-setting best outlined in figure 2 by Maxwell McCombs and Salma Ghanem. In addition to the proposed hierarchical perspective, they provided some clues regarding practical implications and took a step ahead to distinguish between the aspects of frames and central frames based on the degree of framing. Although the difference between the two cannot be taken at face value, simply because it does not seem to bring up an authentic change to the overall meaning of the concept; hence, they could be treated as a single entity, rather than two separate concepts.

⁷² Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," Journal of Communication 43(1993): 51-8.

⁷³ Jim Kuypers, Press Bias and Politics: How the Media Frame Controversial Issues (USA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002) 7.

Though framing is inevitable and forms a part of any kind of communication context, it is the emphasis on some attributes of a certain event that manipulates the public understanding and interpretation of an issue by intentionally encouraging a tacit judgment and providing specific meaning. On the other hand, it omits other sides of the perceived reality which might also be viable. In other words, the choice of the themes to be reported, and more importantly, the lexical choices which are being employed to express the messages of these themes are, in fact, not made at random, but rather they constitute an integral part of a political act aiming at achieving acceptance and approval from the part of the targeted audience towards a preferred problem solution and definition, viz. they are an ideologically shaped form of representation.

Obviously framing is very important in conflicts and wars and the two cases of study here might be very relevant examples to show the ways in which frames and skewed representations towards the powerful actors take place. It must be emphasized that the systematic analysis of the nature of bias and the ways in which facts are being distorted by the press should not be solely limited to content analyses, critical linguistics and semiotic analysis are also very important in this context. The grammatical and lexical structures will provide deeper insights to unravel the hidden mechanism of bias.



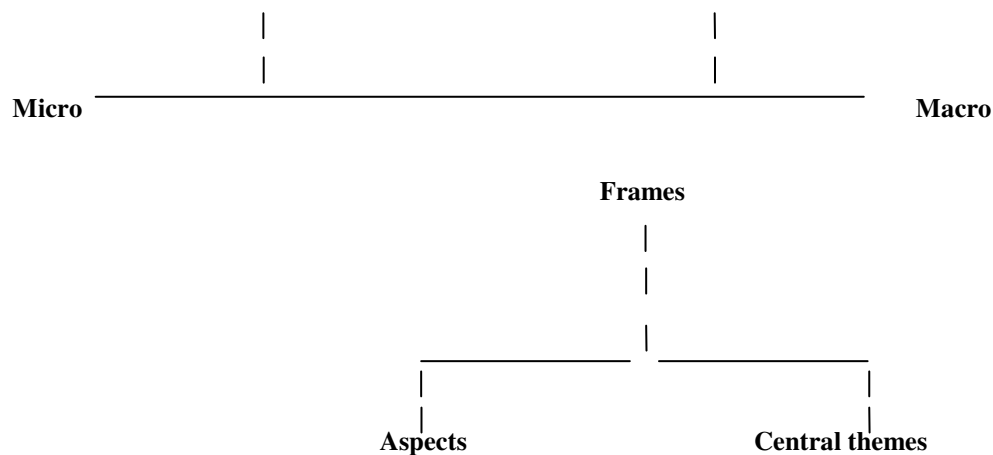


Figure 2. A definition tree for frames and framing processes ⁷⁴

All in all, it could be argued that, the press might not be extremely successful in telling people what to think exactly about certain issues, taking into consideration that not all the audiences are totally submissive but somewhat sceptical. However, a large segment of these audiences do believe, at least, that the press covered issues were the most prominent for a specific period of time. The causal frequency-prominence relationship is to some degree a very substantive one, but there is some doubt whether the causality is of an asymmetric dependency; in other words, who influences who first? Does the press cover issues because they are important to people? Or does the press make them look important and subsequently lead the people to believe so?

It is also vital mentioning incidentally that the increased use of the Internet as the main source of knowledge sharing has yielded a real challenge to the traditional means of mass communication. It opened up new doors for a comparatively easy and unlimited source of valuable data. Albeit not always credible, public instant comments, and discussions on the electronic websites and forums of newspapers might be the optimum source of data for assessing the validity of the agenda-setting theory in various and multiple topics.

⁷⁴ Maxwell McCombs and Salma Ghanem, "The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing," Framing Public Life: Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World Stephen D. Reese, et al., eds., (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003) 71.

2.4. The analytical framework

Although it seems quite plausible that the kind of analysis in this research work is limited both in size and content, since it seeks to examine specific newspapers content during determined and somehow limited span time for the reasons mentioned earlier, it is suggested that the use of multiple discourse analytical tools to scrutinize the various dimensions of news discourse with regard to the two cases of study here might reveal significant findings. It would also have a fair share in accounting for the British press reporting attitudes and frames during Britain's involvement in wars abroad and conflicting issues at home, albeit still in very general terms.

The analytical research direction that will be used in the examination of the discursive strategies of ideological expression in the news reports used in the following chapters will not be built on one single integrated model, but rather upon the genre of critical discourse associated with modern scholars, notably Roger Fowler and Teun van Dijk, whose methodological tools - influenced by Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics⁷⁵ - made a purposeful stride within the critical movement by providing a cluster of techniques to engage in effective textual hermeneutics.

Obviously, Critical Discourse Analysis has always been defined in a number of slightly different ways. It is not based on a fixed methodological model; therefore, it could be generally considered as a branch of applied linguistics consisting of no common theoretical approach. However, it subsumes various methodological strategies and approaches that might be analytically diverse. The field of Critical Discourse Analysis has widened in recent years to be used in a very much broader area of the social sciences, such as nationalism, racism and discrimination, ethnocentrism and most notably in media related studies. Critical Discourse Analysis, Teun van Dijk explains:

⁷⁵ It is a theoretical model introduced by the British linguist Michael Halliday in the 1960s which is concerned with the study of the relationships between language and its functions in practical social contexts.

studies the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality.⁷⁶

Given this kind of focus, Critical Discourse Analysis aims, in contrast to the more formalist approaches, to provide effective and objective analytical insights by explaining rather than merely describing the ways in which specific oriented discourse structures are ideologically placed in the reproduction of social and political dominance. In short, it is concerned not only with ‘What’ and ‘How’ but more precisely with ‘Why’.

Starting from the mid 1970s, media discourse became one of the most critically examined disciplines that attracted the attention of scholars and commentators. The news discourse is important because it is one of the most effective channels through which the production of community discourse takes place. Powerful groups, for example, moneyed people who own the media institutions would have, albeit to a relative extent, a privileged access in sustaining the domination of their own mode of discourse by consent, and actively control the widespread of other ideologically articulated categories. It would, probably, have social consequences, especially if one assumes that a large segment of the press audience will remain to some extent passive recipients of the message being delivered to them.

The techniques of persuasion and manipulation in the media discourse have been explored and investigated by these scholars who used various analytical tools for critical understanding of the ideological and propagandistic strategies that characterize a given news text. Based on the tools adopted by these scholars in the study of news reporting, this research therefore will consider a cluster of basic concepts, and thus devise a theoretical framework that critically looks at the conceptual framing attitudes in the British press.

⁷⁶ Teun Van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, eds. Deborah Schiffrin, et al., (USA: Blackwell publishing ltd, 2003) 352.

In the line of this discourse analytical direction, ideology will be briefly considered as a belief system incorporating a cluster of ideas and perceptions that determine one's world view, attitudes and opinions that should be defended. But could the relationship between these two concepts, viz. ideology and discourse be best examined and measured empirically? Indeed, ideological expression and the way in which it is implicated in the news discourse could be effectively revealed by means of Critical Discourse Analysis at both the semantic and linguistic levels.

At this point, it is significant to stress that framing patterns can be identified at a macro level by looking first at the preferred topics and thematic contents of the newspaper in its handlings of a certain event which are, Van Dijk again explains, “a property of the meaning or content of a text.”⁷⁷ This tells readers what is the core of the subject matter published, and more specifically, what is the most important information. As it has been mentioned earlier, journalists tend to select certain topics to be included as news which is, in fact, an inescapable process but at the same time an important element of framing leading therefore to direct the readers' attention on what they are required to know about a specific event. Besides, the non consideration of some other unsaid related topics can significantly lead to heavily skewed reporting. Systematically, those who belong to the same group, Teun Van Dijk further suggests, “may be expected to detopicalize information that is inconsistent with their interests or positive self-image and conversely they will topicalize information that emphasizes negative out-group properties.”⁷⁸

In more mundane terms, every news article consists of a headline and a leading sentence which together define, in more explicit and sometimes tacit manners, the discursive development of discourse that will dominate the discussion in the body of the article. It is a process of evaluation which is not safe from personal judgment that incorporates a considerable subjective involvement from the part of newsmakers. Seemingly, the hierarchical structure of the text could also be ideologically charged.

⁷⁷ Van Dijk (1988) op. cit., 31.

⁷⁸ Teun Van Dijk, “Discourse Analysis as Ideology Analysis,” *Language and Peace*, eds. Christina Schäffner and Anita Wenden (USA: Dartmouth, 1995) 27-28.

For example, the frequency and appearance of a particular theme in headlines provide an image of prominence, this is precisely so because the headline as a communicative device is supposed to hold the most compelling information, and therefore, potentially help to situate the reader within a particular framework of what is probably the most important thing he should know in the first place. The additional information and other related details will follow later, i.e. the less an information is considered as a relevant one to the story, the more likely it is downgraded and typically revealed at a lower level.

One of the journalistic routine practices is the use of quotes from, or references to statements made by official sources, statements or declarations of official figures that are not part of the event but they are often at the centre of a social network. The reference to politicians, diplomats, and experts is believed to be inescapably value laden implying authority and can heavily influence the portrayal of events. Likewise, the non-official sources such as celebrities, singers and film actors, or even ordinary people's stories might also be important in framing and used as symbols and can lead to skew in reporting.

The underlying ideological implications can also be noticed at the level of lexical use as the richness of the semantic field of language displays a possibility to refer to the same thing in many different ways. Lexical choices can heavily influence the frame because of the judgments inherent in the language. The choice of words performs an important ideological function. A number of variables cognitive, social, or cultural contexts will interfere in deciding the wording that one should utilize to describe a certain self standpoint towards a given situation, somebody, an event and so on. Public manifestations, for example, could be labelled as riots or manifestations. What is said about word choice is also relevant to the syntactic structures. The rhetorical and stylistic structures make the text more directed towards a predetermined position.

Following the tradition which has started in the end of the 1970s (specifically at the University of East Anglia, UK) research began to move into what would become

labelled as Critical Linguistics, and lately dubbed Critical Discourse Analysis. The inception of critical linguistics, which accounts for more empirical realities, helped to bring the analysis of written discourses to be grounded on more concrete basis. Further ameliorations had been attributed by different interdisciplinary scholars. Roger Fowler one of the pioneers in this direction advocates that “in most styles that people find ‘formal’ and ‘impersonal’ two syntactic constructions are almost invariably found to be prevalent: nominalization and passivization.”⁷⁹

The concept of *nominalization* is an important tenet within Fowler’s critical linguistics paradigm through which ideological traits can be reproduced. In other words, events and actions may be described with syntactic variations that are a function of the underlying involvement of actors. *nominalization*, in Fairclough’s terms, “is a process converted into noun.”⁸⁰ This process of transformation is assumed to be ideologically based. According to Geoff Thompson, the use of *nominalization* by the writer helps to limit the scope of ‘negotiation’ by the reader of the facts being posed by removing information about the participants, and eventually permits the deletion of agency, he declares:

The non-negotiability...can clearly be a powerful weapon in cases where the speaker or writer wishes, for whatever reason, to avoid negotiation, with its possible outcome of rejection. In persuasive text, one common technique is to objectify opinion by nominalizing it, so as to make it more difficult for the reader or hearer to disagree with it.⁸¹

Nominalization leaves responsibility unclear by avoiding explicit mentioning of the participants of the action or replacing them by entities like the following example: “surgical strikes on Iraq launched.” The phrase ‘*surgical strikes*’ is used as the problem causer instead of, for example, the US and British forces.

Another notable language characteristic which is considered to be instrumental in the maintenance of ideological persuasion and the reflection of distinct world views in

⁷⁹ Roger Fowler, Language and Control (London : Routledge, 1979) 39.

⁸⁰ Fairclough (2001) op. cit., 103.

⁸¹ Geoff Thompson, Introducing Functional Grammar (London: Hodder Arnold, 2004) 234.

the text is the use of peculiar transitive constructions with inanimate subjects. Transitivity which is part of the ideational function is given a pivotal role in expressing ideological orientations. The importance of this concept goes beyond its mere syntactic function. Negative attribution is assumed to be enhanced by active structures which reveal the agency and responsibility of the out-group (Irish, Extremists, and Dictators). The reverse also holds true for the use of passive forms that will be preferred when in-group (Western, English, Democrats) positive image is to be highlighted and strategically neglect blame. For example, the headline “Mob killed during Riots” will sound completely different from “Police killed demonstrators.” While the first sentence clearly suggests the reaction of legitimate force to illegitimate violence-though the agent who performed the action is not made clear - the second example directly presupposes negative evaluation with regard to the policemen attitude, and charges them with offense of power abuse.

In order to bring this discussion to a close, the analysis of the British newspapers content will be built upon the outlined theoretical model, and involves the selection of a number of themes assumed to be important. It also includes the analysis of how these issues were presented in texts. Themes selection will be based on their relevance to the framing contests, such as the reasons and explanation of conflict/war conditions, violence and terrorism and the portrayal of leaders. Therefore, the sample of reports will be examined for the inclusion of each of these themes as well as their presentations.

Chapter Three

The British Press Coverage of the Northern Ireland Issue

3.1. Background to the struggle of Northern Ireland

At the outset, it is worth briefly summarizing the historical development of the Northern Ireland crisis, since it seems that any objective discussion of the approach that the British press followed through its coverage of the Ulster issue might be as much controversial as the problem *per se*. Thus, any serious ideological analysis should account for the nature of the conflict and draw a comprehensive outline by considering, at least, some facts about the various variables of the issue. The reflection on the historical, political or social conditions, which might not be considered in isolation from one another, as well as the identification of all the active participants, their positions and arguments is vital in this context. Remarkably, a flow of complaints was continuously rehearsed following the increased involvement of British journalists who went to the Northern Ireland province starting from October 1968. British journalists in Ulster were frequently accused of being a mere vehicle of propaganda to the British Government and the then maintained discourse was believed to prevail in the British press for decades to follow.

