MEDIA WARS AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

DAYA KISHAN THUSSU

Abstract

This article examines the dynamics between Western public diplomacy and the mediation of international military conflicts by US-dominated global television news. It looks at aspects of television coverage of wars in the post-Cold War era, in particular the 1999 Kosovo crisis and argues that only the wars in which the West has a geo-strategic interest appear to receive adequate coverage by Western television. NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in March-June 1999 was the most extensively covered military action since the 1991 Gulf War. In both cases, Western television news channels, notably Cable News Network (CNN), consistently reproduced the agenda set by the United States and moulded public opinion in support of war. NATO's campaign in Kosovo was represented as a "humanitarian" involvement instead of it being an action aimed at establishing a precedent for intervention into the internal affairs of a sovereign state and outside its area of operation. The article assesses international implications of such coverage, arguing that given the global reach and influence of Western television and the dependence of world's broadcasters on US-supplied television news footage, the dominant perspectives on a conflict can be American, although the US, more often than not, may be actively involved in the war. Recognising this, the article argues, that Western diplomacy has become sophisticated in packaging public information in a visually astute fashion and television networks, which often operate in a symbiotic relationship with the authorities, tend to conform to the geo-political agendas set by powerful governments.

Daya Kishan Thussu is a Senior Lecturer in Mass Communications at University of North London, email: d.thussu@unl.ac.uk.

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NATO's First War and the Transformation of the Western Security Alliance

Operation "Allied Force," the 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia (between 24 March and 10 June 1999), by the world's most powerful military alliance — the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), was perhaps one of the most significant geo-political developments of the post-Cold War era.

NATO's first war, and the last of the twentieth century, created a significant precedent in international relations, that national sovereignty can be violated in defence of human rights, a principle which is likely to shape strategic thinking in the twenty-first century.

The war was won by air power alone, employing the highest proportion of precision weaponry ever used in an air operation, with NATO pilots flying 37,465 sorties. By the time of the cessation of hostility, more than 900 aircraft and over 35 ships — almost triple than when the bombing started — were in operation (Clark 1999). Unprecedented in the history of warfare, the alliance "won" the conflict without any loss of life in combat operations on its own side (Cook 1999).

Most of the Western media projected the decade-old civil wars in former Yugoslavia as an intractable problem of the Balkans, with its history and "tradition" of "ethnic" hatred. The general impression given was that only Western military intervention, led by NATO, could resolve the crisis (Ali 2000). It was undeniable that there was large-scale and systematic ethnic violence taking place in Kosovo, the Albanian-majority province of the rump Yugoslavia. However, the West, led by the US, appeared to discount any diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. Instead the talk was of "punishing" Yugoslav President, Slobodan Milošević. The general debate on television networks was framed in a way so as to emphasise only certain issues such as: should NATO intensify the bombing? should ground troops be sent in and when? Should the West impose a naval blockade to stop Serbia's oil supplies? What happens if Milošević (not Serbia) refuses to capitulate? There was unending speculation about whether and how Milošević should be removed from power. NATO's resolve and determination were routinely contrasted with the irrationality of the Serbian leadership.

NATO's first war coincided with its 50th birthday. However, it was not a war for which the Western alliance had been originally established in 1949, as a defensive organisation to protect Western democracies from the apparent threat from Soviet communism, but reflected its need to find a new role in meeting the "challenges and opportunities" of the post-Cold War world. In Kosovo, the Western alliance was violating both its own charter and international law by militarily intervening in the internal affairs of a country that was not threatening any of its member states and was outside NATO's area of deployment. Furthermore, what made NATO's bombing illegal was the fact that the United Nations Security Council — which could have used the relevant provision of international law for humanitarian intervention if satisfied that the situation posed a threat to international peace — had not approved the action.

Most television reports seemed to have overlooked the irony in the communiqué issued after the NATO summit in Washington in April 1999, at the height of bombing: "We reaffirm our faith, as stated in the North Atlantic Treaty, in the purposes

and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and reiterate our desire to live in peace with all nations, and to settle any international dispute by peaceful means" (NATO website).

