

DANCE OR DUEL: THREE CASE STUDIES  
OF EVOLUTIONARY EXPERIMENTATION IN MILITARY-MEDIA RELATIONS  
IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

The nature of the military-media relationship in the United States has evolved through the nature of the wars the United States has fought and the media portrayal of these conflicts. The outcome that the media coverage of American foreign military involvement is evidenced in the subsequent human rights treaties after war. Utilizing two case studies, the Second World War and Vietnam, and initiating a preliminary discussion of a third, the combined post-September 11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the paper examines the nature of this relationship and how military-media relations may effect subsequent developments in postwar treaties concerning human rights.

Dedicated to my parents for teaching me never to let school get in the way of an  
education, but that you still need a good education;  
my friends for being gracious and forgiving of the trench foot that kept me indoors for the  
months it took to research and write my thesis;  
and to my advisor who reminded me that the media, like war, is a business  
and taught me a fair measure about finding humor in the absurd.

My heart,  
AMANDA RIVKIN

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“In fact, I don’t know how we would endure war without its rumors.” – Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men*

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### *The War Correspondent and the Military*

Modern democracies like the United States have come to rely on a class of civilian intermediaries who provide information on military operations from the field of battle during a time of war. Better known as reporters, journalists, photographers, and war correspondents, the product of their efforts consists of what popular history and opinion consider a first rough draft of history, with the necessity for future edits and amendments. Inaccuracies are viewed as par for the course.

The veracity of this first draft, admittedly rough, is subject to debate. Battle opens wounds and exposes shortcomings. The “fog of war” contributes, exposing the “inherent limitations of journalism,” and in the process providing an “often blurred” representation of “the running portrait of battle.”<sup>1</sup> A few critiques of media in the modern era remain persistent: a reliance on spectacle and the unrelenting competition among the correspondents themselves obfuscating the story itself.<sup>2</sup> The largest history on conflict reporting from the media’s perspective, *The First Casualty* by Philip Knightley, borrows its title from a statement made by Senator Hiram Warren Johnson on the eve of

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<sup>1</sup> Braestrup, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Kennedy, p. 104.

America's entrance to the First World War. "The first casualty when war comes," Johnson said, "is truth."<sup>3</sup>

Members of the media and military recognize the other's utility out of necessity. Consequently, the relationship between the two has grown in evolutionary stages. Much like the conditions of war itself, the nature of this relationship faces dynamic challenges and is also capable of changing rapidly. In the postwar period, the media has reacted to military maneuvers with a mix of emotions ranging from hostility to complacency. Consequently, the military has moved to protect its interest and promote its story, projecting an image of strength and sacrifice.

Civilian and military leaders are in a different position than the general public, for they receive field information from a variety of alternate sources, including the military, the U.S. State Department, other government agencies, international organizations and foreign governments. The press by contrast is instrumental in conveying the desires of the political and military elite to the general public, and receives parcels of information in the form of observations and leaks from these and other myriad sources.

American military doctrine does not view or sanction the use of domestic mass media as a tool of mobilization. Rather the U.S. military views public support in purely military terms, as a "center of gravity" for the success of its own operations.<sup>4</sup> The distinction is subtle but important.

During the Second World War, the press was a willing partner in the war effort. In Vietnam, the military increasingly came to feel the press could not be counted on in the way it once had been. Without Walter Cronkite's support for the war effort, Lyndon

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<sup>3</sup> Knightley, epigraph.

<sup>4</sup> Rid, p. 114-5.

Johnson told aides he had lost middle America; he opted not to run for reelection a short while later.<sup>5</sup>

The lessons of both eras have been used to craft public affairs policy in the post September 11 era.<sup>6</sup> At the resolution of current hostilities in Afghanistan and Iraq, the nature of this relationship may find a mirror in American society, in human rights treaties after hostilities, and will serve as a rough guide, providing at the very least a dictionary of terms like “embedded”.

As an institution in American public life, the media has a tendency to build its own professional myths and legacy around the works of iconic personalities. These icons are rewarded with their stature as a consequence of producing works that enrich our understanding of history, culture and the times we live in.<sup>7</sup>

The press is slow to adapt to radical changes in the profession. The power of the press can be strained considerably, like most institutions including the military, when under what it perceives to be an assault on multiple fronts. Relative to the military’s emphasis on training and doctrine, the media expends little in preparing each new generation of conflict correspondents for what they will witness.<sup>8</sup> In the modern American media, there is no equivalency to the military’s after-action reports (AARs).

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<sup>5</sup> “When Cronkite returned from the trip, he commented in heavy and memorable words on Tet in a CBS News Special, *Report from Vietnam by Walter Cronkite*: ‘The only national way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.’ This was Walter Cronkite calling to accept defeat in Vietnam. After his remarks – the impact of which cannot be underestimated – President Lyndon B. Johnson reportedly concluded: ‘If I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost Middle America.’ A few weeks later the incumbent announced that he would not run for the presidency a second time.” (Rid, p. 59; also see Ellsberg, p. 400)

<sup>6</sup> Rid, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Sheehan writes of colleague “David Halberstam’s generation, the generation of the 1950s”, projecting his experience in Vietnam and the rapid disillusionment he felt for his own government as a consequence onto a collective of his demographic and ideological peers, p. 320.

<sup>8</sup> Kennedy, p. 14.

Compounding the problem for the press is the fact that few green war correspondents understand military strategy. Most exhibit a limited literacy of military terminology and life. During the Iraq War's experimental embed program, only 19 percent of the correspondents signed on had prior military experience.<sup>9</sup> The presence of civilians lacking military expertise can be highly advantageous to the military however.

In a democratic society the military relies on civilian support for military operations. This support from the general public has a political outcome on the decision-making bodies of the executive and legislative branches of the American government.<sup>10</sup> The problems inaccurate media reports generate have unintended consequences similar to those that persisted within the military in Vietnam when body counts were used as one measure of effectiveness. The accuracy or inaccuracy of these reports left impressions on senior officers who reacted to a phony perception of ground-level conditions.<sup>11</sup>

The media's approach to war is "to cover conflict," whereas the military sees the press as part of a larger public affairs strategy. The media's stated goal of "telling the story," bringing detail and color to the historical record, is considerably different from the military's public affairs perspective based on a doctrine of operational expediency and security.<sup>12</sup>

The press responds to a different set of demands from the public than the military.<sup>13</sup> This can include relentless coverage of celebrities, disasters, and celebrity disasters; the press has a different reward system than the military, part of which is

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<sup>9</sup> Rid, p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Deutsch writes, "households may be considered in the most simple case as making specific demands upon the political system," p. 118.