In general terms, conflicts occur when people or other parties perceive that, as a consequence of a disagreement, there is a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Once the peaceful means prove to be unworkable in solving a conflict between opposing parties, it could potentially be developed into violence and aggression as in the case of Northern Ireland. Historical evidence has shown that both Loyalists (Protestants) and Republicans (Catholics) often resorted to violence in resolving their own conflicts emerging out of their heterogeneous ethno-political and religious grounding. Accordingly, due attention must be paid to the kind of reports the British press offered its readers, its understanding of the nature of conflict, and eventually the proposed solutions to bring a long term resolution to the conflict. Assessment, in this respect, will start with the 1970s onwards. What was the discourse of the British press in its treatment of the conflict? How the conflicting parties have been presented (republicans and their opponent unionist groups and parties)? What were the main

features that characterized the analysis and interpretation of violence, as well as the depiction of negotiations and settlements of peace in the early 1990s? Before answering such questions, this chapter will start with a brief historical skimming and discussion of the genesis of the problem in Northern Ireland which is, to a large extent, complex and deeply rooted in history.

It is essentially important to stress the difficult nature of the problems related to identity, political affiliations and cultural belongings of the inhabitants of Northern Ireland which were a major source of ethnic chauvinism and mutual intolerance that successfully created two distinct communities in the course of time. Indeed, the ongoing struggle in Ulster is a complex phenomenon with multiple sensitive dimensions which led to a long episode of violence and fear dating from the early Anglo-Norman invasion in 1169, the Plantation in the seventeenth century⁸² and the subsequent sectarian animosity that followed and continued to be the main tendency, albeit to varying degrees from one period to another. A number of different theories and arguments had already been suggested about the origins of the conflict and its convenient resolution.

From a geographical perspective, Northern Ireland is situated in the north-eastern part of the island of Ireland, and is made up of six counties: Antrim, Armagh, Derry, Down, Fermanagh, and Tyrone (see figure 3). The peculiar geographical location is just one of the various concrete elements that have contributed to exacerbate the contention over the region between the conflicting parties, most notably among the Irish who held the assumption that the reunification of Ulster is a national commitment. This was clearly expressed in Article 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution (1937)⁸³ which was considered by *The Times* as “an outrageous anachronism rather

⁸² When Ulster was brought under English control during the Tudor monarchy, the land of Irish elites who fled to Europe, was confiscated and given to successive waves of colonists coming from England, Scotland and Wales encouraging, therefore, massive immigration to the province. The settlements accelerated during the Cromwellian Era (1649-52) and ultimately resulted in the creation of a new protestant community and therefore had a lasting impact on the region. for further information see, Marc Mulholland, *The longest War :Northern Ireland's Troubled History* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2002)

⁸³ Those articles were amended in the late 1990s which dropped the territorial dimension from the identity of the Irish nation.

than a legitimate bargaining chip.”⁸⁴ Yet, the gospel of a united Ireland and the national emancipation from the United Kingdom was certainly regarded by the Unionists as a serious threat to their position.

It should also be mentioned, however, that both Westminster and Dublin are two influential players that cannot be seen out of the issue, and can be considered as models to demonstrate at length the internal divides within the province. While it is true that the grievances of the Irish working class in Ulster over discrimination and economic inequalities (housing, employment, and legal system) has constituted the driving force of rebellion, it is also the Irish people, most notably the leftists, who have developed a wider perspective of the struggle by longing for self determination against the British imperialism.

Equally important is the heterogeneous anthropological background of the inhabitants of Ulster who are not necessarily Irish but descended from ancient Ulster, Gaelic, Viking, Norman, English, and Scottish peoples, in addition to other distinguishable social categories which helped to break any social consensus, such as language, class and culture. Virtually, the tension and cultural separation between these sections are more buttressed and to some extent deepened by the different religious belongings, which might not be as provocative as in earlier decades, yet still driving the conflict towards more complexity, as the German political scientist Stefan Wolff explains:

What they all have in common is that they have polarised Northern Irish society for decades, leaving little room for cross-cutting cleavages, and eventually aligning all these various dimensions of the conflict behind two fundamentally different conceptions of national belonging.⁸⁵

The late nineteenth century witnessed an active campaign towards Home Rule that a large segment of the Irish nation longed for a long time ago. However, the successive

⁸⁴ “ARTICLES OF POOR FAITH,” *THE TIMES* 22 June 1994.

⁸⁵ Stefan Wolff, “Conflict Management in Northern Ireland,” *MOST Journal on Multicultural Societies*. 4 (2002): 41-73.

Home Rule Bills introduced in 1886, 1893, 1912, 1919⁸⁶ sharply failed to gain public enthusiasm. This shortcoming was chiefly due to the steady and continuous refusal of the Conservatives and a good number of people in the province of such a proposal.



Figure 3. The Counties of the Republic and Northern Ireland.⁸⁷

Moreover, the mutual suspicion was actually enhanced by the contention about the details of the partition and its repercussions on the future of the region. Despite the apparent lack of trust between the Catholics and Protestants, the partition plan of Northern Ireland became a reality on the 23rd of December 1920. This change was in fact a turning point in the history of the region whereby two separate governments were set up, the first in Belfast and the other in Dublin. However, the former was still under direct control from Westminster, and the latter became an independent and separate state under the name of the Irish Free State with allegiance to the British Crown acquiring full sovereignty seventeen years later.

It was remarked in the years to follow, the development of systematic segregation and discrimination against the minority Catholics, who represented about one third of the population. This included most aspects of the public life such as schooling and employment management. The cautious attitude of each side was the main feature that

⁸⁶ Home Rule Bills introduced by the Irish Parliamentary Party under the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell were not welcomed by the Conservatives, and especially the protestant population of Ulster as a united Ireland was viewed as a threat to them which they staunchly opposed.

⁸⁷ "The Counties of the Republic and Northern Ireland," Google maps. 2011 <<http://maps.google.com/>>.

characterized the relationship between, on the one hand, Ireland and Northern Ireland and the protestant /unionists and Catholic nationalists inside Ulster on the other. Ulster's Protestants felt a constant threat to be overruled by the Irish dream of a united Ireland that Ireland's constitution (1937) insisted upon in Article 2 and 3. Those fears were best expressed by Lord Basil Brooke (Ulster Prime Minister from 1943 up to 1963) in 1933 by declaring that the "Roman Catholics were endeavouring to get in everywhere and were out with all their force and might to destroy the power and constitution of Ulster."⁸⁸

In the midst of these variant backgrounds of seemingly two heterogeneous sections in the province, at least in their consolidation of nationalism (Irish, Catholic) and unionism (British, Protestant) preferences, Westminster was, as the former *Guardian* journalist Roy Greenslade would put it, playing the role of "a reluctant referee between two warring tribes of religious zealots."⁸⁹ In contrast to the unionists' view that considers the region a part of United Kingdom, the Republicans and Nationalists see the Northern Ireland crisis as the offspring of the partition of Ireland (1920) thus blaming Britain for fuelling the struggle which is in their view basically a result of political and economic marginalization in the first place, and only secondary as a religious dispute. Professor of comparative ethnic studies John Darby⁹⁰ explains:

Northern Ireland's population is approximately 55% Protestant and 45% Catholic and the two communities place their emphases on different elements of the problem. Protestants are more likely to see the conflict in constitutional and security terms, and are primarily concerned about preserving the union with Britain and resisting the perceived threat of a united Ireland. Catholic views fall generally into two broad categories. Some perceive the issue as a nationalist struggle for self-determination, looking back to what they regard as the historical integrity of the island and the gerrymander of partition.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Anthony C. Hepburn, *The Conflict of Nationality in Modern Ireland* (London: Edward Arnold, 1980) 164.

⁸⁹ Roy Greenslade, "The Damien Walsh Memorial Lecture," *CAIN Web Service* 12 July. 2010 <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/media/greenslade.htm>>.

⁹⁰ John Darby is the former Founding Director of INCORE (Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity).

⁹¹ John Darby, "Northern Ireland: The Background to the Peace Process," *CAIN Web Service* 09 July. 2010 <<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/darby03.htm>>.

Following this succinct reflection on the overall conditions of the Ulster issue, it would be necessary to point out the fact that the media (quality newspapers in this research) would certainly have a very sensitive role in the sense that it could be a promoter of peace, an agitator, or to a lesser degree the middle place where contests of variant ideologies take place. It could be stressed again, with little reservation, that the media in conflicting issues and time of wars is not solely a reporter of events and stories, but rather a participant which creates a certain perception of the event under coverage and the supplier of a specific view of reality since it accounts for a set of suggestions and opinions which are necessarily driven by particular ideological motivations.

3.2. The press coverage of Ulster's issue

It is suggested that the goal of tracing the framing patterns used in the British press through qualitative analysis of the Ulster problem shall proceed with the identification of the main themes and principally their underlying propositions, viz, their hierarchical positioning within the news text, as well as their semantic categories and features. In this respect, text sample selection will be based on and particularly related to the most important historical stages in the modern history of the conflict. The starting point, then, will be the stage that the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland reached in the early beginnings of the 1970s. The stream of events will also include the subsequent repercussions displaying in the unprecedented social upheaval and sectarian hatred that flared over between the different segments of the population creating therefore serious disturbances and unrest during the decades to follow. The analysis will finally examine the peace settlements initiatives during the 1990s.

Whilst it would be difficult to refer to a single static definition of what exactly frame means, due to the various aforementioned theoretical orientations and multiple understandings of this notion and its processes, it is still an inspiring and value laden concept in revealing the merits of ideological biases. Generally speaking, the kind of emphasis placed on one subject rather than another will lead to unbalanced reporting that admittedly privileges one dominant view over another marginalized one. More specifically, focus will be paid to the ways in which the subjects under spot had been tackled, not only in terms of the selection of thematic issues, but also in relation to the use of language. Developing a critical assessment could be followed by considering the rhetoric, style, wording and other related textual features that would strongly provide helpful insights to decipher the intrinsic ideological codes which are not at the disposal of large segments of the press target audiences. In order to pursue this argument, content analysis seeks to shed light on the framing patterns during the seemingly sensitive periods in the history of this conflict, then, critical discourse tools

discussed earlier will be utilised starting from a macro level and narrowing down up to the micro level of language use.

As far as the British elite press is concerned and at the level of semantic macrostructure, the assessment of the corpus constituted from coverage of both national daily newspapers *The Times* and *The Guardian*, which will be considered in this chapter, showed that these newspapers unravelled the complexities of the Northern Ireland drama by attributing considerable treatment and much sharper focus on violence and mayhem. The overriding emphasis on violence, which was assumed to be one of the most central themes handled with regard to the coverage of the Six Counties starting from the early 1970s, is by no means ideologically displaced. Arguably, the 1970s was a very critical era when the British newspapers were playing more participatory role, and their judgment of the situation was perhaps far away from the standards of objectivity. It could be initially claimed that violence at best, and terrorism at worst, were the main recurrent topics. It follows that such kind of focus should have a large stake in envisaging the political debate and had inevitably serious impact on the perception of British readers and their understanding of the conflict grounding.

It is interesting to note that this claim had been continuously reaffirmed by a number of commentators and experts in media studies interested in the Northern Ireland issue. Based on quantitative approach that followed anecdotal stories throughout the last forty years of the twentieth century, they boldly argued that the representation of violence was almost the dominant title that headed the British newspapers in their handling of the province news. This generated, therefore, leading articles and editorials in this direction and subsequently helped to undermine, albeit relatively, the other related sides, such as the social and political contexts, and perhaps more particularly, the genesis of the problem itself and Britain's legacy in the conflict since there was no serious account of the historical roots of the strife. The historian Alan F. Parkinson in Ulster Loyalism and the British Media observed that "the one-dimensional nature of the reporting of the Ulster situation – what has been called 'a shopping-list in death and destruction' - had been criticized for presenting the British

public with a series of decontextualised reports of violence” which according to him “failed to analyze and re-analyze the historical roots of the Irish problem.”⁹² In other words, the exclusive reporting of violence misconceived the essence of the conflict and paved the way for more ambiguity instead of considering alternative strategies to deal with the crisis on a long term basis.

It is also vital to look beyond merely stating the existing themes in isolation. That is to say, in-depth analysis will bring to light the implied rather than stated ideological biases addressed. The word violence, for instance, in its sake does not seem to constitute a coherent and complete theme and therefore cannot be precisely understood or assigned any ideological value, unless its agency is clearly tackled and communicated in a particular context. In ordinary terms, a more appropriate question would be how exactly these themes have been treated by the newspapers?

It might be discernible that besides the fact that violence appeared at the core of the Ulster crisis in the broadsheet press, *The Times* and to a lesser extent *The Guardian* aimed consciously or unconsciously, to unequivocally ascribe the onus of guilt largely to the Irish Republican Army (IRA)⁹³ that had been repeatedly labelled as a terrorist organisation seeking to spread fear and destruction in the province. Liz Curtis, a specialist in the Northern Ireland politics, clarifies that the involvement of the IRA “comes to appear the alpha and omega of the problem and Britain’s historical and contemporary responsibility is obscured.”⁹⁴ Actually, this claim resonates at different levels and refers, in particular, to the negative features that were being brought to the fore and systematically enhanced in the public eye through the recurrent reference to the presence of the IRA in the battle scene against the British security forces in particular, and the population of the region at large in a lot of leading articles and news briefs. Moreover, the inimical tone reproduced by the systematic provision of firmly negative portrayals of the IRA and its terrorist reputation had been ultimately

⁹² Alan F. Parkinson, *Ulster Loyalism and the British Media* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1998) 73.

⁹³ A radical military group formed by members of the Irish Volunteers in 1916. In the pursuit of its goal, the IRA conducted bombing campaigns on various targets in Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

⁹⁴ Liz Curtis, *Ireland, the Propaganda War: the British Media and “the Battle for Hearts and Minds”* (London: Pluto Press, 1984) 276.

linked, as an extension, to its political wing Sinn Féin. Obviously, the obsession with this orientation, that remained more focused on republican violence, would result in immediate and concrete political effects, and might also affect the overall impression about the true nature of conflict. Once the terrorist attribute is being confirmed, there will be more space to legitimize the institutionalized reaction against it.

Indeed, the image of the IRA as being the ultimate instigator of vehemence had been strengthened by several news articles, comments and editorials starting from the early beginnings of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (abbreviated NICRA) campaign that witnessed the re-emergence of the IRA to the public scene with a notable activism within the civic movement. Then, it became standard practice in most of the British press circles when violence occurs to inform the British populace and raise the suspicion about the IRA.

On the other hand, there was a conspicuous paucity of coverage with regard to the Unionist violence in the Catholic areas. The responsibility of the various extremist loyalist political factions and their belligerent paramilitaries⁹⁵, in almost all cases, was eschewed. The Unionist armed groups -likewise the IRA whose responsibility in successive bombings, and assassinations can not be ignored - were repeatedly involved in violent acts against the minority Catholic civilians, though they were invisible, presented as innocent or at least in self defence position against the republican aggression. This view can be supported by a quantitative content analysis and could be applicable to a range of anecdotal case studies.