Though legally dubious, NATO's action was consistent with its efforts in the post-Cold War years to reinvent itself. With the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the end of communist "threat" to European democracies — in November 1990 NATO and its Cold War rival Warsaw Pact published a Joint Declaration on non-aggression — NATO's status came under scrutiny as it was in danger of becoming an anachronism, especially after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact in July 1991.

This necessitated the development of a Strategic Concept for the alliance, introduced in 1991, to chart out a new role for NATO, one concerned with peace-keeping, among other issues. A year later, NATO started peacekeeping activities in former Yugoslavia, first under the auspices of CSCE (Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe) and later under UN authority. By 1995, NATO was well and truly involved in peacekeeping with the launch of "Operation Joint Endeavour," the US-sponsored military action in Bosnia in which NATO planes were used as part of a UN force. Thus the US, which contributes about 60 per cent of NATO's annual budget, was able to use the civil wars in Yugoslavia as a new field of action for the defence alliance. Half a decade later, a NATO-led force — SFOR (Stabilisation Force) continues to monitor the "peace" in Bosnia.

Apart from its changing character, the alliance was also expanding its activities in territories outside the Euro-Atlantic area. Significant in this geographical expansion was a "Mediterranean Dialogue" which NATO started in 1994 with Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, and since 2000, Algeria, in what it calls a "strategically vital region". In its new "peacekeeping" and "peace-enforcing" role NATO created a Rapid Reaction Force to police the world's hotspots and to deal with "humanitarian emergencies." By 1997, this flexible and highly mobile force was being deployed out-of-area, undertaking military exercises in Central Asia — in a region outside the remit of the alliance but geo-strategically and economically significant given the energy resources in the Caspian basin (Meek and Whitehouse 1997).

It was being argued by, among others, US Senator Richard Lugar that if NATO "does not go out of area, it will go out of business" (quoted in Buchan and Fidler 1999). Others echoed this view. "The stakes for NATO in constructing a viable peace-operations mission are large," wrote one commentator, "at a time when many citizens in the developed world hardly think about security at all in traditional military terms, maintaining and using armed forces of any size and expense requires public justification and some demonstrable impact on policy outcomes with which people can identify. Peace operations could meet at least some of that need" (Lepgold 1998,106). NATO's military intervention in Yugoslavia thus fitted a strategic pattern.

Television and Humanisation of NATO's Aggression

Television coverage of NATO's action in Kosovo was couched in the language of human rights and humanitarianism. Most reports on international news networks such as CNN were framed in this way, with little concern being expressed about the legality of the action or the destruction of civil and military structures of

a small European country. TV networks tended to uncritically repeat the Western position, articulated most forcefully and visibly by US President Bill Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, that defending human rights should override national sovereignty, thus helping to legitimise the concept of "humanitarian intervention."

One of the main arguments presented by NATO (Solana 1999) and repeatedly reproduced by Western television networks, was that the Yugoslav government had caused a humanitarian emergency in Kosovo, which was threatening regional security and posing grave danger to international peace. Accusing the Yugoslav authorities of indulging in a genocidal campaign against the ethnic Albanian population of Kosovo, the US and its other NATO allies, insisted that compelling humanitarian considerations had prompted them to take military action. The immediate cause for the NATO bombing was the apparent failure of the Rambouillet peace talks between the Yugoslav government and the representatives of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in February and March 1999. It is now known, though not highlighted by Western television at that time, that the Belgrade authorities were willing to sign until a secret appendix was handed to them on US behest on the last day of the protracted negotiations, demanding, in effect, they surrender all of Yugoslavia to NATO. The media also largely ignored the fact that Serbian National Assembly had passed a resolution the day before the NATO bombing started, proposing "political autonomy" for Kosovo (Chomsky 1999). NATO governments summarily rejected any such last-minute diplomatic initiatives and with the help of a generally pliant media were able to project the Serbian authorities almost inviting airstrikes with their "unreasonable" demands and "intransigent" behaviour.