<sup>11</sup> Rid, p. 55; Halberstam (1964), p. 94 and 178; and FitzGerald, p. 364.

<sup>12</sup> Livingston, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Halberstam, p. 7.

derived from institutional prestige.<sup>14</sup> Public affairs experiments, like the early cases of embedding after September 11, first in Afghanistan and later in Iraq, were done out of evolutionary necessity. Bureaucracies and militaries are customarily built to oppose change at a certain level<sup>15</sup> consequently the costs of credibility for the two institutions come at different prices.

As an institution, the military perpetuated a culture of defeat in the wake of Vietnam, the first officers in U.S. history to lose an American war.<sup>16</sup> By contrast, the media reacted to the events of the Vietnam era and the demise of Richard Nixon as a consequence of the work of *Washington Post* correspondent Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein by revising its own role in the historical record. In fact, American correspondents in Vietnam including David Halberstam did not question “the American intervention itself,” but rather “its effectiveness.”<sup>17</sup>

### *Military Press Affairs and Evolutionary Experimentation*

The modern embedding program is alternately lauded and criticized. Supporters claim it has helped provide the public with tremendous insight as well as a unique

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<sup>14</sup> Halberstam, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> Rid, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Rid, p. 60-1 and Shay, p. 7. Shay notes the painful experience confronting Vietnam veterans upon returning home from the war at their local American Legion or Veterans of Foreign War posts “where they had assumed that they would be welcomed, supported and understood. Time and again they were assailed as ‘losers’ by World War II veterans.” Consequently, “many brawls” resulted.

<sup>17</sup> Knightley, p. 415.

window into military operations.<sup>18</sup> Critics contend the visual and informational bombardment serves only to saturate the public with small bits of information lacking overview or insight.<sup>19</sup> Military public affairs doctrine does not list information saturation as a strategic or operational goal of public affairs operations.<sup>20</sup>

In recent decades, the military has transformed its one-time hostility toward the media to its own advantage, handling the press with increased skepticism but tempered by the willingness to see in the media the potential to serve as a force multiplier of its own message.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, in the Second World War correspondents were often contracted by the military and journalistic organization at once. They served their country as a force multiplier for the greater national cause.<sup>22</sup>

Vietnam invalidated a previously held assumption about the role of the media in conflict, namely that work of journalists would reflect official positions. There is “a general problem for journalists” since consequently accurate reporting produces a “strategic advantage for one party”.<sup>23</sup> The consequences of the modern embed program for the media have been myriad. On the one hand, the media is rewarded with never-before-seen access and endless footage. Unlike ever before, viewers can feel saturated with information about the war and consequently confused about how to construct meaning from the myriad reports.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Rid, p. 107. Rid sums up the experience of Colonel Melanie R. Reeder, a military public affairs officer in Afghanistan during Operation Enduring Freedom: “When journalists were provided access, the accurate story was told.”

<sup>19</sup> Carruthers, p. 202 and Knightley, p. 535.

<sup>20</sup> Rid, p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> Rid, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Braestrup, p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Rid, p. 169 and Spencer, p. 163.

<sup>24</sup> Rid, p. xi provides the military’s perspective: “the US military... faces both a rapidly changing information environment and an immense learning pressure to deal with it.”

## Research Question

### *Hypothesis*

Post-conflict human rights resolutions develop around concerns of wartime conditions, highlighted by the media in its coverage of war. Human rights concerns appearing in press coverage of conflict will be sustained in the postwar period and translate into influencing pertinent treaties.

### *The Rise of Human Rights Culture*

The civilian values the press seeks to uphold meet a critical test during a time of war. How do these values endure the conditions of armed conflict? The journalist has control of events unfolding on the battlefield or postwar terrain in so far as their pen, and editors or news organizations, will permit. But how do the civilian values and concerns they raise influence postwar policy? This paper will assess how civilian concerns endure through wartime and determine whether there is a correlation between wartime conflict coverage and postwar human rights resolutions.

Journalists whose works have come to define their times have reached a certain iconic stature within their profession, their works providing form to their times. Their status as icons has come to define the terms of American foreign engagement for the

broader public. The creation of postwar resolutions is one yardstick against which it becomes possible, in time, to measure not just the strength of the reporting, but the strength of civilian values as they are tested through the pressures imposed on a society by foreign military intervention.

Three case studies selected for this study – the Second World War, Vietnam, and the post-September 11 conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq (treated as a single combined case) – and only the last remains an open battle, although the legacy of each conflict can be felt in current practices. Following the Second World War and Vietnam, global treaties on human rights emerged in the postwar period.<sup>25</sup> These agreements shaped the terms of civilian affairs and military engagement in the aftermath of war.

This conversation between the military and a nascent human rights culture has played out on editorial pages, news reports, and the voluminous correspondence of journalists ever since, shaping much of the modern rights debate according to its framework.<sup>26</sup> Arguments drawn from human rights discourse have been used by the military in encounters with the press to justify military operations. The more credibility the press has established with the powerful constituencies of the public, military and civilian leaders, the greater its imprint will be on the narrative of postwar human rights resolutions.

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<sup>25</sup> Moyn, p. 2 and Nash, p. 9.

<sup>26</sup> Nash, p. 47.

## Methods

### *Case Studies and Selection*

The case study approach was selected for the simple reason that it is the preferred method of the U.S. military and the American media when examining the nature of their relationship. The case studies have been selected because of the imprint they have left on the military and the media as well as the American psyche and because of their status as most prominently featured and studied in both the military and media establishment.

At Pearl Harbor and on September 11, American centers of gravity were attacked – the U.S. military command in the Pacific and the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. In Vietnam and to a louder extent in Iraq, the case for preventive war was made to justify military intervention and occupation of foreign lands.

Similarly, the military's codes for handling the American media in Vietnam and Iraq were similar insofar as reporters were permitted to travel with military units. While an imperfect parallel certainly to the events in Vietnam, one does exist under a Pentagon scheme to allow reporters to the battlefield, mobility to achieve this courtesy of the military command, and the ability to file largely free of military censorship. The resulting effects in Vietnam and Iraq were quite different however.