Similarly, criticism of the British army was deliberately muted; their intervention even if it was sometimes violent and unnecessary, was always seen as highly understandable and justified. The British army, as Professor Simon Cottle, a researcher in mediatised conflict studies, claims “were represented as... largely inactive except as a rather superior kind of Boy Scout Troop.”⁹⁶ The discursal skew

⁹⁵ Loyalist groups were formed in opposition to the republican movement; their aim was to keep Northern Ireland within the union. There were numerous loyalist vigilante and paramilitary groups such as, Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) Ulster Defence Force (UDF) Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF)...etc

⁹⁶ Simon Cottle, “Reporting the Troubles in Northern Ireland: Paradigms and Media Propaganda,” Critical Studies in Mass Communications (1997): 282-296.

towards the enhancement of bad stereotypical images of the IRA could be considered as a strategy designed to serve the ideological preference of the elite newspapers which were, to some degree, in accordance with the active British official policy. In so doing, the press sought, on the one hand, to justify the legal perspectives from which the British institutions (British Army, Police...) acted and, on the other hand, it aimed at a systematic exclusion of Sinn Féin and the IRA from the political process and discredit them from any legal position.

The end of the 1960s was marked by a notable increase in the social mobility under the Civil Rights Movement Campaign, especially with the creation of the NICRA on the 1st of February 1967 that organised the social protest in a number of demonstrations. Strikingly, the press was not reluctant to show its censure to the political goals behind the organization of public manifestations. For example, when riots broke on the 29th of October 1970 in the Ardoyne area, whereby British troops were attacked resulting in serious injuries. *The Guardian* editorialized on the third of November, “When an Irishman throws a bomb at a Royal Marine he is not simply trying to kill. He wants, through murder, to provoke reprisals. His aim is a Northern Irish Sharpeville.” In similar vein, journalist John Chartres from *The Times* came to confirm what has been put forth by *The Guardian* stating that “This is the only interpretation that can be put on any of the Catholic attacks on troops since the beginning of this year.”

It might be obvious that the reporting in both extracts evokes a war-like atmosphere between two distinguishable blocks, the Irish Catholics, on the one hand, and the British troops on the other. The metaphor (*British troops are under attack by Catholics*) demonstrates the threat posed and therefore calls for immediate action. In this context, the lexical choices are also worth noting, since the employment of religious (Catholic) and ethnic (Irish) vocabulary might further conceptualize the struggle with much broader dimension. There is no doubt that references to ethnicity and religion are among the most powerful elements that potently feed the ideological representations. The stereotypical labels which negatively categorize Irishmen as killers, criminals and provokers of violence would be seemingly assigned to all the

Irish of Ulster, and might reinforce the tendency to exclude the whole Irish Catholic community as being, in Van Dijk's terms, an 'out-group'.

Moreover, this discourse of dehumanisation of the Irish/Catholic community frames the struggle not as being simply a manifestation against racial hatred, hardship of living or as being one calling for more justice, equality and civil liberties for the persecuted Roman Catholic minority, or a protest for social and economic demands which were actually the basis of the NICRA, but as one of legal power against a gang of terrorists. It also points particularly to the revolutionary spirit against the British rule among the Irish of the province leading therefore to the outcome of legitimizing institutional violence against them in the sake of preserving the rule of law and order.

It was noticed that the first initiatives for sustainable social reform through demonstrations had greatly faded, especially by the early 1970s and more precisely after the Bloody Sunday⁹⁷ incident in Londonderry where a unit of the British army had been directly involved in killing some demonstrators. The incident was in fact a real watershed in the Ulster issue that received considerable attention, front page treatment and detailed follow up by local and international newspapers. On the following day of the massacre, *The Guardian* devoted considerable space to the event carrying the headline: "Ulster civil rights march erupts in violence and bloodshed" Journalist Simon Winchester, again, while quoting some eye witnesses that confirmed the responsibility of the British army in the fatality, he typically tended to concentrate much more on the illegal aspect of the march. Choice of focus on some attributes rather than others as mentioned in the previous chapter is ideologically based and might considerably influence the overall story tone. Paradoxically, this can help dedicated readers to deconstruct the ideological traits that are being encoded in the text. Consider the following published on the 31st January 1972 which illustrates precisely how the event was reported by the correspondent from the ground and presented in the leading *Guardian* daily newspaper.

⁹⁷ Events that took place on the 30th January 1972 in Derry where 13 civil protestors were shoot dead in the Bogside area by the British Army (Parachute Regiment). This happened during a march organised by the NICRA to protest against the Internment without trial policy in Ulster.

13 killed as paratroops break riot

This happened at about 3:00 pm and from then until about 4:15 the mob growing angrier by the minute, was engaged in a fierce tussle with soldiers at this barricade and others in Great James Street and Sackville street. Huge quantities of gas and hundreds of rubber bullets were fired at this stage and many of the rioters were injured. Then at 4:05 a single shot was fired in William Street, presumably by an IRA man.

Interesting enough is the fact that although the journalist revealed full details about the shooting scene by troops of the First Battalion, a declaration that clearly indicates the agency of the action, there is still another implicit causal relationship which is actually made through consistent reference to the existence of IRA rioters. Indeed, the proposition of the IRA threat by its presence and indirect involvement in creating tension and provoking hysteria within the crowd is politically relevant. While the suggestion '*presumably by an IRA man*' does not denote a factual declaration, it expresses in somewhat unobtrusive manner a fierce condemnation of the IRA and presupposes its participation in violating the peaceful march. In the same line of this argument the writer proceeds to suggest, within the same article, that the army fired up in response to some positioned snipers. Quite apart from the fact that this presumption can be used for an ideological skew towards a more negative portrayal of the IRA, these claims could be understood as an endeavour to legitimize the reaction of the troops. In fact, what was most surprising about the whole situation is that there was not even greater evidence of what happened exactly. Though the headline in bold above does not explicitly presume that the shooting of demonstrators was in fact a legitimate response to some lurking IRA snipers, it strongly suggests so in the absence of hard evidence that might strengthen this allegation.

Indeed, implying the existence of terrorists/ IRA in the incident is one of the complex discursive strategies carried out in the process of legitimising and normalising the immediate response to the civil march by the British army. That is to say, raising doubts concerning the peaceful nature of the march by pointing out the presence of lurking snipers is made to gain approval and acceptance by the audience, or at least to clear guilt from intended fatality by the troops, because it is important to set the tone for the subsequent public discussion about the incident. The process of

'*legitimation*' of specific group acts/attitudes as Van Dijk advocates is one of the main social functions of ideologies."⁹⁸

In similar vein and within the same front page different statements by official figures were published. Under the title "Premier on the reasons why" and in a very compassionate, and somewhat provocative tone, the Northern Ireland Premier Brian Faulkner, mourning two young policemen, charged the responsibility of the bloody march to intruder '*rioting crowds*' of IRA members who, he announced, "would use such marches wherever possible as a cover for their attacks on population at large." Defensive arguments in favour of the official story line were also expressed by Major-General Robert Ford, commander of land forces of Northern Ireland and ended with Ulster Unionist PM at Westminster who concluded with the statement: "the marchers had been used by the IRA and communists."

The opposing scenario was immediately delivered by quoting Mr. Jack Lynch Prime Minister of the Irish Republic, Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien a Labour MP and Mr. Liam Cosgrave of Fine Gael who announced their resentment and denunciation of the 'reckless' way through which the British army managed the march. It must be mentioned, however, that these comments were considered at the back page and ended with the allegations of linkage between international communists and the IRA organisation. The thematic structure of the quotes above suggests that the placement of violence and rioting at the head, while the responsibility and agency of the British army in the incident are being downgraded, may slightly lead to a skewed representation in favour of the British standpoint.

It should also be emphasised that the common journalistic inclusion of quotes from official sources is believed to be a very effective ploy in transmitting a specific straightforward message to readers. Thus, the above quotes were selected to hold accountability to officials who advocate what a journalist could not state explicitly. The concern about bias, diversity and fairness of viewpoints is considered by quoting

⁹⁸ Teun, Van Dijk, "Opinions and Ideologies in the Press," *Approaches to Media Discourse*, Allan Bell & Peter Garrett, eds. (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 25.

different references, but again this is more complex than what it might appear to be on the surface. The ordering of statements, their position in the front page in addition to length, size and other technical details are not made at random. Relatively, much space was devoted to Faulkner's emotional discourse and Army Headquarters in Lisburn that responded with a fierce attack on the supposedly IRA gunmen and nail bombers who started fire. This of course makes the shooting of the British army eminently acceptable and fully justified counter reaction.

At its most fundamental level, the previously mentioned article could be summarized in few words, in order to do so, one would then best refer to the headline, or the subhead line of this news article that provide an initial general outlook "13 killed as paratroops break riot." This declarative sentence effectively reduces the whole text to a few schematic categories. Although headlines and leading sentences may not hold all the discussed topics, they are crucial in drawing the overall theme that remains stored in reader's memories about the covered events. Van Dijk claimed that headlines "often have ideological implications since they express the most important information about a news text, they may bias the understanding of readers,"⁹⁹ and provide a subjective definition of the situation. More than that, headlines could also be read as representative of the newspaper's general ideological orientation and preferences.

It could be noticed that the most important features that dominate the thematic structure are first indicated followed by the identification of time, space markers, the participants in the manifestation ('mob' vs. British paramilitary troops), and finally causes of the massacre and the possible answers of course, i.e. the reasons why the army fired the crowd. The use of such detailed specifications about the situation (13 killed, 3:00 PM...) ranks the article in the hard news class and makes it more credible and salient.

In various ways and to various degrees, *The Times* followed identical discursive strategies by falling in the line which tends to criminalize the IRA. Indeed, the battle

⁹⁹ Teun A. Van Dijk, Racism and the Press (London: Routledge, 1991) 51.

of words was waged by *The Times* right away from the beginning against Sinn Féin and its military wing. Amazingly, this fact was boldly stated by the newspaper in an editorial on the 20th of September 1990 under the headline “war with words” *The Times* advocated that “the continued criminalisation of the activities of the IRA is essential to British policy.”

One month prior to the Bloody Sunday, in one of the most horrific acts of violence, 15 people were killed by a bomb in a Catholic bar in North Queen Street, Belfast. At the moment there were no suspects and various rumours were being circulated.¹⁰⁰ John Chartres from *The Times* headlined the story on the 16th December 1971.

Blast that killed 15 may have been IRA error

Police and Army intelligence officers believe that Ulster’s worst outrage, the killing of 15 people, including two children and three women, in an explosion in a Belfast bar last night was caused by an IRA plan that went wrong...

The theory assembled in the security forces intelligence circles is that a large IRA operation was planned for last night involving a bomb attack on a police station or an Army headquarters in the North Queen Street district of the city. An ambush of troops who would have had to move into the district would have followed.

Word had been passed to several people in the Catholic community to ‘keep out of North Queen Street’ last night. This got back to the security forces, who were alerted...

The Army’s theory is that the bomb in McGurk’s bar was ‘in transit’, that it had been left there, probably without the knowledge of any of the people who were killed or injured, by a ‘carrier’ for another person to pick up, and that the second person was unable to keep his rendezvous because of the security operation.

The only other theories open are that it was indeed a Protestant bomb, or that the IRA Provisionals deliberately killed their own people to provoke open rioting again.

Neither of these theories, it is felt, stands up.

Taking the army’s self created story is what has been called earlier the gate keeping function. The theories set by the army and security forces provided the perspective from which the bombing should be interpreted which was, of course, the interpretation

¹⁰⁰ The bombing of the MucGurk bar in an Irish Catholic and nationalist area to the North of Belfast, conducted by a loyalist paramilitary group (Ulster Volunteer Force) Shortly after the bombing, police provided misleading information to the government and to the media accusing the IRA of committing the fatality.

that they meant at the end. They effectively set the tone for the story to the newspapers whose job then is just to comment on an already drawn picture and within confined boundaries. The picture of the whole situation has been delivered from the official authorities stand point which does not only put the IRA in the dock, but more than that it deliberately claims that the IRA is most suspected culprit.

The headline in bold characters expresses the thematic sentence that summarizes the whole text. So the macro-proposition is the responsibility of the IRA in the Blast that killed 15 civilians and injured some others. The modality expression '*may have been*' serves to indicate a value judgment that is being incorporated in an apparently descriptive text on the surface. What comes next is a set of different theories about the nebulous explosion whereby a number of sub-themes are evident: (a) The IRA were preparing a bomb which exploded by mistake, (b) A phone call warning to the Catholic community to keep out of the bar, (c) The person who was expected to carry the prepared bomb was not able to pick up the bomb in time, (d) the bomb was made by Protestants or IRA against their own people to provoke rioting. Strikingly, the article ends up with non-confirmation of what has been reported.

On the one hand, it could be discernible that there is a close attention towards the suggestion that the blast is more likely to be an IRA plan through the reference to credible official sources (army and security forces), and on the other hand by the writer's style which establishes its overall coherence through the consistent reference to the IRA. This would also make the text an argumentative rather than purely a narrative one allowing for the implied expression of a specific ideological position and an understanding of the text in accordance to what has been previously exhibited by the headline. It is style, Van Dijk advocated, that "seems to be captured by the well-known phrase 'saying the same thing in different ways.'"¹⁰¹ Against this background, there was a secondary presumption that referred to the possibility of loyalists involvement which is a mere prediction hinted at with no good argument.

¹⁰¹ Van Dijk, Teun A (1988) op. cit., 73.

After all, both IRA wings denied responsibility. Moreover, inquiries carried out by the intelligence showed that what had been suggested about the McGurk Bar incident was a serious blunder. Seven years after the atrocity, Robert Campbell a member in the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) admitted his responsibility of the attack and was charged for the murders.¹⁰²

At this point it is perhaps interesting to examine the press coverage of the diplomatic endeavours that followed and gained some success in recent days. A historical attempt, which was supposed to set a rigid ground for peaceful arrangements and curb the ongoing struggle in Ulster, was made through the Anglo-Irish agreement¹⁰³ on the 15th of November 1985 where Ireland and Britain signed a pact to give full responsibility to the population of Northern Ireland to govern themselves with a devolved power sharing management. This proposal which provided Ireland with a consultative role had, however, sharply failed as it did not gain sufficient approval neither by the Unionists nor the Republicans. On the day of the agreement signing, *The Guardian* published: “PM, Dublin agree Ulster text as Commons warned of trouble,” “Trouble warning as text agreed.” The focus was placed more on expressing the dismay of the Unionists and their discontent at what they claimed to be a ‘*sell-out to Dublin*’. The article which ended with brief news about the shooting of a Northern Ireland policeman in the border might perhaps be seen as a confirmation of these fears.