This was typical of how television reporting framed the conflict within an "us vs. them" dichotomy — a reasonable, resolute and responsible West pitted against a communist dictatorship that was irresponsible, illegitimate and unpredictable. In a coverage dominated by press conferences by NATO high command, the White House and Downing Street — shown live and in their entirety on networks such as CNN — the Western alliance was able to project its version of the war to a global audience. The sheer volume of coverage made it easier for media managers at NATO to blend half and quarter truths with speculative if not false information (BBC 1999a; Goff 1999).

Examples of a concerted misinformation campaign abound. It is now known that during the entire war only 58 "confirmed" strikes took place against Serb tanks and personnel carriers and not 744, as claimed by NATO. A *Newsweek* investigation revealed, conveniently a year after the bombing, that the number of targets verifiably destroyed was a tiny fraction of those claimed by NATO's spin doctors: 20 artillery pieces, not 450; 18 armoured personnel carriers, not 220 and 14 tanks, not 120 (Barry and Thomas 2000).

This kind of coverage can partly be explained by the fact that many Western journalists had to depend on local camera crew to cover the event, as Mike Hanna, a veteran CNN correspondent, admitted in a special report in the *Columbia Journalism Review* (McAuliffe 1999). Western reporters tended to present "collateral damage" as unfortunate exceptions, ignoring the ruthlessness and regularity with which civilian targets — power stations, hospitals, television studios, and housing estates — were bombarded. At times "anti-personnel" cluster bombs were used on such targets. A year after the war, Western human rights groups such as Amnesty In-

ternational have accused NATO forces of committing war crimes by unlawfully killing civilians in Kosovo. Drawing information from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and NATO's own statements, Amnesty has argued that NATO forces violated the laws of war leading to cases of unlawful killing of civilians (Hilton 2000).

Leading up to the bombing, and during the NATO air campaign, Serbian atrocity stories, many emanating from KLA sources, formed an integral part of most news bulletins. Media reports unquestionably reproduced the often wildly exaggerated figure of number of people killed as a result of alleged Serbian atrocities provided by the leaders of the US and Britain and NATO military commanders. At one point, the claim was made that as many as 100,000 Kosovars had been executed. However, by November 1999, the UN's International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia could only find just over 2,000 bodies.

Such atrocity stories have been traditionally used in wartime propaganda. During the 1991 Gulf War, for example, propaganda played a crucial part in preparing the public opinion for the military involvement in Iraq. The inevitability of war was emphasised by the media. As one study in Britain argued the equation "of Saddam Hussein with Hitler, and the disparaging of any alternatives other than fighting, were important elements in the arguments for using military force" which most of the media endorsed (Philo and McLaughlin 1993, 146). One particular story highlighted by the media and thus caught the imagination of a reluctant US public during the conflict was about alleged atrocities committed by Iraqi soldiers in occupied Kuwait. On October 10, 1990, at a time when US public opinion was delicately balanced between war and peace, a fifteen-year-old Kuwaiti citizen named "Nayirah" tearfully told the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus that she had witnessed Iraqi soldiers killing scores of babies by dragging them from incubators in a hospital in occupied Kuwait. A year later, it was revealed that the story was a complete hoax and Nayirah was no ordinary witness but the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US, a member of the Kuwaiti royal family, who was trained as part of a major public relations offensive undertaken by the firm Hill and Knowlton on behalf of the Kuwaiti government (MacArthur 1992). The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation made a programme about it "Selling the War," also shown on prime time on ITV in Britain, but it did not elicit a public outcry. Instead, most of the media ignored the revelations. The key question is whether, when the original atrocity story was making rounds the Western journalists covering it knew the identity of the witness — given the access they have to ambassadors of client states, especially at the time of a crisis involving major geo-strategic and economic interests.

An analysis of CNN's coverage of the Kosovo crisis reveals that atrocities — committed by Serbs against Kosovars but rarely by Kosovars against Serbs — formed a central plank of the network's coverage. How CNN covers such crises is crucial given that it is the world's most influential television news organisation — reaching more than 150 million television households in over 212 countries and territories, 24-hours a day. During the height of the bombing of Yugoslavia, CNN had 70 journalists and other crew in the Balkan region and the network was spending an estimated $150,000 a day to cover the war (Gibson 1999).