The biggest change in the relationship has come with the transformation of the American military into a professional enterprise with the abolition of conscription (“the draft”) in the wake of Vietnam. The decision to eliminate forced military service was

political<sup>27</sup> and is in a sense a barometer of the seriousness with which the military reacted to the perception of a press assault on a critical center of gravity, public opinion.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Moyn, p. 159.

<sup>28</sup> Rid, p. 115.

## Literature Review

### *A Divergence of Opinion*

Literature on media-military relations can be viewed broadly under two themes: conflict reporting and public affairs. Media theory asserts concern with reporting conflict, whereas military doctrine sees the press as a component of a larger public affairs strategy. The military understands the media functions reactively, rarely setting the terms or topic of public discussion itself.<sup>29</sup>

### *Covering Conflict: An Overview From the Ground*

War correspondents live for “an intense and overpowering moment,”<sup>30</sup> however they daily face the constraints of on the job realities, operating in an insecure environment with changing power dynamics. *Esquire* correspondent Michael Herr describes the emotional flux confronting reporters in Vietnam, “Maybe you couldn’t love the war and hate it inside the same instant, but sometimes... you were literally High On War.”<sup>31</sup> Herr concludes, “Vietnam was what we had instead of happy childhoods.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Rid, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> Hedges, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Herr, p. 59. Pyle writes similarly, “War sometimes gets to be almost like Hollywood.” (2004, p. 211)

<sup>32</sup> Herr, p. 229.

Philip Knightley a journalist and scholar of the changing role of the war correspondent in the west, chronicles the evolution of the modern conflict reporter in *The First Casualty*. Knightley's extensive media experience gives him an understanding of the shortcomings of the profession and an awareness of the institutional constraints; he is among few voices in the journalistic profession who openly acknowledge the role the press has "in the promotion of war" (p. xiii). Vietnam correspondent Herr quotes a colleague that taking "the glamour out of war!" would be "like trying o take the glamour out of sex, trying to take the glamour out of the Rolling Stones."<sup>33</sup>

The military needs to portray something horrific, war, favorably, as glorious even. At times, Knightley concludes the aims of the military and the media are "irreconcilable" (p. xi). He critiques the media's ability to uphold civilian values in wartime, but tempers his criticism with an understanding that correspondents have "short working lives," noticeably so when compared with the longevity of military doctrine and the military as an institution (p. 489).

The media has the ability to shape public opinion by constructing, then amplifying the narrative in conditions of armed conflict.<sup>34</sup> Murray Edelman, America's foremost scholar on the construction of political spectacle through instruments of mass politics and media, came to view, over the course of his career, political events in the context of stand-in symbols for a range of moral values. As a symbolic act, a political

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<sup>33</sup> Herr, p. 233.

<sup>34</sup> Livingston, p. 11. The media interest in conventional warfare is noted to be considerably higher than during other forms of military invention, with only terrorist or counterterrorist special operations, hostage rescue, and the initial stages of peacekeeping operations generating "high interest" from American media outlets; therefore "the stakes are highest in conventional warfare".

event can embody good or evil, portraying “moral certainty” that can lead one “to harm or kill others” in battle.<sup>35</sup>

Edelman notes that the demonization of adversaries is critical for political and military action against an enemy. Edelman writes adversaries become “objects embodying a particular abstract function: aggression, evil, domination, obedience and so on.”<sup>36</sup> Clinical psychiatrist Jonathan Shay, who specialized in treating veterans of the war in Vietnam with severe combat trauma, similarly concludes that “men cannot kill an enemy understood to be honorable and like oneself” (p. 103).

Karl Wolfgang Deutsch wrote of power as a currency in politics rather than its center or essence. Deutsch suggested executive power ultimately rested with the cascading currents of public opinion (p. 118). “Regimes and proponents of political causes,” Edelman writes in *Constructing the Political Spectacle*, “know that it takes much coercion, propaganda, and the portrayal of issues in terms that entertain, distort, and shock to extract a public response of any kind (p. 7).”

In conditions of conflict, notably a losing war or military defeat, the resilience of a society meets an extreme test. Deutsch concludes, “No individual, no culture, no people and no state can endure without self-respect” (p. 234). Edelman elaborates that in a system where civil and military elites set the news agenda,<sup>37</sup> the “very concept of ‘fact’ becomes irrelevant because every meaningful political object and person is an interpretation that reflects and perpetuates an ideology.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Edelman (1971), p. 60 and Edelman (1988), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Edelman (1971), p. 60.

<sup>37</sup> Carruthers, p. 202.

<sup>38</sup> Edelman (1988), p. 10.

Samuel Huntington writes in *The Soldier and the State* that American military and political policy are more “closely interrelated in the postwar world than they had been previously” (p.351). “American idealism” has made “every war a crusade... not for specific objectives of national security, but on behalf of universal principles” (p. 152). Huntington asserts the primacy of the “rights of individuals against the state” but notes the paradox of liberalism “never questioned the existence of the state” (p. 149).

Harold Lasswell writes in the interwar period of the early twentieth century of the dangers confronting a liberal society with the rise of militarism. As a natural consequence of the unprecedented growth of all branches of the armed forces to meet the demands imposed by the war effort, the postwar period in America was defined by a “heightened and persistent peacetime tension between military imperatives and American liberal society.”<sup>39</sup>

Lasswell coined the term “garrison state” to mean in effect “a world in which the specialists on violence are the most powerful group in society,”<sup>40</sup> suggesting that the emergence of a garrison state “is not inevitable.”<sup>41</sup> Samuel Huntington, citing Lasswell’s hypothesis, suggests that “in the long run” the encroachment of militarism on the liberal state will “be relieved only by the weakening of the security threat or the weakening of liberalism.”<sup>42</sup>

Nigerian journalist Ndaeyo Uko points to the corruptible nature of both individual members of the media and institutions, such as the military, that safeguard a free press. While admittedly not operating in an entirely free and open society, Uko acknowledges

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<sup>39</sup> Huntington, p. 345.

<sup>40</sup> Lasswell, p. 56.

<sup>41</sup> Lasswell, p. 57.

<sup>42</sup> Huntington, p. 456.

the press in his country suffers from the deleterious, dual influences of official and unofficially sanctioned corruption, afflicting both the political and military classes to an extreme degree.