This is another strategy which helped to provoke the so called the construction of fear and mistrust attitudes against the whims of Irish Republicanism. It is deployed there to amplify the threat posed by the Nationalists and Republicans to the status quo. One consequence of this is that all, or at least a large part of the Irish/Catholic community in Ulster would be perceived as a constant threat to the stability of the province. It follows that the agreement that gave a say for Ireland is a dangerous shake

¹⁰² For further details on this case check the “Public Statement by the Police Ombudsman under Section 62 of the Police (Northern Ireland) act 1998, July 2011.<

<http://www.policeombudsman.org/Publicationsuploads/McGurk's---Final-Report.pdf>>

¹⁰³ In their attempt to put an end to the ongoing troubles in Ulster, UK and the Republic of Ireland signed an agreement on the 15th of November 1985. In spite of its failure, it was believed that the pact set the ground for more re-approachment and cooperation between the UK and Ireland with regard to the Ulster issue.

off to the peculiar identity of the population of the region, at least from the Unionist perception. It is precisely this discourse of fear that gives rise to the orthodox distinction between 'Us' and 'Them' and successfully designates otherness (Catholic, Irish) as the enemy within.

During the 1990s the discursual position of the British press did not bring about a real change as its anti-republican tone kept up its criticism and condemnation of Sinn Féin, although this period has witnessed an authentic move towards peaceful settlements to the long conflict at a time when the shortcomings of military choices were more than apparent. Most importantly, after the IRA declared its readiness to cease fire paving the way for more positive initiatives. The legacy of the IRA and Sinn Féin, however, was repeatedly rehearsed in *The Times*. It was also routinely mentioned that members of Sinn Féin were previously jailed or involved in crimes, but not many details were given about their preference of peaceful settlements, nor is it explained how they could be potentially dangerous on the region's future. Following the meeting held on the 9th of December 1994 between some Sinn Féin members with British diplomats *The Times* published the following:

The party (Sinn Fein) is taken seriously by the British Government because it is the political wing of the most murderous and well-organised terrorist group in the world. Of the five republican delegates yesterday, three have served prison sentences for the IRA offences.

Obviously, Sinn Féin spokespersons were routinely linked with episodes of violence and terror, and metaphorically identified, as *The Times* suggested in the above quotation, '*the most murderous and well organised terrorist group in the world*'. Clearly, such kind of stereotypical depiction would place them within terrorism frame, predictably invoking feelings of anxiety and fear in readers who activate their own background knowledge about terrorism which carries, of course, a firmly negative connotation. The outcome is the enhancement of a negative impact on the audience's own judgment of the situation as a whole. It could also be said that the deployment of metaphor at this level is one of the discursive rhetorical mechanisms of ideological persuasion that brings out the bad features of the out-group by making them more salient, and at the same time underpins their good qualities (for example willingness

for peace). This is done in an effort to rally readers behind the ideological preference of *The Times* with regard to the peace process that included for the first time Sinn Féin as a legitimate political partner.

Indeed, there are a good number of examples that pursued this line of argumentative stance which heavily criticises Sinn Féin political activists and leading figures. It is worth considering the following *Times* editorial published on the 26th April 1995.

THE PIKE IN THE THATCH.

Time for a Symbolic Act of Good Faith by Sinn Féin.

The delegation, which is expected to meet Michael Ancram, may include three people convicted of IRA offences. It is likely to be headed by Martin McGuinness, a senior member of Sinn Féin who has been jailed in the South in 1973 for his membership. At the time he said he was very, very proud of his association with that murderous organisation.

The language register that the press adopted was also a jargon of violence which is clearly discernible in the stylistic description of leading figures of Sinn Féin and IRA leaders who were portrayed as killers, criminals and extremely savage and beyond negotiations. *The Times* on the 9th of June 1992 overtly presented the following definition to the organisation.

KEEPING SECRET

The IRA is a Northern Ireland gangster culture whose activities in Britain is, and should be treated as, those of common criminals. The existing directive to MI5 grants to the IRA the glamour of seeking to “undermine or overthrow democracy.”... Terrorists are tribal killers, psychopathic assassins and student anarchists.

In the following editorial excerpt published on the 8th of September 1991, *The Times* again establishes a stereotypical association by contrasting the deeds of the IRA with president of Iraq Saddam Hussein who was then considered as the archetype of the horrific dictator.

Many in the West reacted to Saddam’s threats by instantly capitulating. They have permitted him to alter their lives and social behaviour, generating a neurosis of doubt as to whether the war is worth fighting, whether beating a distant dictator merits the

dislocation, the recession, the fear. Such doubt is soil in which defeatism grows. It is the greatest single threat to victory.... Killers can strike when and how they choose...There will be more such attacks, whether from the IRA or from Saddam Hussein. They are the unavoidable response of an embattled enemy.

In many respects, this sort of negative evaluation which puts both of Saddam Hussein and the IRA on the wrong side confirms the political and ideological attitudes of the newspaper towards the whole issue of Ulster that were constantly spelled out either explicitly or tacitly starting from the early 1970s up to the 1990s. The sympathy of *The Times* primarily to the official British standpoint and the Unionists combined with its pessimistic view, hostility and prejudice about the intentions of Sinn Féin were driven by political motivations that sought at the end to exclude any republican views from taking part in the negotiation table.

3.3. Critical linguistics

The move at this stage to work within the theoretical and methodological framework of Roger Fowler and his associates is also significant. Critical linguistics model, which considers the various connections between the linguistic structures and the values that they convey, would enable us to practically dig into the specific grammatical and lexical choices of journalists in expressing their views points and outlooks in relation to the conflict in Ulster. This might perhaps be especially valuable in reinforcing the assumptions that have been discussed so far at a macro semantic level of textual analysis. The choice of specific linguistic forms rather than others, notably in headlines and leading sentences, as it has been advocated earlier, echoes the choice of a certain point of view that, in turn, embodies a specific ideological stance.

It is interesting to refer to the insidious function that transitive verbs play in the enhancement of the writer's foisted point of view in attributing the action of certain behaviour to a specific agent, to inanimate one or simply by ignoring to mention the participant agent through the so called '*passivization*'. The use of transitivity, according to Roger Fowler and his colleagues, stands for a specific ideological orientation.

Consider, for example, the previously discussed *Guardian* article "13 killed as paratroops break riot" (31st January 1972). The use of the passive form '*13 killed*' leaves the agency of the act unspecified since it is not directly stated and presumably left opened, i.e. the responsibility of the army is not emphasised in the title of the article through the use of the passive construction instead of, for example, the more expressive active form:

"Paratroops killed 13 during riot" or the alternative, more revealing, passive forms

"13	killed	during riot	by paratroops (1)
(Affected participant)	(Predicate)	(Circumstance)	(Participant)

“13	killed	by paratroops	during riot (2)
(Affected participant)	(Predicate)	(Participant)	(Circumstance)

It is vital to note that the option made out of a set of linguistic structures is not fundamentally a random decision. In both examples (1) and (2) the action is clearly assigned to the paratroops by the verb ‘to kill’. However, in the actual headline, it is not indicated whether the action (killing) was committed by paratroops or not. The reader then would form a number of related questions: who did it? Was it intended or by accident? Likewise, the only circumstance referred to, in which this action happened, was not described as being a peaceful civil demonstration, but rather a violent riot.

As in the case of passive constructions, agency could also be attributed to inanimate objects. Indeed, this is could also be very much applicable to divert the attention of the reader towards preferred readings of the event. *The Guardian* article continues, “fifteen more people, including a woman, were wounded up by gunfire and another woman was seriously injured after being knocked down by an armoured car.” The reference to a ‘gunfire’ or an ‘armoured car’ drives the agency of injuring civil people and knocking down a woman away from humans (soldiers) to abstract agents.

It is suggested in this case that the omission of agency and other distinctive conditions would omit reproach and de-emphasise the assumption that there has been an intended use of violence against the demonstrators. Moreover, it is believed that the active form is chosen when the emphasis is to be on the agent of the action, implying clear responsibility. On the contrary, the passive form shifts the attention from the participant of the action to the affected participant (patient) as in (1) and (2). More importantly, the passive constructions would allow for the omission of the agent participant as in the original *Guardian* headline. It is assumed that the invisibility of participants would make it difficult for readers to pass tough judgment and criticism.

Among the most important framing patterns within this critical linguistic paradigm is the use of some linguistic components that express modality. This falls under the rubric of the ideational function of language which can be defined, as Fowler puts it,

“comment or attitude, obviously by definition ascribable to the source of the text, and explicit or implicit in the linguistic stance taken by the speaker/writer.”¹⁰⁴ In other words, modality allows for the expression of subjective, yet implicit expression of the writer’s opinions and evaluations. It follows that this might be an interesting element that shows the ideological biases of journalists. The use of the so called modality markers expresses different degrees of probability which ranges from absolute certainty, “there will be more such attacks,” (4) to the lesser suggestion as in (6). Virtually, this would have a significant effect on meaning. Consider the following quotations from both *The Times* and *Guardian* in the 1990s in their follow up of the early steps of the peace processes.

The Times

(3) The IRA is a Northern Ireland gangster culture whose activities in Britain are, and **should be** treated as, those of common criminals. (9/6/1992)

(4) There **will be** more such attacks, whether from the IRA, or from Saddam Hussein. They are the unavoidable response of an embattled enemy. (08/02/1991)

(5) The experience of the latter part of 1940 (*the blitz of London during the Second World War*) – far more testing than anything the IRA **could** perpetrate – stiffened the popular will for the long haul ahead. (27/06/1990)

(6) In fact, the **likelihood** that Sinn Féin will renounce violence and join the peace process is diminishing daily. (11/01/1994)

The Guardian

(7) Nobody can be in any doubt that **it would be** immensely difficult for the IRA to return to the armed struggle. (1/11/1994)

(8) Sinn Féin offered early hopes of peace. (16/12/ 1993)

¹⁰⁴ Fowler (1991) op. cit., 85.

All in all, it could not be an overstatement to argue that British broadsheets *The Guardian*, and especially *The Times*, provided a non-comprehensive coverage to suit the propagandistic campaign against the spirit of Republicanism in Northern Ireland, best exemplified by the radical group IRA and its political representative Sinn Féin. It is undeniable that the process of delegitimizing the political whims of all what might stand for Irishness, republicanism and nationalism, through the deployment and attribution of violence and terrorism, had successfully played out in the British anti-Irish propaganda. This ideological discourse slightly changed from period to another driven by the immediate political conditions which were in most of the time frustrated and volatile.

On the whole, the images and discourse relating to the Ulster problem have fallen in line that supports the official British policy in the first place, either during the hard times of violent struggle that reached its peak in the early 1970s, or the relatively peaceful initiatives that followed in the 1990s. It might be safe to argue that the quality press discourse reflected, in essence, the mainstream ideology within the British political sphere. It is not to assume, however, that the press did not have their more positive stake in peace building, its discourse was becoming gradually more constructive and supportive of the peace efforts. Yet, they were still adhered to their historical narrative which was heavily imbued with stereotypical images that are more pro-British and Unionist and anti-Irish and Republican.

Chapter Four

**The British Press Coverage of the
Iraq War (2003)**

4.1. Background to the Iraq War

The Iraq War, dubbed also Operation Iraqi Freedom, is one of the most controversial and highly undesirable wars in recent history. The war has received huge media coverage; different news agencies worldwide delivered hundreds of articles, TV shows and ongoing debates, and even some rare live access to battlefield scenes. In fact, the Iraq War has already been preceded by warfare within the British press and the other media outlets which were competing to offer their own narrative and interpretation, and particularly commenting on Britain's direct involvement in the war under Prime Minister Tony Blair leadership. Obviously, the political strife was increasing with the promotion of the Blair-Bush official conceptualization about the *just war* they declared on Iraq. This required in the first place rounding up the sympathy of the media which was, without doubt, vital to back up the war campaign efforts through its central role in legitimising the rightness of their case in the eyes of a large sceptical public.

Before tackling this subject in more details, it is useful to mediate on the overall political circumstances of the war which might be necessary perquisite to draw a fuller picture about the rhetoric manoeuvres that have been subsequently incorporated in the British news circles. Just like the preceding chapter, this part is designed to look for the framing patterns used in the coverage of the Iraq War in two of the best circulated British broadsheets: *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. For this purpose, focus will be attributed to a given period of time in the timeline of the struggle, especially when the coverage is believed to be particularly poignant. In other words, attention will be drawn only to some specific dates that preceded the unilateral Anglo-American military attack, and most significantly addressing the crowded period of events starting from the actual onset of the war on the 19th of March 2003 up to George Bush's declaration 'Mission Accomplished' by the beginning of May. It is also quite reasonable to advocate that the mood which featured the British newspapers towards Iraq exemplified in Saddam's persona in the previous decades might be very pertinent

to this topic. However, this concern is beyond the scope of this research work. This chapter, therefore, attempts precisely to trace the direct, as well as the less stated ideological inclinations and preferred war narratives that the broadsheets endorsed in their coverage.

To a large extent, the history of Iraq in the twentieth century was in a constant state of metamorphosis, characterized by a dramatically long phase of political instability and unrest embodied in a series of coups d'état and sudden uprisings. In such conditions, the birth and survival of the modern Iraqi state incorporating an ethnically and culturally diverse society with intermingled allegiances was difficult. Let alone the influence of the other local and external powers that continuously interfered, in a way or another, in the country's internal affairs for ideological, political or economic objectives. Certainly, Britain, whose presence in Iraq dates back to the First World War, had always been a major participant in shaping the modern state of Iraq. Its military intervention at the time was followed by a League of Nations mandate that eventually ended with a full independence and the creation of the free state of Iraq in 1932.¹⁰⁵ It must be emphasised that the British imperial control, albeit less forthright as it used to be, continued to mould the Iraqi political life up to date.

The strategic importance of Iraq for Britain, and the west in general, intensified with the sudden rise of the fundamentalist and hostile regime in Iran in the wake of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution (1979)¹⁰⁶ whereby the foundation of a radical theocratic state was set up. These circumstances were coincided with Saddam Hussein's seizure of power in Iraq in the same year. It was clearly noticed that this latter secular and pan-Arabism ideology was in sharp contrast to its neighbouring new born Iranian Shiite based state, which afterwards contributed to the Iran-Iraq war that lasted eight years starting from 1980, in which neither side seemed victorious. However, Saddam's special ties with the west were marred especially after he had

¹⁰⁵ See, Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, 2nd ed. (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

¹⁰⁶ The founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran after a successful overthrow of the Shah in 1979 whereby a deep and sudden change transformed the country to be an Islamic Republic.

invaded Kuwait in August 1990.¹⁰⁷ Iraq's occupation of Kuwait created an international condemnation and had lasting negative repercussions displayed in the immediate economic and military blockade issued by the United Nations Security Council. The aim of the new policy of containment against Iraq was intended to oblige Saddam Hussein to an unconditioned and full compliance with UN inspections investigating Iraq's nuclear projects, and its probable possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

There were formally a set of presumptions which constituted the platform of Bush's administration and its allies, most importantly Blair's team, to legitimize the move towards using military force as an alternative to the containment strategy. Iraq's acquisition of WMD and the possibility of using them against neighbouring countries, or making them available to terrorist organizations which would threaten UK's national security was Blair's most clearly voiced cause. Regime change as such, Professor Patrick Thornberry explains, "has been formally denied as a justification for the action, at least by the UK. Tony Blair asserted before the UK House of Commons on 18 March 2003 that 'I have never put the justification as regime change.'"¹⁰⁸ However, this formed, as noted by Dr. Robert M. Bowman (President of the Institute of Space and Security Studies in the US), the quintessence of Bush's foreign policy agenda before he came to power, and only later on endorsed by Tony Blair who kept insisting that regime change was not what made Britain side with the US policy over Iraq.¹⁰⁹

The legacy of Saddam as a pitiless dictator during more than two decades of ruling as president of Iraq came to the surface in the British media; he was repeatedly accused of violations of human rights through the use of poison gas and chemical weapons against his own people (the Kurds and Shiite in northern Iraq). With the escalation of the pro-war movement, several other arguments subsequently dominated

¹⁰⁷ The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq started on the 2nd of August 1990 after territory and oil policy related disputes between the two countries. The invasion confronted mass international condemnation and a US led coalition was authorized by the UN to drive Iraqi forces out. Kuwait was liberated on the 27th February 1991.