In CNN's coverage, the NATO spokesman, Jamie Shea, was given disproportionately more airtime in news bulletins and also in more in-depth programmes such as *Insight*, broadcast on 23 April 1999, to coincide with the Washington sum-

mit. Shea justified the bombing of communication facilities including radio and TV stations as "instrument of war" which were "more responsible than the Serb army" for atrocities. The emphasis of Shea was on the humanitarian aspects of the crisis. Interspersed with pictures of Kosovar refugees fleeing Serbian army, CNN reports represented NATO as fighting in the former Yugoslavia to protect the ethnic Albanians.

The coverage was dominated by the perspectives of NATO and the US, indicating the ideological underpinning of a network such as CNN. Most of the people interviewed on the programmes belonged to NATO or the US government. The experts quoted were Americans, more often than not hawkish warmongers than spokesmen for peace. Few alternative voices were aired. No questions were raised about the legality of the NATO action. Television reports omitted to mention that NATO had actually used radioactive material in some of its weaponry — depleted uranium on its anti-tank shells fired by US Thunderbolt aircraft (Capella 2000).

Reporters, in the tradition of war reporting since the Gulf crisis, focused on the military success of "allied" efforts and tended to provide moral justification for the bombing. The alliance was projected as getting involved in the Balkans crisis in fulfilment of its lofty ideals, the fact that NATO was intervening in a strategically significant part of Europe, at the cross-roads of Western and Eastern Europe and close to the strategically vital Middle East and Central Asia, was never explicitly mentioned. The subsequent events, the construction of Camp Bondsteel, "the largest US base built since the Vietnam War" (Judah 2000, 311), which apart from housing 5,000 soldiers will also have helicopter base near Uroševac in Kosovo, shows that the intervention was carefully planned and executed with a long term view of security in the region, a view shaped by Western strategic priorities rather than humanitarian concerns. The absence of any mention of the existence of a major base by the "free" Western media graphically illustrates how media tend to ignore stories which impinge upon Western geo-political or economic interests.

The news discourse did not address the key issues raised by the NATO bombing, namely the precedent of military intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation, thereby changing the rules of international relations, undermining state sovereignty and the UN system. A year later, the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright continued to justify, in high moral tone, the action and suggesting that the Americans are doing the "right and smart thing" then as now (Albright 2000, 6).

Media Wars and Invisible Wars

The conflicts in which the West does not have a direct involvement often tend to be ignored by the Western media. The two-decade old civil conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka is a prime example of an "invisible" war. Another major example is the Turkish war against the Kurds in eastern Turkey and northern Iraq. Television coverage of wars in Africa fares even worse — there is more footage of wildlife from Africa on international television than reports about humans in the continent's 51 countries. The civil war in Angola — one of the world's longest-running conflict dating back to 1970s — has rarely been adequately covered by global television news. Whenever it is reported, the focus seems to be on the tribal rivalry of Angolans that makes it impossible for

them to live in peace. Rarely, if ever, do the underlying economic factors of the conflict — competing interests in the country's huge oil, gas and diamond industry — form part of the television news discourse.

An analysis of British television's coverage of 1994 genocide in Rwanda found that Rwanda became a television story only after it was framed as a humanitarian crisis, with an emphasis on Western support for refugee camps. The study from Britain's Glasgow Media Group reported that most of the coverage was devoid of the historical or political context. "Through this distortion," the study reports, "the media unwittingly helped Western governments hide their lack of policy on genocide behind a mask of humanitarian zeal" (Philo et al 1999, 226). As US journalist Philip Gourevitch has shown the systematic massacre of Tutsis that claimed, within just three months, one million lives in a country of only seven million, was comparable with Nazi genocide (Gourevitch 1999). Its causes were much more complex than stereotypical shorthand media clichés of "tribal and ethnic hatred." The international criminal tribunal for Rwanda jailed Georges Ruggiu, a minor civil servant in Belgium, the former colonial power in Rwanda, for 12 years for "directly and publicly inciting people to commit genocide in his broadcasts from Rwanda's Radio Libre des Mille Collines" (Black and MacAskill 2000, 20).