Based on his experience as an investigative reporter in Nigeria, Uko cites numerous examples where the press operated more freely under military, rather than civilian rule. Uko indicates times when the military was better able to guarantee the physical safety of the press. Alternatively, the political class was unable to do the same in a political environment wrought with physical intimidation and coercion, in essence a criminal state.

Uko's larger point may be defeated by the challenges represented by the serious concerns he raises about the nature of civilian rule under such a system. But his most important conclusion, though, serves as a cautionary and a corollary to Lasswell's "garrison state" hypothesis. Uko finds the press is often "no better than the regimes" it is forced to confront.<sup>43</sup>

### *Public Affairs: Managing the Media's Narrative*

The media has different obligations than the military, which balances "demands of international secrecy and domestic support".<sup>44</sup> Since the Second World War, the U.S. Department of Defense has attempted and executed a variety of press management strategies to varying levels of success. The Vietnam experience was perhaps the most

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<sup>43</sup> Uko, p. 122 and Knightley, p. xiii.

<sup>44</sup> Hunt, p. 19.

bitter in U.S. military history. The military saw its prestige as an institution diminish considerably as a result of “the central contradictions of the policies pursued by Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon.”<sup>45</sup>

For the military command, Vietnam left a dark legacy. Initial hostility toward the press in the wake of damning coverage led towards introspection. Part of the difficulty for the military after Vietnam was the slow acceptance that systematically the military had effectively “turned bad news into not so bad news as the accumulated data reflected success that was just not there.”<sup>46</sup>

For the military, the disaster in Vietnam came on multiple fronts, both foreign and domestic, by way of negative portrayal in the press, which resulted in diminish public prestige for the military as an institution. It would literally take a generation for the military to come around to the modern strategy of embedding, which on the periphery is an inherently “counter-intuitive” development.<sup>47</sup> The idea behind the program was to transform what had proven to be a source of vulnerability historically into a “force multiplier” that would magnify the military’s operational successes.<sup>48</sup>

In order for the public to maintain genuine and long lasting support for military intervention, the military must appreciate the factors that lend credibility to a news report and understand the limitations of press reporting. In sum, the military must interact with the press in a way that is both credible to members of the media who serve as

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<sup>45</sup> Braestrup, p. 61.

<sup>46</sup> Rid, p. 55.

<sup>47</sup> Rid, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> Rid, p. 9.

interlocutors to the general public and in a manner that provides credibility to the military as an institution.<sup>49</sup>

After failure, an organization's health is tested whereas success "weakens an organization's ability to thoroughly unlearn and reorient its strategy," shrouding decisions in hubris, in essence.<sup>50</sup> Within the military, an evolved understanding of the strengths and limitations of the international media permitted a view of public affairs as something far more than convincing the public alone.

Successful public affairs strategy involves knowing "the strengths and weakness of your enemy," to "avoid and exploit them" as well as "your own centers of gravity" in order to "protect them."<sup>51</sup> Based on these principles, an adaptive strategy involves preempting the news cycle,<sup>52</sup> but not with misinformation since this can have unintended negative consequences since in the United States, the media "forms part of Washington's decision making process."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Braestrup, p. 75 and Richard "Dick" Cheney in Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 101.

<sup>50</sup> Rid, p. 40.

<sup>51</sup> Rid, p. 114.

<sup>52</sup> Rid, p. 36.

<sup>53</sup> Rid, p. 114-5.

## Case Studies

### *The Conflicts and the Correspondents*

Three conflicts of multi-year foreign military engagement have left deep imprints on the American media, military and mass culture since the mid-twentieth century. In the press, the iconography of modern American war journalism is derived from these battles, namely the Second World War, Vietnam and the post-September 11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. A prominent example of this iconography of war journalism in American mass culture would be two images produced during the Vietnam era by Associated Press photographers Eddie Adams and Huynh Cong “Nick” Ut, one of a street corner execution in Saigon and the other featuring a small girl covered in napalm running naked down the road.<sup>54</sup>

An icon in this instance is best defined as a journalistic product, whether literary or visual, that helps to reconstruct a part of the conflict by contributing meaning to our understanding of the larger struggle taking place. Work of long lasting worth withstands a few critical tests, namely time and revision. If the contribution of an iconic work were somehow absent from our picture of a particular conflict, our understanding of what took place would in some way be less complete, our sense of what transpired more embryonic.

In the Second World War, Ernie Pyle and Bill Mauldin helped tell the story of young men on the front lines with bitterness, humor and respect for both the men and

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<sup>54</sup> Rid, p. 59.

their war.<sup>55</sup> The legacy of the Second World War on civilian life can be found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Contrary to popular opinion and the revisions of history, the Universal Declaration was not a legacy of the Holocaust but rather a “wreath laid on the grave of wartime hopes.”<sup>56</sup>

In Vietnam, correspondents David Halberstam and Neal Sheehan became increasingly disturbed by the direction of American military commitments on behalf of South Vietnam, one front in a much larger struggle against communism worldwide. After Vietnam, there were a “number of catalysts for the explosion” in human rights culture in the late 1970s. In particular, American foreign policy experienced a “liberal shift” as the country increasingly saw the world in “new, moralized terms after the Vietnamese disaster.”<sup>57</sup> The Helsinki Final Act was signed in 1975 shortly after the American withdrawal from Vietnam. From there, the Act evolved into the Eastern bloc human rights monitor Helsinki Watch a few years later.<sup>58</sup> Since then the organization transformed into the powerhouse Human Rights Watch, an organization now capable of contributing to and, on occasion, setting the global news agenda.

After September 11, a military intervention first in Afghanistan, then Iraq led a new generation of journalists to discover a whole new terrain – the *battlespace*.<sup>59</sup>

Reporters could “embed” with military units after agreeing to certain restrictions

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<sup>55</sup> Pyle (2001) writes of Mauldin, “his cartoons are funny, but because they are also terribly grim and real... In a way his cartoons are bitter. His work is so mature that I had pictured him as a man approaching middle age. Yet he was only twenty-two years old, and he looked even younger.” (p. 137-8)

<sup>56</sup> Moyn, p. 2. Moyn writes that several “high profile observers” such as Michael Ignatieff have put forth an inaccurate account of the evolution of human rights culture, stating that “the most universally repeated myth” may be that human rights is “an old ideal that finally came into its own as a response to the Holocaust.”