¹⁰⁸ Patrick Thornberry, "It Seemed the Best Thing to Be Up and Go: On the Legal Case for Invading Iraq," *The Iraq War and Democratic Politics*, Alex Danchev and John MacMillan, eds (UK: Routledge, 2005) 120.

¹⁰⁹ The goal of regime change was made clear in a document under the title "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces, and Resources For A New Century" in September 2000.

the UK's and US official discourse that went to demonstrate the rising threat of Saddam. Several allegations were proposed such as his possession of WMD, his ability to acquire them in a relatively short time, the threat to the Middle East security and the world in general, in addition to his alleged links with international terrorist networks most notably Al-Qaida. Thus, the liberation of the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam and help establishing a genuinely democratic state was made a central motive.

While all the aforementioned factors could be very relevant in hastening the US and Britain's might for the invasion, a second route - and perhaps more important one - was the geostrategic and economic position of Iraq that was largely perceived, at least in the Arab World, to be at the core motivation of the war. It was not, as Noam Chomsky¹¹⁰ put it, about having an access to Iraq's rich oil sources, but more essentially about controlling the oil industry. From another perspective, it is also plausible to situate the war within a larger scope as a part of the 'War on Terror' project which was formally shaped after the 9/11 atrocity in the US Neoconservative ideology. Indeed, further debate in the arguments pertaining to the real causes and aims of the war would be more complex, and might need more space to be adequately discussed, a concern which far exceeds the scope of this research work.

It has also been observed that the wide scale of the international embargo on Iraq during the 1990s¹¹¹ has considerably succeeded in draining the economic and military potentials of the country which was apparently defenceless in front of the advanced war machinery of the coalition forces. However, Bush-Blair promise of a swift war with few casualties, and the anticipated immediate collapse of the regime seemed increasingly unlikely when the coalition forces seemed to confront a fierce resistance, especially at the first days of the occupation. A protracted conflict not only with the official Iraqi army, but also with rising civic armed groups driven either by a nationalist sentiment, or religious zeal was in the horizon, and the great possibility of

¹¹⁰ David Barsamian, *Imperial Ambitions: Interviews with Noam Chomsky on the 9/11 Post world* (UK: Penguin Books, 2005) 6.

¹¹¹ A series of resolutions of economic and political sanctions against Iraq were issued by the UNSC and enforced by the use of international military force. The blockade was a direct response to Iraq's aggression on Kuwait in August 1990, and was lifted only in the wake of the Iraq War 2003.

foreign infiltrating fighters from other Arab states made the conduct of the war more complex and expanded the timetable of the military operations from days to months.

Another important facet of the war was the role of an impressive public opposition which was materialised as early as the official plans were made public through frequent mass demonstrations. It could be argued that the effect of the anti-war campaign that stretched across the world posed another real pressure, albeit limited in its influence and lacking tangible impact, to the more sophisticated official pro-war campaign. Significant segments of an expanded British population, in addition to international associations, were not reluctant to criticise Blair's foreign policy in relation to Iraq. The anti-war movement that appeared to be more vocal before the launch of the strikes has however witnessed a slightly conceptual transformation and ultimately became less fierce with the progress of the coalition forces in the war, most notably after the toppling of Saddam's statue which represented a symbolic image of the triumph of the allies.

A number of polls and online surveys were conducted before and during the war showing a slight change in public attitude. A March *Guardian* survey finding showed an increase in support, though the majority still in opposition with 44% in proportion to the 38 % pro-war proponents¹¹² a few days prior to the invasion. In the other side of the Atlantic, most Americans believed the alleged links between Al-Qaida and Saddam's regime and its indirect involvement in the 9/11 attack. However, the ties between the two were never frankly advocated by senior US government officials based on the lack of sufficient evidence, yet they did not fully deny the matter and frequent references were suggested.

Despite the huge public opposition and the poor legal background of the war proponents who represented the invasion of Iraq as inevitable and pre-emptive measure, the US-British led coalition forces started their offensive on the 19th of March, 2003. After few weeks from the landing of troops under massive aerial

¹¹² "Guardian Opinion Poll- Fieldwork: March 14th-16th 2003," March 2003 <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Politics/documents/2003/03/18/17303ICM_poll.pdf>

bombardment, President George Bush declared the end of the major combat operations on the first of May announcing the victory over Saddam's regime. However, daily violence, unexpected armed confrontations and suicide bombs have remained the main feature that characterized the Iraqi scene for several months to come, and resulted in considerable economic and human losses.

4.2. The pre-invasion press coverage

It is undoubtedly necessary to stress from the outset that a clearer understanding, albeit in very broad terms, of the political landscape in which the British press was fabricating its own ideologically based position is central, in the sense that this would have eminently a considerable influence on the press discourse production and understanding. Critical discourse specialists Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak advocate that “discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking the context into consideration.”¹¹³ In this case, the newspaper’s coverage, as a form of political communicative device, is basically a product of knowledge, opinions, beliefs and attitudes that relate, at various levels, to the overall political situation in which the press operates.

The British press, following the terrorist assault on the US in what is formally known as 9/11,¹¹⁴ had become largely pre-occupied with the future effects of the traumatic event and its political repercussions on the world stage. It could be said that this was indeed a totally new phase which directed the press focus towards new subjects, as will be shown, where a greater emphasis was being placed on the rising threat of international terrorism as a lethal menace to global security-though the term Terrorism with capital T was lacking a commonly agreed upon universal definition-in addition to prompting a renewed discussion on the pending question of Iraq. Broadly speaking, the media coverage reflected the deep changes in the world political climate, notably with the rise of the Neoconservative ideology in the US in January 2000.

In fact, the reinvigoration of George H. W. Bush political agenda with regard to Iraq in the First Gulf War (1991) was fully discernible in the persuasive rhetoric of the George W. Bush administration. This latter included a number of former official members who served in the US government during the First Gulf War, such as

¹¹³ Norman Fairclough, et al., “Critical Discourse Analysis,” *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Volume 2. Teun Van Dijk, ed. (London: sage publications, 2011) 372.

¹¹⁴ Refers to the terrorist attacks on the US on the 11th of September 2001 which targeted the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC resulting in the death of almost 3000 victims.

Secretary of State General Colin Powell previously serving as of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, vice president Dick Cheney, and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld who were notoriously obsessed with the unfinished job of Iraq, and apparently committed to realize their designs on the country. In Britain, Prime Minister Tony Blair did not seem reluctant to offer his overt back up for the project when it was evident that he would stand unconditionally at America's shoulder. Yet, there have been major divisions and intense political tumult about the case of Iraq in both countries.

It is the aim of this section to assess whether the official mainstream ideology has been endorsed and ultimately disseminated by the British press which leads one to empirically measure a corpus of newspapers' articles during the most sensitive periods that paved the way for the war. The sample of newspapers consisted of a large body of all the editorials published in September 2001, the immediate comments on the Crawford summit in April 2002, and most significantly the three weeks period of the invasion that will be looked at in the separate section that follows. It must be noted that the articles drawn from the official digital indexes of both the broadsheet titles *The Independent* and *The Guardian* were systematically selected on the basis of their direct or indirect reference to the Iraq War.

It is understandable that the complexity of the Iraq question must have represented serious challenges for journalists and editors to stick to the journalistic norms and ethical values that regulate the press behaviour. Even in a democracy like Britain, it would be difficult for journalists to adopt a completely balanced discourse since they are constantly confronted with a massive official propaganda campaign which went in an effort to drum up maximum local sympathy and international support with public driven with discord. Besides journalists might be accused of being unpatriotic in case they take an adversarial stance to the views of the established power, the failure in expressing solidarity with 'our troops' and 'our nation' that is deemed necessary in wartime, could be wrongly taken as a betrayal to the national duty, a fact which eventually makes the myth of objectivity and neutrality less visible.

Remarkably, the war was topic ‘A’ not only in Bush’s political agenda but also in the British media debates. It seems quite reasonable, with reference to Galtung and Ruge’s perceptive model¹¹⁵ that the ongoing nature of this case has satisfied a number of criteria which makes it a newsworthy item playing out over several years and its repercussion to be unfolded for years to come. The war of Iraq, therefore, can be subsumed into the category of bad news due to its unpredictable, yet huge human and financial costs, since it has involved elite powers whose actions can potentially affect the world’s political and economic atmosphere. Let alone the unknown security risks that might arise afterwards in the Middle East region and elsewhere.

At the broadest level, a sweeping analysis of the headlines and editorials, as well as the syntactic and lexical structures used throughout the period that preceded the so called ‘Decapitation Attack’, revealed that both *The Independent* and to a lesser extent *The Guardian*, that were traditionally supportive of center leftist ideology, formed a stage for quite diverse discussions. In fact they displayed a variety of opinions which mirrored the lack of political consent, and most of the time explicitly expressed their uneasiness at the equivocal whims of the US-British led to the war. Before elaborating on this discursal position, it is perhaps relevant to quantitatively measure the salience of the topics that addressed the question of Iraq and terrorism in the press coverage.

Interesting enough is the research filtering mechanism in the official website of *The Guardian* which allows for efficient retrieval of its content from an archive that dates back up to 1999. It is especially effective in marking out the lexical content of *The Guardian* which is a very useful function since it could help one sort out results with precise details about the date, the contributor and the section that the intended article belongs to. This could be simply done by typing subject related key words or phrases in the research box. The set of data resulted from the research carried out for the regular appearance of certain words, such as Iraq, terrorism, and violence has been organized and transformed into simple graphical representations as shown in the figures 4, 5, 6 and 7.

¹¹⁵ See, chapter two, pp 41-42.

As it has been mentioned earlier, the topicality of the journalistic texts is a central factor in tracing the ideological perspectives of the press. The principal objective in this section is to address certain questions about the content of newspapers (main themes and topics of coverage) to find out what was emphasized and what was de-emphasized.

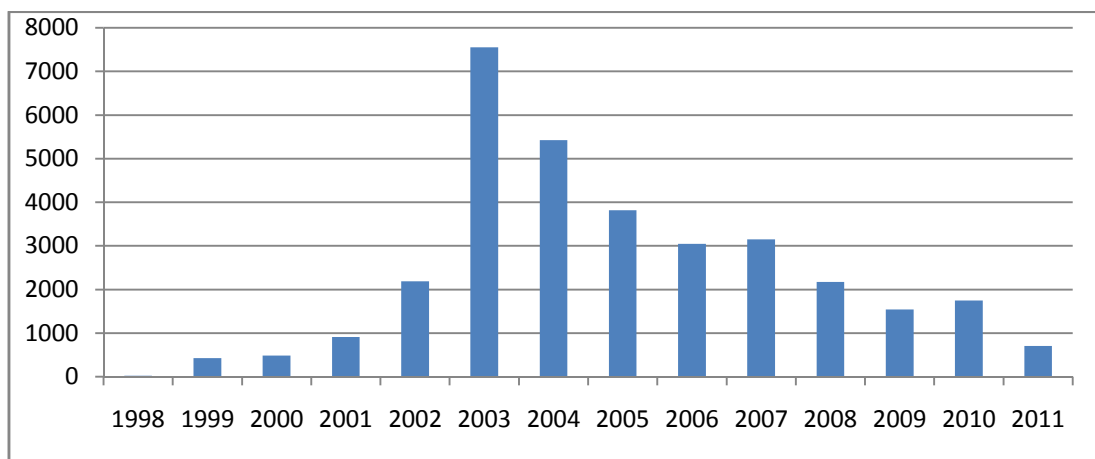


Figure 4. The appearance of the word 'Iraq' in *The Guardian* (1998-2011)

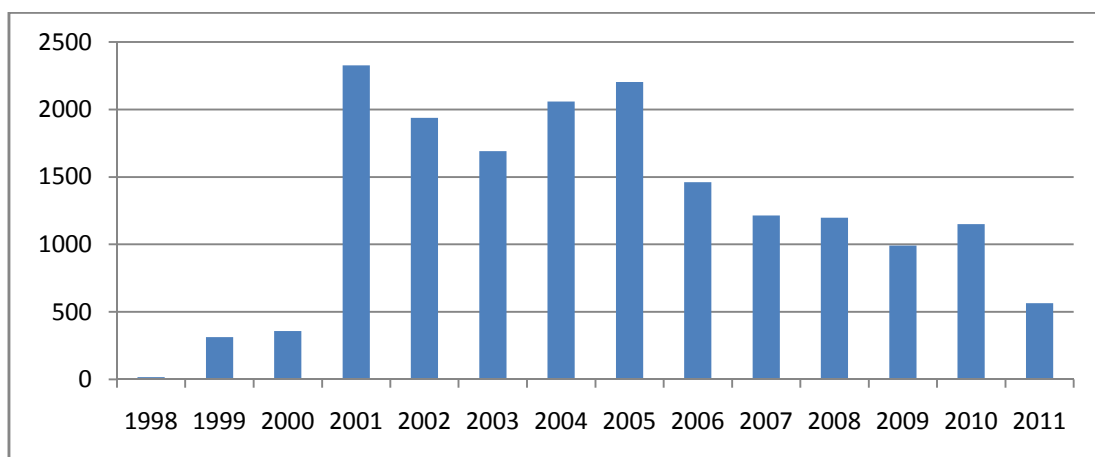


Figure 5. The appearance of the word 'Terrorism' in *The Guardian* (1998-2011)