Sierra Leone hits international headlines only when the British dispatch their troops and camera crew to defend diamond mines and other economic interests in its former colony. The French routinely and regularly send the Foreign Legion to trouble spots in Francophone Africa, barely noticed by the Anglo-American media. For the past half decade the Russians have blatantly violated the human rights of Chechens, which do not seem to rank with those of Kosovars on the Western news agenda.

The Global Reach of Western News and Views

Such distortions in television's coverage of wars in poorer parts of the world have a global impact, given the international reach of US-dominated Western media. They can affect understanding of the South in the North and amongst the countries of the South since most newsflow continues to be from North to South and limited South-South news exchange takes place. The world's three main news agencies Associated Press (US), Reuters (UK) and Agence France Press (France) are Western and they dominate the global flow of news, with AP alone putting out 20 million words per day. AP and Reuters are also the two main providers of international television news material. Reuters Television (formerly Visnews) is one of the world's two largest television news agencies, while its rival, Associated Press Television News, is another major supplier of news footage to broadcasters worldwide. AP and Reuters thus "bestride the news agendas and news flows of the world" (Tunstall and Machin 1999, 88).

Particularly significant in the global television journalism are channels such as BBC World and CNN — the two major 24-hour news networks watched in newsrooms, diplomatic enclaves and middle-class homes across the globe. Such is the power of CNN, that, despite being singled out by the Serbian media as a "factory of lies," Serbian television nevertheless continued to carry CNN during the bombing (McAuliffe 1999). The CNN Group, part of AOL-Time Warner, one of the world's biggest media and entertainment corporations, is the largest and most profitable

news and information companies. In 2000, it was available to more than 800 million people across the globe. The group includes six cable and satellite television networks (CNN, CNN Headline News, CNN International, CNNfn, CNN/SI and CNN en Español), two radio networks (CNNRadio and a Spanish version CNNRadio Noticias), eleven web sites on CNN Interactive and CNN Newsource, the world's most extensive syndicated news service, with more than 200 international affiliates.

As a recent study of CNN observes, channels such as CNN have an important role in what has been called "emerging spheres of global political communication." One of whose effects is "the constitution of a worldwide homogeneously timezoned *bios politikon*, instantaneously affecting worldwide political action or interaction via press conferences or public resolutions transmitted around the world" (Volkner 1999, 3). Such media power gives CNN the capacity to set and then build the global news agenda. This overwhelming US/UK dominance — what has been called "US/UK news duopoly" (Tunstall and Machin 1999) in the supply of raw news footage and news reports — can result in imbalances in the way the world is covered by television news. Although they employ international staff and produce professionally sophisticated news reports, consciously or unconsciously they appear to pursue a Western or more accurately an American news agenda, particularly discernible on stories which impinge upon Western geo-political or economic interests during the Cold War years (Herman and Chomsky 1988) or crises of the "New World Order" (Mowlana et al 1992).

Public Diplomacy in the Age of Real-Time TV News

In an era when television has become the source of foreign news for the majority of the population, media-aware governments have recognised that TV news has a major consequence for the foreign policy agenda (Toffler and Toffler 1993). It has been argued that global news networks such as CNN "reconstitute geopolitical space by opening sites of interpretation/contestation/reclamation on the world's mediascapes that they help to produce every day around the clock" (Luke and O' Tuathail 1997, 721).

Writing at the time of Ronald Reagan's presidency, a former White House counsel, Lloyd Cutler, observed that his administration was "the first White House occupants of the TV era who have acquired the on-camera and behind-camera skills needed to practice TV politics. He is the first president who has learned to deliver prepared written remarks from a hidden teleprompter while looking his audience squarely in the eye ... . He has learned that how a leader looks on TV is often more important than what he says" (Cutler 1984, 123). Subsequent US administrations have astutely employed the country's "soft power" — the ability to achieve political and ideological goals through cultural and media appeal — to underpin its "hard power," its formidable economic and military capacity to coerce (Nye 1990). In the age of television "soft power" seems to have acquired a more important position.