<sup>57</sup> Moyn, p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> Moyn, p. 150 and 159.

<sup>59</sup> Rid, p. 4.

theoretically imposed to maintain operational security.<sup>60</sup> Based on journalistic awards and industry prestige, most likely the work of journalists such as Sebastian Junger, George Packer, Thomas Ricks, and Elizabeth Rubin will likely come to define these times.

Unlike previous conflicts, the work of these journalists will be viewed alongside the work of anonymous members of the military's rank-and-file responsible for the photographs and misdeeds of detainee abuse and torture at Abu Ghraib.<sup>61</sup> Such images, provided to the press for publication after attempts at suppression were unsuccessful, lend a new, unique definition of atrocity to the larger picture of Americans' understanding of the military's foreign interventions. Unlike previous conflicts, the definition and depiction of atrocity is being constructed by the military in the press for the public, an unanticipated consequence of the current system of restrictions and of the current structure of the military as a professional force.

Much as veterans suffer "moral injury" after battle, the agreements that emerge in the aftermath of war serve to bring humanity back from the "horror, fear and grief" prevalent in wartime narratives.<sup>62</sup> The human rights movement does not, contrary to popular opinion have its origins in the Holocaust or anti-colonial movements.<sup>63</sup> Western states, "the model supposes are the leaders of international society," responsible for "expanding human rights".<sup>64</sup>

As a force in geopolitics, human rights concerns remain in the domain of victors and elites, a reflection of a particular set of interpretations of a wartime effort. To what

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<sup>60</sup> Knightley, p. 531 and Rid, p. 148.

<sup>61</sup> Hersh (2004).

<sup>62</sup> Shay, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> Moyn, p. 6-7.

<sup>64</sup> Nash, p. 47.

extent has the press contributed to America's collective understanding of foreign military interventions? How is this reflected in society's postwar attempts to heal moral injury in the form of human rights resolutions?

### *World War II*

By most accounts, the Second World War is considered America's last "patriotic war". Following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, "public opinion and the press rallied behind the nation's armed forces," the result of a catalyzing event, bolstered by media outrage. A "lingering nostalgia for the halcyon days of World War II" remains within the military command.<sup>65</sup>

Unlike today where the military holds the preeminent spot in the ranking of militaries, in 1941 the American military was comprised "overwhelmingly of citizens rather than professional soldiers"<sup>66</sup> and placed "nineteenth among the world's armed forces, after Portugal but barely ahead of Bulgaria."<sup>67</sup> After Pearl Harbor, the United States would eventually send 11.9 million men to war in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific,<sup>68</sup> making the cost of losing public support extraordinarily high.

This was America's good war and the press was there to tell the story. "Despite the immediate imposition of censorship", the Second World War nonetheless

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<sup>65</sup> Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 38.

<sup>66</sup> Braestrup, p. v.

<sup>67</sup> Knightley, p. 296.

<sup>68</sup> Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 38.

“represented the high-water mark of military-media relations.”<sup>69</sup> The only media outlet in Honolulu when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor was United Press. A reporter’s line through to San Francisco was cut during the “first excited telephone report”. The imposition of censorship and “suppression of news came immediately, restricting everything but “official communiqués... for another four days.”<sup>70</sup>

Contemporary public relations theory was in its infancy during the Second World War.<sup>71</sup> The press was viewed as an integral part of the war effort, “constructed to defeat Hitler.”<sup>72</sup> Being part of the team meant members of the media wore uniforms, traveled with military units and accepted “battlefield and home-front censorship as the price of national security.”<sup>73</sup> No reports or images moved - the media’s term for release to news outlets (if a wire service) and the public, “from the battlefield without first being reviewed by a military censor”, even if the work produced was by legendary and trusted correspondents like Ernie Pyle or Walter Cronkite.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the fact that President Franklin Roosevelt had both censorship powers and a propaganda division in the Office of War Information, “at no time could he be considered the master of public opinion, able to manipulate at will.”<sup>75</sup> The effects of wartime censorship though were widely felt within the media and on American public life.<sup>76</sup> One example includes physical alterations to published material like books, evidenced in an editor’s note “About the Appearance of Books in Wartime” from the

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<sup>69</sup> Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 38.

<sup>70</sup> Knightley, p. 296-7.

<sup>71</sup> Rid, p. 36.

<sup>72</sup> Knightley, p. 344 and Braestrup, p. 28.

<sup>73</sup> Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 38.

<sup>74</sup> Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 63.

<sup>75</sup> Stoler in Osgood and Frank, p. 68.

<sup>76</sup> Sweeney notes “the fabric of domestic censorship rested on a system of trust among journalists, the government, and the armed forces,” p. 77.

front of Margaret Bourke-White's 1944 bestselling, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"*:

A recent ruling by the War Production Board has curtailed the use of paper by book publishers in 1944. In line with this ruling and in order to conserve materials and manpower, we are co-operating... We are sure that readers will understand the publishers' desire to co-operate as fully as possible with the objectives of the War Production Board and our government.<sup>77</sup>

Bourke-White, a *Life* magazine photographer and correspondent (also the first woman to be outfitted by the U.S. military as a correspondent), repeatedly refers to her work in Europe as a "mission".<sup>78</sup> One assignment for *Life*, Bourke-White notes, came from "headquarters in the Pentagon Building" where "the ASF issued a request that I go overseas with our Army to show how supplies are brought to our troops: to tell in photographs the great story of 'logistics.'"<sup>79</sup>

Logistics is a recurring theme, a story the military appears eager to have told. *New Yorker* writer A.J. Liebling also wrote "the background of bookkeeping staggered the imagination."<sup>80</sup> Ernie Pyle reminds us "that 'This is certainly an engineers' war.' And indeed it was."<sup>81</sup> Philip Knightley, historian of conflict coverage, suggests that one of the more interesting consequences of increasingly mechanized warfare was that as "the individual soldier was reduced by technology, the more correspondents concentrated on writing about him," as Ernie Pyle did (p. 357).

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<sup>77</sup> Bourke-White, copyright page.

<sup>78</sup> Bourke-White, p. 14-5 and 18.

<sup>79</sup> Bourke-White, p. 17-8.

<sup>80</sup> Liebling, p. 247.