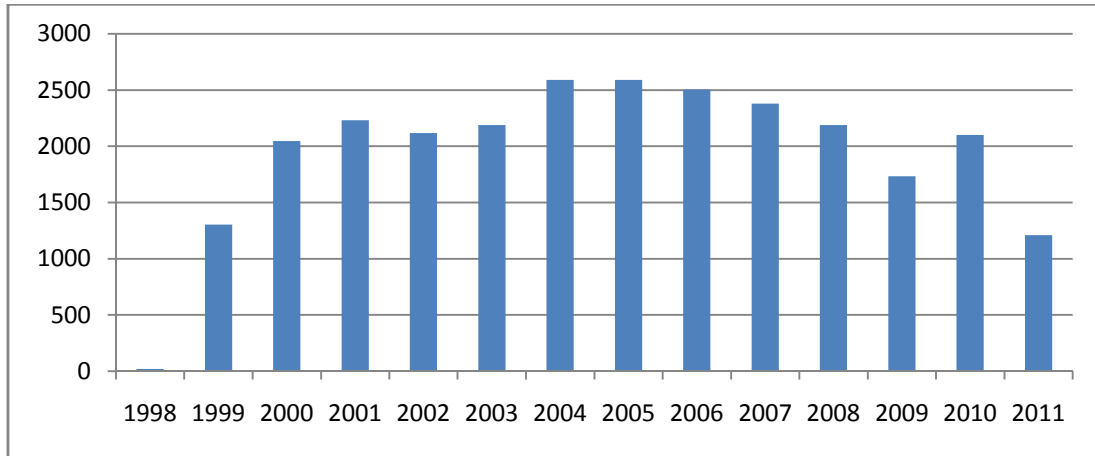


Figure 6. The appearance of the word ‘Violence’ in *The Guardian* (1998-2011)

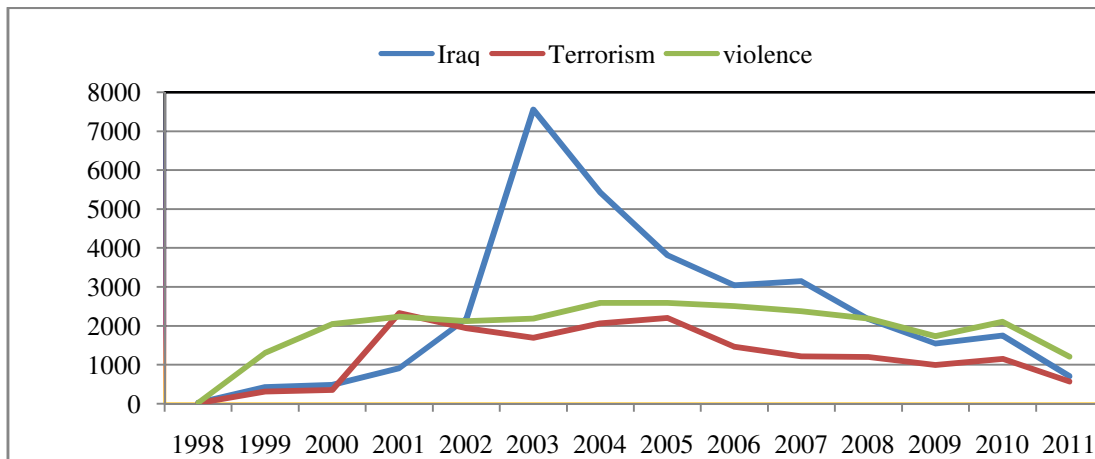


Figure7. The appearance of the words ‘Iraq’ ‘Terrorism’ and ‘Violence’ in *The Guardian* (1998-2011)

A close look at the figures above shows that *The Guardian’s* representation of Iraq has come under increased scrutiny starting from 1998 and has become more salient with the escalation that followed and finally decreased after peaking in 2003. It could also be noticed from figure 5 that the discourse about terrorism witnessed a dramatic increase following the 9/11 event and continued to be a major feature in *The Guardian* up to recent years where it slowed down. Similarly, the word ‘violence’ reached its highest peak and continued to increase in the same period and waned in the aftermath. The final composite figure clearly demonstrates a parallel increase in the appearance of the word ‘terrorism’ along with ‘Iraq’, and to a lesser extent the word ‘violence’. It

is obvious that throughout the whole period, daily accounts of terrorism, either in relation to the problem of Iraq or to other related matters that fall under the umbrella of 'War on Terror' discourse, were in parallel increase.

It is necessary to stress the fact that although these graphs confirm the prominence of the discourse of terrorism in the newspaper during the prologue to the war and its aftermath, they do not necessarily relate terrorism to Iraq, because these words may express a specific concept, but do not form a comprehensive theme or topic. Whether the correlation between the two is firmly established or not is a question that needs a close examination at the level of the newspaper's texts themselves. It should also be mentioned that the appearance of the word violence, albeit very pertinent in this context, might not be exclusively related to the war of Iraq, these caveats therefore need to be borne in mind when considering the data provided here which should be taken as primarily suggestive so far.

More crucially to the case of Iraq is the type of discourse features and characteristics in the press. In order to allow this to be fully assessed, the use of discourse analysis techniques should be considered in the news reports, the editorials and leading articles of the newspapers to trace their skewed ideological representations that might lead to unbalanced reporting.

It has become discernible that ever since the appalling 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, the discourse of counter terrorism came to dominate the political debates engendering with it a war-like atmosphere that unleashed feelings of fear, hatred and a sense of victimization amongst Americans similar to that of the Pearl Harbor incident during the Second World War whereby the US was officially engaged in the war. However, the enemy then was identified as a terrorist organization named Al-Qaida¹¹⁶ and its supporters. 'Terrorism', Professor Edward Said noted, "has acquired an extraordinary status in American public discourse, displacing communism as public enemy number one."

¹¹⁶ An international terrorist organisation formed by the Saudi born Osama Bin Laden (1975-2011) who has been liquidated recently in the northern part of Pakistan. The organisation committed a number of atrocities in different parts of the world that resulted in thousands of victims.

¹¹⁷At various times, charges of Saddam's involvement have been much more hedged around by American officials without concrete evidence that sustains their allegation.

The war on terror frame was reinforced by the official rhetoric that succeeded to normalize the discourse which demonizes the 'Other' enemy exemplified in a large network of terrorist organizations backed by 'rogue regimes' and 'failed states'. The new terminology was becoming extensively used in the British press, which showed an increased hostility towards Saddam Hussein's totalitarian regime. British Labour party politician Peter Kilfoyle in his book Lies, Damned lies and Iraq further advocates:

The whole thrust of British policy on Iraq post 9/11 was to portray it as a threat to Britain, and to the West generally. Some of the suggested capabilities of Saddam Hussein's Iraq were risible, but were deemed necessary to convince the British public that unlawful 'action' needed to be taken against an obdurate and dangerous dictator. Fear was to be the emotion shared by government propaganda, aided and abetted by a complaint and complicit press.¹¹⁸

It is worth mentioning that critical voices condemning the brutality of the 9/11 attack have subsequently emerged in all the British press. While both *The Independent* and *The Guardian* expressed unconditioned solidarity with the United States, they did in fact continuously question the ways in which the response should be, its targets and how far reaching the war on terrorism might be. Since the military action against any 'rogue state' supposed of harboring terrorist bases requires a consensus from the international institutions and community. *The Independent* insisted on its opposition to any kind of unilateral response, or counter-productive act for revenge that might breach the international law, alluding of course at the great possibility of targeting Iraq. An editorial in *The Independent* on the 12th of September 2001 praised the success of the international collaboration in this respect.

¹¹⁷Edward Said, "The Essential Terrorist," Blaming the Victims, Edward Said and Christopher, eds. (New York: Verso, 2001). 149.

¹¹⁸ Peter Kilfoyle, Lies, Damned Lies and Iraq: An In-depth Analysis into the Case for War and How it Was Misrepresented, (USA: Harriman House, 2007) 97.

Terrible acts of barbarism against America, but still the response must be civilised

It seems inevitable that there will be a refocusing of America's defence and intelligence communities towards the terrorist threat. International co-operation, such as we recently witnessed working so successfully against an IRA mission to Colombia, has to be intensified.

In the post 9/11 political frustration and anxiety, the broadsheets called for rationality in the conduct of the new 'War on Terror'. This view has been frequently re-emphasised during the whole month that followed the attacks, insisting on clarification on the limits and scope of the new war campaign before a military strike can be launched. The scepticism of the British quality newspapers raised questions about Bush's strategy and its subsequent consequences. At the macro-structure level, headlines and leading sentences, again, can be seen as very succinct and helpful summaries for the themes of the newspapers (global meaning of the text). It should be mentioned that unlike the news reports, editorials as such are persuasive discourses constituting of a cluster of opinions and attitudes which might be personal or based on shared social beliefs. Let us consider some of the headlines that followed the 9th of September 2001 event.

The Independent

Hold fire until we have seen Mr Bush's response (13/11/2001)

This war needs to be won. But we must be sure of **our weapons and our enemies** (13/11/2001)

Bring the murderers to justice, but tackle the causes of these outrages (14 /11/2001)

It is meaningless and dangerous to declare **war against terrorism** (17/11/2001)

Bush has not yet earned the right to lead us to **war** (23/11/2001)

The Guardian

Beating the terrorists: Bush should move with caution (13/11/2001)

Penknife and the bomb: **brute force is not the way to defeat the terrorist threat** (15/11/2001)

A perilous proposition: **military action** must have clear objectives (19/11/2001)

What is perhaps most interesting in these editorial headlines is the focus on war related vocabulary which is almost prevalent in these texts, as well as other related ones that deal particularly with this subject. Words and phrases like ‘hold fire’ ‘weapons’ ‘enemies’ ‘declare war’ emphasise once more the war-like character in the conflict against an abstract entity ‘Terrorism’. Indeed, this terminology was a vital component in the official modes of discourse with great political significance. In the sense that the response to the attack was no longer seen as a traditional fight against organized crime, or desperate terrorist organizations, but more serious battle with an extremely dangerous threat whereby the word ‘War’ is a key term. It is precisely because of this categorization that military intervention was justified against terrorist regimes (Taliban in Afghanistan) and by extension those, in Bush’s words, forming an ‘Axis of Evil’.

Another significant stage in tracking the run-up to the Iraq invasion was the meeting held in Crawford, Texas, between President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair from 5-7 April 2002.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the private meetings during the summit had left the impression that the plan for the war had officially started, the remaining task was to carefully craft the political conditions conducive to carrying out a seemingly ‘legal’ war. Late evidence confirmed analysts’ speculations about the meeting. *The Mail* for example reported on the 27th of November 2009 that former British ambassador to US Sir Christopher Meyer declared that it was there when Bush and Blair ‘signed in blood’ their commitment to regime change in Iraq.

In a prescient manner, *The Guardian* on the 6th of April 2002 warned that “The Iraq threat exists, but it should be dealt with through the United Nations, through a new regime of inspection and through willingness to enforce that regime by UN authority, not the unilateral force on which Mr. Bush appears set.” Whilst it is evident that the newspaper suggested the existence of a real threat of the Iraqi regime, it asked Blair to deal with the issue from the perception of Britain and its commitment to the rule of international law. It could be argued that this position was virtually intriguing, but still

¹¹⁹Leaked documents from previous Labour politicians such as, Blair’s foreign policy adviser David Manning, confirmed that Blair was committed to support regime change in Iraq following the meeting with former US president George Bush.

unconvincing and obviously did not offer any explanation of the nature of the Iraqi threat and skewed the core of the debate. The clear implication was that if there is any possible attack plan, it should be handled collectively and in accordance with the UN recommendations, and not by a unilateral Anglo-American action.

From a slightly different perception, the response to *The Guardian's* cautious approach was shortly supplied by *The Independent* on the following day in an editorial entitled: "Let the UN test Saddam's intentions before sending in the bombers" which advocated:

From there, we are hearing that a pre-emptive strike would be justified by the scale of the threat posed by Iraq... it is hard to believe that Iraq presents any greater threat to the US, or to any other country, than a great many other countries we could name.

In addition to the proposed potential threat posed by the Iraqi regime, there was another important thematic representation of the war which was becoming more silent during the days of the military attack which framed the occupation of Iraq as a war of liberation.

As already noted, the quantitative results of this section demonstrated the salience of Iraq and terrorism in the press discourse. Since the September 2001 attacks, the threat of terrorism became an obsession in the British media circles. Thus, the Iraqi case was frequently subsumed into the debate of the war on terror without making a strong link between the two. It is to be emphasised that both broadsheets, *The Guardian* and *Independent*, explicitly voiced their refusal to any kind of military intervention against the sovereignty of Iraq based on the fact that the allegations held by the proponents of the war were founded on scant evidence. Moreover, the need to international coalition and consent was highlighted and prioritised. While there was no affinity between the press and the political decision considered by the US and UK with regard to the use of force, some official frames permeated throughout the discourse of the press and were commonly discussed.

4.3. The press coverage of the war period (19 March- 1 May 2003)

It can be argued that the war period which lasted from the 19th of March till the “Mission Accomplished” declaration on the first day of May is probably the most significant span time that best help mark the central ideological tendencies of the press discourse. It is during this period that the voice of the elite newspapers and their positions to be subtly communicated, basically in their editorials and leading articles, taking into account that newspapers ideologies and opinions, as Teun A. Van Dijk explains, “are usually not personal, but social, institutional or political.”¹²⁰ However, it should be stressed that one distinctive feature of the British broadsheets, at least the papers considered here, is their avoidance of direct propagandistic techniques. This could be simply noticed through the variety of war related subjects and contested views displayed in following up the progress of the war events. Nevertheless, it is left to the tools of CDA to demarcate the press ideological orientations through the analysis of extracted lexical and semantic items.

At the global structure of discourse, the overarching question to be asked once again here is: What was the gist of the press coverage? After a preliminary inspection of a large section of articles, several different patterns appeared. The range of topics discussed during the war time for the broadsheet papers addressed in this research, were to some extent an acknowledgment of the deep public concerns and uncertainties about the wisdom of going to war in the then turbulent circumstances. Confusion rather than consent seemed to be the main feature in the political spectrum. This was caused by the different contested voices about not the legality of the war, which *The Independent* considered to be a somehow outdated topic at the time when the Commons vote was overwhelmingly in favor of war, but fundamentally about topics that address the conduct of the war, the Anglo-American relationship and the post war reconstruction of Iraq and the role of UN. Clearly, the central question about the right

¹²⁰ Teun Van Dijk (1998) op. cit., 22.

cause of the war in the first place was overshadowed by repeated discussions of those framing patterns.

It has been noted that *The Guardian's* and *The Independent's* discourse was reassessed in a number of occasions expressing various views which were not wholly separated, but broadly speaking fall in the line of soft criticism. It could be argued that *The Independent's* reporting was more controversial by providing access to different types of articles in caricaturing the war progress. Very significantly, it attributed much attention to the human aspect that lashed out at the war planners through the depiction of the tragedy of the civilian Iraqis caught in the middle of chaos and disorder.