A recent study in the United States divides the perceived risks to the country's security into three lists. The "A list" represents the types of threats that the Soviet Union presented to the West, threatening even its survival. The "B list" is concerned with imminent threats to Western economic and geo-strategic interests (but not survival) such as the one triggered by Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Finally,

the "C list" mentions contingencies that indirectly affect Western security, such as the crises in Somalia or in former Yugoslavia (Perry and Carter 1999, 11-15).

It is instructive to note that in the post-Cold War era, the "C list" has come to dominate the US foreign policy agenda, partly because such threats offer opportunities of dramatic visual material of human suffering that dominate media attention — the so-called "CNN effect" — and are easy to "sell" in an age when televising foreign policy has become an important aspect of public diplomacy.

In an age of round-the-clock global news, US military intervention in the world's hotspots to protect new definitions of security, have dominated the foreign reporting agenda (Seib 1997). The world's view of US military interventions in various parts of the globe has been informed, to a considerable extent, by the US-supplied television images. The US military actions in Panama (1989), Iraq (1991), Somalia (1992), Haiti (1994), Sudan (1997), and Iraq (1998), were invariably presented in the context of how they fit into American view of the world. Critical perspectives have been largely ignored in television coverage, which has tended to find justifications to legitimise new versions of an old concept — imperialism. As Jonathan Mermin has convincingly argued in his study of the media coverage of US military interventions in the 1990s that "the spectrum of debate in Washington, has determined the spectrum of debate in the news" (Mermin 1999, 143).

In the absence of limited critical engagement by the mainstream Western media with foreign policy issues and the lack of any credible alternative global news service, it is possible that the coverage of international crises may be further reduced to a simplistic narrative of the benevolent West and the "evil Other," personified by a Saddam or a Slobodan. As Islamic "fundamentalism" and other "Third World threats" — narco-terrorism, the spread of weapons of mass destruction among "rogue" states — replace communism as major foreign-policy concerns, it is important that other perspectives, especially those from the global South, are included in the international news agenda. This is particularly important given the expansion and consolidation of Western investment in the South — site of many a "failed states" as well as of ethnic tension and religious conflict (Allen and Seaton 1999).

The growing commercialisation of news media, with some of the world's biggest news organisations being part of what Bagdikian has called "communication cartels" (Bagdikian 1997), can act as blocking mechanism against news events that cannot be "sold," resulting in a distorted presentation of events to make them more marketable. One result of such market-driven journalism is that most reporting of issues in the South -with scant space to cover news from developing countries — is reduced to a simplistic version of often complex realities.

The Kosovo precedent raises critical questions relating to the conduct of international relations in the twenty-first century. Apart from conferring legitimacy to NATO's offensive action and its intervention outside the alliance's area of operation, the action further marginalises the UN. It has been argued that the UN is not equipped to handle the new humanitarian emergencies: "Actual military interventions are best left to regional organisations, such as NATO, or to coalitions of the willing that, for now at least, will generally have to have the United States at their core" (Daalder and O'Hanlon 1999).

An emboldened NATO now sees itself in the role of a global policeman. The New Strategic Concept issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the April 1999 Washington summit talks of NATO's need to meet the "New

Missions ... to respond to a broad spectrum of possible threats to Alliance common interests, including: regional conflicts, such as in Kosovo and Bosnia; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery; and transnational threats like terrorism" (NATO website).

Already, three former Warsaw Pact members (Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic) have joined NATO, while many other Eastern European and Baltic nations are queuing to come under its security umbrella. NATO is also openly discussing expanding its definition of security, going beyond the alliance's geographical area to include "uncertainty and instability in and around the Euro-Atlantic area and the possibility of regional crises at the periphery of the Alliance." As its Strategic Concept observes: "Some countries in and around the Euro-Atlantic area face serious economic, social and political difficulties. Ethnic and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights, and the dissolution of states can lead to local and even regional instability."