<sup>81</sup> Pyle (2001), p. 62.

Known as the American soldier's favorite reporter during the Second World War, Pyle was said to cheer up infantry merely with his presence.<sup>82</sup> What he provided was new in America at the time, namely a nuanced, yet flattering portrait of the soldiers' predicament. In Pyle's work the individual soldier is both obscured, brought to "moving in machinelike precision throughout long nights"<sup>83</sup>, and strengthened by the force of American technological might. Pyle writes the "unbearable weight of machinery" was able to "smother the enemy," while making it possible for "hundreds of thousands of our young men whose expectancy for survival otherwise have been small" with being able to again "walk through their own front doors."<sup>84</sup>

Pyle penned masterful odes to the infantry, his "old love."<sup>85</sup> Alternatively victorious and elegiac, Pyle's prose could look as lyrical as:

A salute to the infantry – the God-damned infantry, as they like to call themselves. I loved the infantry because they were the underdogs. They were the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They had no comforts, and they even learned to live without the necessities. And in the end they were the guys without whom the Battle of Africa could not have been won. (p. 200)

A few pages later, Pyle describes how the U.S. Army boys "bodies were tanned as if they had been wintering at Miami Beach."<sup>86</sup>

Yet for all the mythology Pyle creates around America's grunts, his portrayal is of a deeply human fighting force. He describes an encounter in Sicily with "these

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<sup>82</sup> Sweeney, p. 99-103.

<sup>83</sup> Pyle (2004), p. 117.

<sup>84</sup> Pyle (2001), p. 39-40.

<sup>85</sup> Pyle (2001), p. 457.

<sup>86</sup> Pyle (2004), p. 202.

hillbillies” who were playing cards and “betting on whether Schlitz beer was sometimes put in green bottles instead of brown.” Pyle is clear; these boys were “Dumb”.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, the cartoons of Bill Mauldin reflect a simple humanity that provides some dark comfort to men confronting terrible conditions, wartime shortages and the like. One comic shows a young yet weary conscript staring down at his gun, “I’ve given you th’ best years o’ my life.”<sup>88</sup> Another shows two soldiers arriving at an Italian market shortly after the town’s occupation to find increased prices, the amount serving as a measure, “Th’ town has been occupied three days,” one soldier says, cigarette dangling.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the restrictions, several correspondents, including *Life* photographer Bourke-White, wrote openly and frankly of the difficulties of administering an occupied city, in those terms<sup>90</sup> and perceptions of a penetrating racism dividing the armed forces where “Negro soldiers... working side by side with their fellow Americans in the hope that in this war they are earning first-class citizenship.”<sup>91</sup> *New Yorker* correspondent A.J. Libeling also wrote of difficulties within the chain of command, observing in an early war article “The Road Back to Paris,” “energetic officers were curbed by their superiors, who lived in fear of politicians.”<sup>92</sup>

Such examples illustrate military censorship did not translate into an expansive definition of “operational security,” where every unfavorable news item or observation met the grade. When the stakes were great like D-Day, the military “did everything it

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<sup>87</sup> Pyle (2001), p. 114.

<sup>88</sup> Mauldin, p. 267.

<sup>89</sup> Mauldin, p. 101.

<sup>90</sup> Bourke-White, p. 36. “It is not easy to administer justly an occupied city, to prevent the growth of a black market, and to see that our supplies are properly distributed. Still, our failure to do this may have serious effects in the future. I observed that the friendship with which we were greeted when we landed in Naples rapidly cooled during my stay here.”

<sup>91</sup> Bourke-White, p. 70. Bourke-White quotes an ordinance officer describing black Americans, utilizing one word that polite society would widely deem to be racist and offensive, both then and now.

<sup>92</sup> Liebling, p. 34.

could” to enable press access to the landings, accrediting 558 journalists while prioritizing operational security by “providing censors on the assault craft and even on the beaches.”<sup>93</sup>

Under a similar pretext, William Laurence, a science reporter with *The New York Times*, was granted secret access to the Manhattan Project in 1945 five months prior to the dropping of the atomic bomb on two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>94</sup> Laurence reported “a bluish-green that illuminated the entire sky all around” after the bomb landed on Nagasaki. ““There she goes,’ someone said,” Laurence quoted from the airplane as the bomb fell.

Such collaborations demonstrate even when reporters might have been inclined “to challenge the official version of events” they were not able to because “they were totally dependent on the military to be able to see the war at all.”<sup>95</sup> Later Drew Middleton, an Associated Press correspondent, would compare his experience in the Second World War to Vietnam, noting wartime censorship freed up the military command to be more open with members of the media since “all copy was submitted to censors before transmission”. Middleton found this lessened fears that slips of the tongue could be costly or, in the terms of one poster of the era, sink ships.<sup>96</sup>

On the flip side, the press did fulfill certain public affairs functions for the military. The press demonized the enemy and upheld American values, nowhere more so than in the pages of elite publications like the *New Yorker*. Liebling, a *New Yorker*

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<sup>93</sup> Knightley, p. 352.

<sup>94</sup> Braestrup, p. 28.

<sup>95</sup> Knightley, p. 352.

<sup>96</sup> Middleton quoted in Knightley, p. 345. In Vietnam, Middleton found the military command to be “far more wary of talking to reporters” as the lack of censorship induced a climate where “generals and everyone else” were tightlipped as a consequence.

correspondent, wrote of “at last” seeing “some Nazis”. Having traveled before in Germany, he recalled an “uncertain-looking people” who had quite suddenly “become so formidable” - *New Yorker* parlance for the enemy is a big wimp.<sup>97</sup>

Liebling proclaims democracy to be a “most precious thing, not because any democratic state is perfect, but because it is perfectible.” Almost apologetic, Liebling writes, “It sounds breathtaking banal” to say as much.<sup>98</sup> At war’s end, Liebling demonstrates greater critical capacities, refined by the postwar order. His portrait of the American approach to international justice is not flattering. He wrote, “the Nazis boiled the innocent down into soap, while the Americans let the guilty go free” (p. 761).