However, in tandem with the war developments, a new stance was eventually produced. Indeed, the shift in the discursal attitude of the newspaper in addressing its new outlook was sudden and discernible. A few themes were relayed and substantially dominated its coverage. In brief, the paper made it clear that the war was a wrong decision that the nation has been involved in unless its results come with the noble goals that both Blair and Bush insisted upon during their war campaign. The justification of the engagement in the war was expressed in more disguise from different perspectives. *The Independent* editorialized on Friday, the 21st of March 2003:

After all the doubts, only one aim can justify this war: freedom for the Iraqi people

The momentum of war, it has been observed, has a logic of its own. It is often in the first few days of a conflict that the war aims of the combatants metamorphose into a different shape. That happened in Kosovo, for example, when the initial aerial bombardment designed to deter Slobodan Milosevic from ethnic cleansing provoked an exodus of refugees – whom Nato then pledged to return to their homes. That clarified things, and it may be that something similar will happen in Iraq.

However, there is more to this war than that. The liberation of the Iraqi people is, on its own terms, a desirable and laudable aim. The more the Bush administration and its allies focus on the welfare of the Iraqi people, the better it will be. The more this is fought as a war to liberate Iraq, the more its damaging effects, both on Iraq and the rest of the world, can be minimised. The unprovoked invasion of a sovereign state

sets an uncertain precedent; but it will be mitigated by the emphasis on Saddam Hussein's tyranny.

Strikingly, *The Independent's* pre-war critical comments transformed into another phase of appraisal of the war humanitarian purposes; this was by no means the most straightforward war justification that aligned the newspaper with the official propaganda. On the other hand, opinion polls suggested an increased public sympathy in the US, and to a lesser degree in the UK, because they perceived the battle against Saddam dictatorship as a liberation mission of an oppressed nation. Against this background, it could be said that the press failed to bring to light the immediate and long term human suffering that the invasion itself will cause, still bearing in mind that there was no majority vote over the use of force in the UNSC which is virtually the only credible international authority to decide on such cases.

At the level of language use, the importance of word choice has already been highlighted. The inner workings of ideology can also be manifested in analogical constructions. By definition, analogy is simply used to show that two things share some common items. The more the items are alike, the more the argument behind the analogy is being made more convincing. The use of analogy between Iraq and Kosovo in the just mentioned quotation, and in a number of other editorials, has been established to allude to the common ethical background that the two cases share. The implicit ideological construction is made to justify the war from a purely humanitarian perspective. However, the context of the two situations is quite different; this is simply because the case of the former was driven by evidence of systematic mass killings and ethnic cleansing campaign against the minority Albanians by the Serbian army that was motivated by extreme chauvinism.¹²¹ Furthermore, there was less public criticism and more international political consent compared to the Iraq War whose motives still regarded as highly controversial and dubious.

Another analogy often used by *The independent* to defend its support for the conduct of the war against Saddam is the comparison between, on the one hand, the

¹²¹ There has been hard evidence of mass killings against the Kosovo Albanians by the Serbian army, around 11,000 were massacred and thousand fled the region.

democratic and legitimate states (Britain/US/ George Bush and Tony Blair), and on the other hand, the forces of destruction (Iraq/ Saddam). On the first day of the military attack on Thursday, 20th of March 2003, *The Independent* published the following:

When democracies do battle with a despot, they must hold on to their moral superiority

When democracies do battle with despots it is essential they retain the high moral ground – which is part of what distinguishes the governments of George Bush and Tony Blair from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein... Politicians across the political spectrum are united in the conviction that the time has come "to support our troops". This newspaper agrees, and fervently hopes for a swift conclusion with as few casualties on both sides as is possible in war.

It could clearly be noticed in this excerpt the way in which the attention of the reader is being drawn to a previous scriptable knowledge about the recent situation. Viz, the reader's memory is being invoked with negative images about the other enemy through the emphasis on the oppressive nature of Saddam's military regime. This quotation does not only provide an interpretation of the event, but also gives an opinion about the situation and its components. In simple words, the war is represented from an ethical dimension whereby the reader is being told that it is a war between democracy and barbarism, between liberation and oppression. Thus, Saddam Hussein is described as tyrant and despot and Iraq, in Blair's words, would be better without him. The normative assumption that underlies this discourse is an important element in legitimating the war.

The above text is not only about how the war could be efficiently managed with less human cost, but also about US (Superior/civilized Democratic states) and Them (inferior/despots, barbaric regimes). This categorization strengthened the negative facet of the enemy; hence, influencing the reader's own judgment. The emphasis on negative portrayals is among the explicit discursive strategies in the ideological discourse structure. From that point, it is easy to see how *The Independent* came to the conclusion that the case of the war is not wholly rejected, that was the turning point, yet without complete adherence and still providing the background for criticism

either in relation to the conduct of the war itself, its human aspect or even the unconditioned inclination to the American approach.

Indeed, the characterization of the different actors and participants involved in the act of war is a value laden element that typically (though not necessarily) strengthen, or suppress negative/positive stereotypical images and labels in the news texts and therefore works on a process of exclusion and inclusion which is, in principle, ideologically motivated. Similar examples of this stance can also be seen in a number of excerpts, albeit very few in both broadsheets, that assign specific descriptive categories to the US-British coalition forces and their Iraqi opponents as in the following editorial of *The Independent* published on Wednesday, 2nd April 2003 under the title:

Civilian deaths occur in war-but there is no excuse for needless belligerence

The British army prides itself, with justification, on the precision, guile and forbearance that it acquired in Northern Ireland. The signs are that these skills are proving valuable in Iraq, and will become more so as the war proceeds. But we should not forget that these techniques were hard-won and that there were many deaths, injuries and just plain errors along the way.

This quotation and other similar samples tend to represent the British soldiers as professional, well trained and disciplined who are expected to act humanly. They are there fighting for humanitarian purposes and therefore depicted as liberators, and peace keepers rather than invaders. In similar vein, *The Guardian* praised the conduct of the war by the US-British coalition forces, the accuracy of the aerial bombing in targeting the enemy military bases and most significantly the troops' carefulness towards the civilian Iraqis were highly appreciated by the newspaper which considers their efforts and performance *commendable*. The picture of the soldiers as 'saviours' was recurrently enhanced. Following the toppling of Saddam's statues on the 9th of April 2003, for example, *The Independent* commented:

After expressing their relief and celebration, Iraqis must now be allowed to rebuild their own country

The toppling of Iraq's Baath party regime in the very centre of its tyranny is a victory to savour. That it has been achieved relatively quickly, with relatively few Allied casualties, is testimony to the professionalism and discipline of the US and British forces.

In sharp contrast, Iraq's military forces were categorized through their violent behaviour and their apathy with regard to the civilian casualties and the international conventions of war, notably in respect to prisoners taken captive. They were also described as militiamen resorting to guerrilla tactics, wearing largely civilian clothing and taking refuge in populace centres. Ostensibly, this kind of depiction creates the impression that they were not an official army, and more importantly draws an image of terrorist like behaviour.

It is true that at the political stage the identity of Saddam Hussein was linked with the broad framework of war on terrorism. However, this was not mirrored by the British press based on the assumption that there was no concrete evidence which relates him to any terrorist organization. Yet, negative attributions to Saddam's character and his misbehavior were repeatedly emphasized in the press. Labels like *tyrant*, *despot* and *dictator* were frequently accompanying the reference to Saddam. This kind of criminalization of Saddam was systematically sustained.

Strikingly, along with *The Independent's* editorial shift with regard to the war aims and consequences at the beginning of the invasion, there was also a parallel shift in evaluating Tony Blair's performance on the political stage as a prime minister. Following Blair's statement to the commons on the 19th of March 2003, *The Independent* published a relatively long article that has given him a glowing appraisal, it ran:

Whatever the anxieties over this conflict, Mr. Blair has shown himself to be a leader for troubled times

It was sometimes said of Margaret Thatcher that she made her own luck. Maybe the same can be said of Mr Blair. For he has had his share of luck as well as, in recent weeks, becoming increasingly impressive as a national leader...And despite all the doubts about this war, Mr Blair has shown himself in the past few days to be at once

the most formidable politician in the country and the right national leader for these deeply uncertain times.

Tony Blair is referred to as an impressive national leader. The whole article, from which this quotation is taken, considers him to be the perfect politician whose presence, particularly in such circumstances, is more than necessary. Thus, his promises of a swift war with minimum casualties and the democratization of Iraq are made more trustworthy and reasonable in the reader's perception. However, there has been a constant criticism over Blair's loyalty and adherence to Bush's policy in Iraq and apparently his limited influence on the decision making of Bush's administration, which *The Independent* considered in an editorial published on Sunday, the 6th of April 2003, to lack "unified purpose and nearly always opts for the unilateralist option."

Another noticeable representation category in the press language is the use of references to ethnicity and religion. Indeed, there were rare examples that addressed ethnic backgrounds in the Iraq War, yet they had powerful ideological significance. The words 'Islam' and 'Arab' were more or less tied to each other in most cases and predominantly encoded with implicit, and sometimes explicit, negative prejudicial portrayals. The words Arab and Muslims were used as if they stand for the same thing, whereas they are basic differences between the two in terms of meaning, reference and belonging since not all the Arabs are Muslims and the reverse is equally true. It is worth mentioning in this respect that many western readers might not fully recognize the nature of this association.

The most important point here is that the Iraq War has been given a wider contextualization that goes beyond Iraq to include all the Arabs and all the Muslims. In other words, the war is not only about Iraq, but between the West (the US, UK and their allies) and the Muslim sphere, most precisely Arab countries whose 'diehard fanatics' as *The Guardian* put it on Saturday the 5th of April 2003, aiming not for "a better future for Iraq but a bloody nose for America." Following the toppling of Saddam's statue *The Guardian* further commented that "the shock of the day weighed heavily on some - but not all - Arab hearts. Many viewers in Cairo turned off

televisions in disgust. Some see this, wrongly, as an Arab and Muslim defeat.” Such judgments were by no means subjective interpretations that are loaded with ideological biases.

It was also vital to refer to the inclusion of quotations in the press releases which was likely to refer to US and British pro-war politicians and planners who were justifying their own points of view regularly and affirming the necessity and legality of their case. Yet, reference to the Iraqi officials was rare. Further to what has been suggested so far, what was unsaid about the war formed the common basis for ongoing criticism. It is from this perspective that the British press was blamed for failure to objectively tackle the grim facet of the war that has been frequently reported by non British press and TV channels. War crimes against Iraqi civilians, topics of torture, rape and random killings committed by the coalition forces were lately confirmed by military leaked documents.

4.4. Critical linguistics

Like the preceding chapter, this section should also account for the use of grammatical forms in the corpus of data and assess their ideological function. It is usually a common practice in news making to use impersonal passive constructions in headlines and leading sentences through which the information being addressed would seem somewhat incomplete and provocative, and might therefore lead to a misinterpretation of who actually performed a certain action. The passive form, as it has been mentioned earlier, is an important device that unveils the nature of the underlying relationship between the linguistic structures and the ideological skew of a given text.

After analyzing the corpus of *The Independent* and *Guardian*, numerous cases were found with regard to the way in which the agency of actions was handled. It has been observed that, in numerous cases, negative attributions to the coalition forces were undermined by the use of passive constructions. For example, on the 23rd of March 2003, after the bombardment of the southern city of Basra which resulted in the death of about 50 Iraqi civilians, journalist Severin Carrell from *The Independent* headlined the story, “50 civilians dead, says Arab TV.” The act of killing and its circumstances in this example are not made clear, which leaves the agency of the action unspecified while the source clearly charges the coalition forces of the massacre.

In fact, there are many ways in which self positive representation can be emphasized and negative attribution to be subtly avoided. Thus, the converse is equally true when considering the ‘Other’ representation. In contrast to the above pointed example, condemnable actions were frequently assigned to their Iraqi agents. Let us consider the following *Independent* headlines:

UK bomb experts were executed **by Iraqis**, Blair insists (28/03/2003)

Iraqi troops fire on families fleeing Basra (29/03/2003)

Iraqi missile may have caused Baghdad market horror, says US general (27/03/2003)

The case of the UK bomb experts Luke Allsopp and Simon Cullingworth (in the headline just mentioned) was fraught with ambiguity. At the time when Tony Blair insisted that they have been killed by Iraqis in what he considered to be '*an act of cruelty beyond comprehension*', Iraq's information minister denied responsibility. Whatever the real circumstances of this incident, the problem, as so often, is that fact that journalists are impelled to provide the agents of such incidents at the very beginning of their articles whenever found related to the 'Other' as also exemplified in the second headline which clearly exhibits the brutality of the Iraqi troops.

Equally important to this line of argument is the reference to inanimate objects or abstract nouns instead of direct reference to humans as in the cluster of headlines below.

14 dead as missile hit Baghdad market (26/03/2003)

In the Cotswold's sunshine, **B-52s** load deadly cargo (21/03/2003)

Laden with death and with destruction the B-52s take off in front of peace demonstrators (22/03/2003)

Minute after minute **the missile** came with devastating shrieks (22/03/2003)

Shock and awe air assault blasts Baghdad (21/03/2003)

The longest day: **From surgical attack to full scale** attack on land and by air (21/03/2003)

The regular reference to inanimate objects when reporting, for example, about the violence occurring during the war, such as causing or bringing about the mass killings of civilians, to devastate, bomb, blast and the like, instead of their real human agents, would have a strong impact on the reader's perception. The above headlines tend to create a sort of machine war-like atmosphere which conceals the human responsibility in a brutal war taking lives and resulting in considerable damage and suffering. It is obvious to readers that the blame of devastation and bringing death to the streets of Baghdad are attributed to military equipments and machinery which are considered the actual actors (B-52, Tanks, missiles...) rather than American or British soldiers who are commanding them. The imperative to using these kind of constructions is not

made at random because it has a valuable effect at the level of the entire event, showing how exactly ideological bias in relation to the ways in which preferred interpretations of actions are handled.

Normalisation is also another technique used in this direction whereby the agency of the US-British forces is suppressed especially in violent acts as *The Independent* headlined on 24th March “*Fighting on the streets of Iraq’s second city ‘leaves 77 civilians dead.’*” This was the result of the attack launched by the coalition forces in their attempt to conquer the city of Basra. The use of the noun ‘fighting’ to which the action is ascribed is reflective of an ideological standpoint. Just like *passivization*, the participants of the event are deliberately not mentioned leaving no room for negotiation and most importantly contribute to the normalization of violence.