Particularly significant is the geo-strategically significant Mediterranean area, as NATO says, "geostrategic considerations within the Alliance will have to be taken into account, as instabilities on NATO's periphery could lead to crises or conflicts requiring an Alliance military response, potentially with short warning times" (NATO website).

The intellectual rationalisation for the new concept of humanitarian intervention is to be found in prestigious international relations and global security journals (Rodman 1999; Deutch et al 1999), and its legal justification in international legal journals (Meron 2000). The action has given a new dimension to the US strategic thinking by changing NATO's mission to address issues such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drugs and terrorism (Guicherd 1999; Haass 1999).

In other Western fora, too, the talk is of loosening the rigidities of existing international law. The Charter for European Security adopted by the 54-member Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) — a more respectable and political face of NATO — in Istanbul in November 1999, incorporated a "principle" which in essence argued that intervention was justified if the security risks — including international terrorism, violent extremism, drug trafficking, the spread of small and light weapons, acute economic problems, as well as instability in the Mediterranean basin and Central Asia — were to threaten Europe (Ghebali 2000).

The rhetoric for enforcing "cosmopolitan law" by intervention is likely to grow in what has been termed as "new wars" in which the major powers intervene in interstate, ethnic and civil wars (Kaldor 1999; Ignatieff 2000, Shawcross 2000a). NATO's so-called "humanitarian" mission cost $11 billion in warfare alone, while further $60 billion of damage (BBC 1999b) was inflicted by the bombing, yet it gave a new lease of life to the world's defence industry, which affects the formulation and conduct of US foreign policy (Johnson 2000).

Under its Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), NATO wants its member states to increase their defence budgets. The DCI, unveiled at the Washington summit in April 1999, is intended to help alliance forces operate more effectively together and enable the European members to make a stronger contribution to NATO. Lord Robertson a former British Defence Secretary and now NATO Secretary General and Chairman of the North Atlantic Council wrote in *NATO Review*: "The Defence Capabilities Initiative ... will help ensure that all of NATO's Allies develop certain

essential capabilities. It will also take steps to improve interoperability between Allied forces. This is not just a question of spending more — it is also about spending more wisely. Promoting interoperability with NATO's Partners is also a key priority. We have seen both in Bosnia and Kosovo how important they have become in the conduct of peace-support operations in Europe" (Robertson 1999).

One reason for this expansion of NATO is the supreme position that US has as the world's largest exporter of defence equipment and munitions, it delivers more defence hardware than the next four exporters — Russia, Britain, France and Germany — put together. The need for "deployability, mobility and flexibility" of its forces is central to NATO's strategy as it enters its sixth decade as a transformed offensive organisation, buttressed by the US military empire which consists of 61 overseas bases spread across the globe in 19 countries. Some have even recommended the use of mercenaries to fight "ethnic wars" in "failed" states such as Sierra Leone. "Mercenaries or private security forces, properly supervised and controlled, may be the best answer," wrote one British commentator recently (Shawcross 2000b, 20).

Most of television news networks, preoccupied as they are with infotainment and docusoaps and docudramas, seem to have little interest in covering distant wars or analysing geo-strategic concerns. Foreign affairs in general have declined among many networks, despite the growth of all-news channels. It is scarcely surprising then that media coverage of new wars have left the medium, in the words of historian Bruce Cumings, "deaf, dumb and blind" (Cumings 1992, 2).

In a market-driven broadcasting environment, characterised by increasingly vicious battles for ratings, even the more liberal media organisations have had to reorient their editorial priorities, with news about developing countries — unless they concern "humanitarian intervention" by the West — being one of the first casualties. The implications of this for the future of international news are grave at a time when most developing countries, on the receiving end of neo-liberal "reforms," are likely to be making news — whether it is about ethnic conflict, religious "fundamentalism," immigration, terrorism or proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The world's newsrooms ought to get used to many more spectacles of hordes of hi-tech white knights of a transformed NATO, accompanied by CNN crew, landing on an African beach to save "failed" or "rogue" states and defend human rights of displaced ethnic communities.

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