The conclusion of the Second World War represents a break from the past traditions and the beginning of “a new era in American civil-military relations.”<sup>99</sup> During the Second World War, American journalists wanted to see Hitler defeated, Japan surrender; many were the recipients of military decorations.<sup>100</sup> The press was “treated... as just another branch of the services” (p. 352). But the successful outcome of American military operations on multiple continents “not only transformed America’s role in the world for the remainder of the twentieth century... but also changed American society permanently.”<sup>101</sup>

Samuel Huntington notes the postwar period was a time of “heightened and persistent peacetime tension between military imperatives and American liberal

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<sup>97</sup> Liebling, p. 63.

<sup>98</sup> Liebling, p. 123.

<sup>99</sup> Huntington, p. 315.

<sup>100</sup> “General MacArthur broke American army precedent by awarding the Silver Star to Vernon Haughland of the AP for ‘devotion to duty and fortitude.’” In addition to Haughland, “Harry Gorrell, Jr., of the United Press was awarded the Air Medal for giving first aid to a wounded air-gunner during a bombing raid on Greece. Leo S. Disher of the UP got a Purple Heart after the attack on Oran...” Knightley, p. 345.

<sup>101</sup> Braverman, p. 257.

society”.<sup>102</sup> In the absence of “a total victory” from all but Japan and Germany, military leaders responded to postwar demands “for continued military security through the balance of power.”<sup>103</sup> The present, global architecture of human rights infrastructure traces its origins to the resolutions and treaties signed at the conclusion of the Second World War.

At the end of the Second World War, the United Nations came into being and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, signed in 1948, guaranteed people - in theory - to far more than they had ever been entitled previously under the rules of the newly emerging international system.<sup>104</sup> A host of international organizations came into being to handle documentation, displaced persons, and reconstruction – and many of these institutions and organizations govern the global order, noticeably so in the third or developing world, to this day.

Few of the significant atrocities of the Second World War were well documented in the iconic press accounts from the period. Instead crimes like genocide and Stalin’s gulags came into focus much later, the result of scholarship, debate, the work of activists and mass media discussion. Human rights historian Samuel Moyn notes, “Contrary to conventional assumptions, there was no widespread Holocaust consciousness in the postwar era,” and therefore “human rights could not have been a response to it.”

The U.N. Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights “were not a response to the Holocaust,” and nor were they “focused on the prevention of catastrophic slaughter.”<sup>105</sup> For instance, the Universal Declaration “contained a number of articles

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<sup>102</sup> Huntington, p. 345.

<sup>103</sup> Huntington, p. 333.

<sup>104</sup> Moyn, p. 47-9.

<sup>105</sup> Moyn, p. 47.

relating to ‘socio-economic’ and ‘cultural’ rights”. In 1948, when the Universal Declaration was signed, “the definition of cultural rights focused on education and the right to participate in ‘cultural life’ in the sense of arts and sciences, rather than on respecting cultural difference and making redress to colonized peoples.”<sup>106</sup>

During the Second World War, the American media served to reinforce the American military effort, offering scant criticism of its own beyond negative reflections of domestic American life as they appeared in the armed forces. Racism and ignorance appear to be the foremost frequent charges on this front, but the description and overall character of the American soldier is a generous, yet human portrait. His sacrifices are honored and his agonies heard, albeit occasionally in idealized, Adonis-like terms.

In terms of covering the broader conflict beyond the scope of the American military, journalists attached to American military units were not able to report on much more than the movements and maneuvers of their units. Some noted the unprecedented, mechanized movement of civilians from territories under German occupation; the Russians took care of the eastern front and were partners in the war effort.

Journalistic accounts however had a limited influence on the postwar resolutions of human rights accords and civilian treaties. The absence of genocide’s imprint, first on journalistic accounts and then on postwar human rights resolutions, intimates press coverage can have a deep effect, especially when it is unable to detect crimes of profound enormity. If an event, an atrocity is not reported it has no chance of effecting postwar outcomes. If the press does not see or acknowledge a phenomenon, whether deportations, concentration camps, or gulags, there is little way to force policy elites in western, democratic societies forward on human rights matters in the postwar.

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<sup>106</sup> Gledhill in Wilson, p. 70.

## *Vietnam*

In Vietnam, the military granted unprecedented access to the media, based on lingering, inaccurate assumptions from a shared experience in the Second World War and the Korean War, when the press was “on the team.”<sup>107</sup> Before the war, Vietnam “had only come into the public’s eye through articles in the *National Geographic*, or old newsreels,” which portrayed the country in essence as “filled with exotic but dutiful natives whom the French were helping to become modern.”<sup>108</sup> From 1954-1960, most press accounts “concentrated on the Communist menace and the need for greater American involvement.”<sup>109</sup>

The death of 400 civilians in Saigon in November 1960 brought an increase in the number of American troops on the ground in Vietnam, as well as an increase in the number of American reporters.<sup>110</sup> By the summer of 1965, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) accredited 400 foreign journalists, up from just over forty the year before.<sup>111</sup> During the Tet offensive in 1968, the number soared, with 637 accredited correspondents. By the end, in 1974, there were just five reporters. A very small number saw combat.<sup>112</sup>

Much of the coverage generated from Vietnam by “David Halberstam’s generation”<sup>113</sup> of reporters - people like Neal Sheehan, Frances FitzGerald, and Michael

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<sup>107</sup> Braestrup, p. 7.

<sup>108</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. 79.

<sup>109</sup> Knightley, p. 409.

<sup>110</sup> Knightley, p. 410.

<sup>111</sup> Braestrup, p. 64.

<sup>112</sup> Rid, p. 56.

<sup>113</sup> Sheehan, p. 320.

Herr - was critical of the military's conduct.<sup>114</sup> Their work was noteworthy for both the precedent it set in criticizing the American military during a time of war as well as for the attention paid to the consequences of American foreign policy on civilians.

Revisions to history have created a myth, bolstered by both the media and the military. Most reporters in Vietnam were “not questioning the American intervention itself, but only its effectiveness.”<sup>115</sup> “The important question” for these establishment reporters, writes Frances FitzGerald<sup>116</sup>, a freelance correspondent in Vietnam for several months for *The New York Times Magazine* and *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1966, was “whether or not the United States could win in an acceptable amount of time.”<sup>117</sup>

Halberstam writes “the American role was not comparable to the French” since “we were, after all, fighting to get out”.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> In 1964, David Halberstam was awarded a Pulitzer Prize along with Associated Press correspondent Malcolm W. Browne for reporting the conflict in Vietnam and the overthrow of the Diem regime. In 1989, Neil Sheehan received a Pulitzer as well for his account of the war, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam*.