One constant feature in the discourse of the British broadsheets, as displayed in the handling of the articles and headlines considered so far, which are only a handful of archive items, is their tendency to throw light on the positive ‘self’ representation and the likelihood to place negative values and attributions in the representation of the ‘Other’. This type of argument is very much related to Van Dijk’s ideological square (Us vs. Them) which does not only extend the limits of the conflict to broader socio-cultural dimensions, but also works the process of inclusion and exclusion through the use of personal pronouns. Significantly, the use of the pronoun ‘We’ in this case by editors and journalists instead of the personal pronoun ‘I’, as clarified by Kress and Fowler, “displays the added complexity that the source claims to speak of and for himself and on behalf of someone other than himself,”¹²² which also includes the readers of those newspapers. *The independent* and *Guardian* extensively used these interpersonal pronouns in addressing their own views and often included the reader through the frequent resort to statements like ‘our soldiers’ ‘our government’ ‘our sense of technological, political and moral superiority towards Iraq’, or as it is clearly exhibited in the following headline, “This is a righteous war that **our soldiers** should take pride in fighting” (31/03/2003)

¹²² Fowler, et al.(1979) op. cit., 201.

Through this analysis, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that within an increasingly political strife there has been an element of spin as a strategic technique to exercise an influence on the press. However, the investigation of the overwhelming majority of editorials and opinion articles, in addition to news reports in the British newspapers pointedly showed that there has been no total compliance of the press to the national political environment which attempted to frame the war in ways that make it look like a necessary and defensible engagement. Thus, there has been no press conformism towards the belief about the terrorism-Iraq collaboration suggestion, albeit a notable change in attitude was discernible with the advent of the war.

It has also been evident that both papers expressed their opposition to any military move towards Iraq without a green light from the UNSC. The underlying assumption here is that action against Iraq is not a wrong decision *per se*, but in the light of insufficient international support due to the impossibility of issuing a second UN resolution, it would be wrong to act unilaterally. *The Guardian*, and later on *The Independent*, took it for granted without making a positive critical stance that there has been a constant threat of Saddam's regime. Consciously or unconsciously, and regardless of the circumstances under which the press was confronting the proponents of the war and the official propaganda, their discourse did not in fact form a strong critical basis, and therefore, had a modest influence, if any, on the political decisions over the war and the public opinion.

The threat posed by Iraq has been proved to be a mystification in the light of subsequent evidence. Blair's fears about the Iraq's possession of WMD which have not been found, and the alleged collaboration of Iraq and its supposed links with international terrorism seemed to be based on false political prospectus. The only remaining justification was based on humanitarian interventionism perspective, which somehow succeeded to gain some sort of public approval and press endorsement. The liberation of the Iraqi people from dictatorship was perhaps the most acceptable, yet unconvincing cause for launching a war that has claimed the lives of thousands of civilians, in addition to the huge economic losses that followed.

Conclusion

This research work is a modest attempt to give purposeful insights about the coverage of conflicts and wars in the British quality press (*The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*) aiming, therefore, at providing a meaningful assessment of the newspapers' coverage given to major national and international events –the Iraq War (2003) and the Northern Ireland issue. In doing so, this study attempted also to come at a better understanding of how newsmaking, albeit in general terms, occurs in times of political frustration and confusion which the above cases best exemplify. Thus, the news items treated were carefully selected to provide an accurate image of the sort of coverage which reflected the actual ideological point of view endorsed by the British broadsheet newspapers. The corpus of data did not include only the editorials and leading articles, but also stretched to incorporate a large body of front page articles, news briefs, headlines and leading sentences, in addition to comment and news articles that, directly or indirectly, refer to the Iraq War and the Northern Ireland issue within, of course, the limits of time span allotted to each case.

The research work is, therefore, undertaken to critically examine the performance of the press by adopting the most recent developments in the CDA paradigm concerned with the study of news discourse. We have suggested, based on the assumptions that form the methodological model, that the expression of ideology is a constant feature of any written discourse. Therefore, the content of newspapers is by no means ideologically driven to a specific orientation that expresses skewed attitudes towards one of the conflicting parties. Although there are stark differences between the Ulster issue and the Iraq War in terms of their overall historical and political circumstances, our findings showed a number of common points in the press representation, either in relation to the thematic categorization of the events, the depiction of the conflicting parties, or at the level of language use through a careful selection of syntactic and lexical structures that were ideologically charged.

Before moving to elaborate on those findings, a number of broad remarks about the press are worth mentioning. As it has been discussed in the first chapter, the early beginning of the print press in Britain was faced with various economic and legal obstacles. Tracking the political history of the British press revealed a long phase of

struggle against the state censorship and oppression which ended with a marvellous victory of the press that eventually became a free enterprise without any serious regulatory impediment to its independence. However, in the course of time, two major key facts emerged. First, the economic structure of the press industry in a free market environment facilitated a dramatic move towards increasing concentration leading conversely, albeit in very relative terms, to limit the scope of opinion expression and diversity. This was chiefly due to the influence of capitalist proprietors themselves who were politically committed and aligned their newspapers to some political parties and ideologies. Moreover, the press was increasingly becoming at the heart of politics since some of those owners were appointed to high-level political leadership positions. Second, despite the overwhelming impact of these factors on newspapers output, journalists and editors were also enjoying considerable freedom in deciding the papers' ideological preferences and whose editorial choices were not always in accordance with the whims of their bosses. After all, there were numerous examples of press bias either to the right wing policies, which was in fact the general tendency, or to the left and centre left ideology traditionally associated with Labour Party. It was also demonstrated, in the second chapter, the extent to which the content of newspapers could affect its readers' attitudes and opinions. Furthermore, it was emphasized that the press is not a neutral medium but an active player in the conflict.

In very broad terms, the research findings showed some specific marked characteristics in the discursive behaviour of the British broadsheets in both cases which, it should be stressed, were not all the time in total compliance with the official line. Yet, there were certainly vivid images of polarized coverage. It is also true that the three newspapers did not follow exactly the same pattern in relation to the two cases addressed in this work. A brief survey on the database and findings reveals that there has been a changing mood in reporting, however, the skewed coverage was most noticeably expressed in the conservative *Times*, whose overwhelming propagandistic and distorted coverage with regard to the problems in Ulster, were not necessarily representative of the political opinion in the UK. The centre left-wing papers, *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, took a more critical editorial position against Blair's

interventionist policy towards Iraq, at least in the pre-war era. Thus, *The Guardian* was comparatively neutral in its handling of the Northern Ireland question.

At the macro structure level, it has been evident that the theme of terrorism and violence came to appear at the very centre of discussion. Relatively, recurrent references to the threat of terrorism were systematically tied with those cases. The press coverage was in fact imbued, in most of the time, with false interpretation of the state of affairs. Thus, distorted images of the conflicting parties were, consciously or unconsciously, enhanced with potent stereotypical labels and most intensely manifested. This, of course, was by no means a major weakness of the press.

As far as the Northern Ireland issue is concerned, there has been a noticeable tendency to report the violence and terror caused by the Republicans and Nationalists as a major theme. The concentrated depiction of the affairs of Ulster in this direction, which was a constant feature in *The Times* and only secondary in *The Guardian*, helped to charge the IRA almost with full responsibility about the deteriorating conditions in the province, while the role of Westminster and the local authorities in the problem was relatively overlooked, or at least relegated to a secondary position.

It was abundantly clear that the press discourse was framing the struggle in Ulster as a security problem during a period of real political intransigence which ultimately shifted the debate away from any possible diplomatic initiatives. In doing so, the press discourse, therefore, was normalizing and legitimizing the state military counter-reaction that followed the demonstration and marches in the 1970s organized by the NICRA as a series of repressive legislations were enacted. Unlike *The Guardian* that welcomed the peace process negotiations in the early 1990s, *The Times* continued its anti-IRA propaganda through insisting on its scepticism and doubts about the whims and intentions of its political wing (Sinn Féin).

In relation to the Iraqi dossier, two distinguishable traits were remarked. First, during the pre-war period *The Independent* and *The Guardian* alike explicitly ran counter to the government line. Blair-Bush allegations about Iraq's acquisition of

WMD and their tacit suggestions of its collaboration and back up of international terrorism were downplayed. The assumption was that any military attack against Iraq without straightforward UNSC resolution to be considered as a direct violation of the international law. Moreover, they expressed deep concerns of how and when the drama is likely to end in case of unilateral move. However, a second route was fabricated with the start of the first military strikes when it was becoming clear that the press joined the fray against Saddam's regime. The fear of Iraq's assumed threat on the world security in general dominated the official discourse in the British political circles, and was a frequent topic in both *The Guardian* and *Independent*. The humanitarian intervention was also being made more salient as an acceptable cause for the war.

In many respects, the situation of Iraq has shared a number of common points with the case of Ulster in the British press coverage. It has been evident that the overall frame, from which those cases were considered, stemmed from the potential threat they represented to Britain's national security. The fear of terror acts and violence was a distinctive feature in the press. Thus, terrorism and violence were recurrent key words in the British press discourse practices. This was done through the reference to the ethnic and religious backgrounds which were exploited to mould certain stereotypical labels that associated the Catholic/Irish and Muslim/Arabs with terrorism and violence. While there are only certain quotes, yet they had a potent impact on the overall categorization of the nature of the conflict in Ulster and the Iraq War.

Another distinctive feature was the peculiar depiction of the deeds of the British army. As in the case of Northern Ireland when the aggression of the security forces and the British army, most notably during the 1970s, was undermined or at least made justified counter reaction, its conduct in the Iraq War was highly appreciated. Paradoxically, the other enemy, either Irish demonstrators, or Iraqi soldiers were criminalized and negatively portrayed. In the same line with this argument, Saddam Hussein like Sinn Féin leading figures, such as Gerry Adams, were put on the wrong side through the emphasis on their encouragement of brutal murders and terror acts against civilians.

The findings of Roger Flower and his associates into the perception of agency have also contributed much in validating the assumptions held so far. It has been demonstrated that the press was more inclined to attribute agency when the 'Other' appeared or assumed to be involved in criminal acts, violence or death and conversely opt to delete the agency in case of in-group members, direct or indirect, responsibility. Indeed, this was effectively carried out through various transformations and structures which can be briefly summed up as follows: First, the use of passive forms and *nominalizations* which renders the participants invisible by drawing the attention to the act *per se* rather than who did it. The second observation concerns the reference to inanimate participants which also served to create a virtual world when things are performed by inanimate objects rather than humans which, after all, intended to hide the blame on the human factor.

Those news frames were potently driving the attention away, and towards specific directions which at the end aimed to bring to the fore the blame on the 'Other' and the concealment of 'Our' agency in any negative situation. This is by no means an ideologically driven discourse that tends to normalize and legitimate the actions of the in-group which is, in a way or another, a very subjective treatment that contributes only in providing a partial and biased view.

What has been suggested so far lies under Van Dijk's concept of the ideological square. The dehumanization of the out-group and the positive self representation constituted a recurrent feature in all the three broadsheet newspapers, and in both of the two case studies. The skewed coverage in favour of the in-group, as it has been shown, was materialised via the selection of particular vocabulary and lexical items which were heavily imbued with negative stereotypical images.

It is also vital to attach great importance to the management of quotes and references to the British official authorized sources. There has been unquestionably a tendency to include more references to government sources and rarely to its opposing views, most noticeably in the case of Iraq. The overuse of references to the prime minister and senior politicians is not made at random. It had performed an ideological

function since they run the risk of framing the whole situation to suit the government story line.

Before bringing this discussion to a close, it should be mentioned in passing that, despite the press contribution to mould people's perception of reality, at least a large segment of informed citizenry seems to have grown more sceptical and resisted the propaganda. It should also be suggested that there were striking differences in how the various sections of the British media covered the conflict either in Iraq or Northern Ireland. If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of the ideological manoeuvres needs to be developed by comparing the British newspapers discourse with that of those who are directly involved in the conflict or war. Last but not least, the weight of collected, analyzed, and assimilated information within the defined criteria strongly substantiated the research work hypothesised answers. It also pointed out again that the nature of reporting in cases of crisis is very elusive and does not necessary echo reality, but only engages in a process of deletion or highlighting some aspects of the perceived reality which are more congruent with the newspaper's own ideological stance, while deleting other aspects that might be against the newspapers baron's interests.

Appendix

List of tables and figures

Table1. Concentration of ownership by circulation in the metropolitan press, 1910 ..	23
Table.2. The main press groups in July 2004 with their owners and circulation compared to 1961	25
Table 3. Conservative and Labour share of national daily newspaper circulation's editorial endorsement and share of national votes in general elections.	28
Figure 1. Two levels of agenda-setting and three hypothesised effects.....	52
Figure 2. A definition tree for frames and framing processes.....	56
Figure 3. The Counties of the Republic and Northern Ireland.....	67
Figures 4 & 5. The appearance of the words 'Iraq' and 'Terrorism' in <i>The Guardian</i> (1998-2011)	99
Figures 6 & 7. The appearance of the words 'Violence' 'Iraq, Terrorism, and Violence' in <i>The Guardian</i> (1998-2001).....	100
Figures 6 & 7. The appearance of the words 'Violence' and 'Iraq, Terrorism and Violence' in <i>The Guardian</i> (1998-2011).....	100

Acronyms

CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis

IRA: Irish Republican Army

NICRA: Northern Ireland Civil Right Association

UNSC: United Nation Security Council

UVF: Ulster Volunteer Force

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

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تغطية الصحافة البريطانية لقضية ايرلندا الشمالية وحرب العراق (2003)

ملخص البحث

لا يوجد هناك أي شك أن صور وأشكال الإنحياز في نقل الأخبار والمتمثلة في التعبير غير الموضوعي عن دلالات توزيع القوى، السيطرة والهيمنة، تغطية الحروب والنزاعات الإقليمية والدولية، اللامساواة واللاعادلة الاجتماعية، التمييز والعنصرية وما إلى ذلك تُضمن يوميا في الإعلام المكتوب. مع العلم أن الصحافة تستهدف طائفة كبيرة من الناس، غير المدركين إلى حد ما بالمناورات الإيديولوجية الخفية الهادفة إلى إضفاء الشرعية على بعض وجهات النظر المستقطبة و المنحازة. وبما أن اللغة هي الوسيلة التي من خلالها تُصاغ الإيديولوجيات فإن الدراسة النقدية لهذه الأخيرة تعتبر المرجعية الأساسية لأي بحث هادف إلى التمييز في آليات الإقناع الإيديولوجي في النصوص المكتوبة. وبالرغم من أن دراسة الإيديولوجيا موضوع قديم إلا أن النتائج الحديثة للدراسة النقدية للخطاب مهدت الطريق لنقد بناء أكثر.

يتناول هذا البحث التوجهات الإيديولوجية لبعض الصحف البريطانية الوطنية في تغطيتها لقضية ايرلندا الشمالية وحرب العراق (2003) بالاعتماد على الدراسة النقدية للخطاب المقروء كمنهجية بحث. في إطار هذه الدراسة تشكل آراء بعض رواد الدراسة النقدية للخطاب القاعدة الأساسية في المنهجية المتبعة لاسيما كل من روجر فولر و تون فان ديك الذين تعتبر مساهماتهم عناصر أساسية في الشكل الأكثر حداثة لهذه المدرسة خصوصا فيما يتعلق بدراسة النصوص الإخبارية المكتوبة.