<sup>115</sup> Knightley, p. 415 and Hammond, p. 4; Halberstam concurs, noting “When I was here in 1962 and 1963 I belonged to a group of reporters who though the war was worth winning but who doubted the effectiveness of the fight against the enemy and sensed the seed of failure in our own efforts. That group was roundly attacked by American officialdom for being too pessimistic, but in retrospect I think the great sin was that we were not pessimistic enough.” (1964, p. 181)

<sup>116</sup> Daniel Ellsberg, responsible for leaking government documents that came to be known as *The Pentagon Papers* while an employee of the Rand Corporation, cites the influence of Frances FitzGerald in his memoir, *Secrets*. “After meeting journalist Frances FitzGerald, Patricia [Ellsberg's then fiancé] proposed they do an article together on the ‘other victims’ in Vietnam, the refugees who had fled from the countryside to the areas of our control. The U.S. public relations line was that these people had ‘voted with their feet’ against Vietcong terrorism by moving from their homes. Interviews with the refugees and talks with their representatives in the camps, however, showed very clearly that there was basically one and only condition that had made them leave their fields, homes, family alters, and ancestral graves: the cumulative effect of American air attacks and artillery.” (p. 139) FitzGerald followed up the point in her book, *Fire in the Lake*, “Doesn't that give the villager only the choice of becoming a refugee?” one journalist inquired. “I expect a tremendous increase in the number of refugees,” answered [General] Westmoreland.” The “statement was significant,” FitzGerald writes, “for it means that with the arrival of American troops the U.S. command had largely given up hope for the conventional pacification schemes,” where the goal was “to drive the NLF [communist National Liberation Front] out of the villages and to secure the villagers' loyalty to the government.” (p. 344)

<sup>117</sup> FitzGerald, p. 272.

<sup>118</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 57.

“Even as late as 1968,” FitzGerald found “many of the journalists in Saigon, believed the official claims” insofar as the U.S. “was at least making an effort to develop South Vietnam and to improve the welfare of the South Vietnamese people.”<sup>119</sup> Time has obscured these voices and favored the journalists who like FitzGerald, slowly raised their voices in dissent. As a collective, the military and the public alike have come retrospectively to view journalists as antagonists in the larger story of American military involvement in Vietnam.<sup>120</sup>

Two iconic images “had a tremendous impact in the United States” and best illustrate the paradox of the official version of events provided by government officials and the reality reporters found before them. One image, taken by Associated Press photographer Eddie Adams depicts the street corner execution of a captured Viet Cong guerrilla by Saigon police chief General Nguyen Ngoc Loan. The other image by Vietnamese photographer Huynh Cong “Nick” Ut, also of the Associated Press, shows a nine-year-old girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, running naked through the streets her flesh burning from napalm. With these images, the press functioned as “a magnifying glass in the sun” to the detriment of military morale and public opinion of military operations abroad.<sup>121</sup>

Initially the “pessimism appearing in the press had far more of an effect on Washington officials” than the general public.<sup>122</sup> After moving away from “World War II-style censorship”, the Department of Defense concluded in 1965, “at the urging of U.S.

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<sup>119</sup> FitzGerald, p. 120.

<sup>120</sup> Braestrup, p. 10-1.

<sup>121</sup> Rid, p. 59.

<sup>122</sup> Hammond, p. 9.

officials in Saigon,” that there was no going back. The reasons given are both explanatory as well as revealing of the military’s postwar constrains:

(1) it was impractical, given the freedom of reporters in Saigon to travel to Hong Kong or elsewhere to file stories free of censorship; (2) there was no censorship in the United States and could not be without a declaration of war; (3) the South Vietnamese, hosts to the American forces, would have to have had a hand in censorship, and they had already set some unpopular precedents with their own press; (4) it was impossible to censor television film for lack of technical facilities; and (5) it was difficult to suddenly impose censorship during a war which had long been covered without it.<sup>123</sup>

Changes in the nature of news gathering “allowed critics greater access to the press than ever before” a trend that “led away from traditional channels... and towards methods less susceptible to the government’s point of view.”<sup>124</sup>

The military command favored an “organizational perception filter” of “management practices based on ‘systems analysis,’ and the use of data and quantitative measures of effectiveness,” championed by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, former president and manager at the Ford Motor Company.<sup>125</sup> Body counts were just one aspect of “top-down construction of the systems analysis paradigm favored” which left little room for field commanders to innovate or conduct a counterinsurgency campaign that would avoid making the civilian population a target of military operations.<sup>126</sup>

The “five o’clock follies,” the military’s daily Saigon press briefing, reported the day’s tallies and figures, including the inflated body counts.<sup>127</sup> The press conferences,

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<sup>123</sup> Braestrup, p. 66.

<sup>124</sup> Hammond, p. 102.

<sup>125</sup> Rid, p. 55.

<sup>126</sup> Rid, p. 55.

<sup>127</sup> Braestrup, p. 63; FitzGerald, p. 273 and 364; and Sheehan, p. 93-5.

well documented (and pilloried) in the press, were just the most visible manifestation for the media of the larger problem.

In his memoirs, Colin Powell would later recount the experience of witnessing the body count statistics produced “first hand.” In one “random dialogue between a commander and an operator asking for the number of enemy killed: ‘How many did your platoon get?’ ‘I don’t know. We saw two for sure.’ ‘Well, if you saw two, there were probably eight. So let’s say ten.’”<sup>128</sup>

FitzGerald writes statistics were created not “as neophyte journalists naturally assumed... solely for their own benefit,” but rather, “The officials made those figures for themselves”<sup>129</sup> noting, “the officials were sincere, sometimes painfully so.”<sup>130</sup> Others, like Neal Sheehan disagreed that “men like Dean Acheson... the Dulles brothers in the Eisenhower administration, John Foster at the State Department and Allen at the CIA” could be “naïve enough to think they could export democracy to every nation on earth,” noting, “they favored a democratic state or a reformist-minded dictatorship.”<sup>131</sup>

In Vietnam, “two things made a deep impression” on many journalists covering the war, namely, “the difficulty of chasing guerrillas in that terrain, and the agony of the war for the peasants.”<sup>132</sup> Halberstam found his “mind boggles at the firepower an infantry company possesses” suggesting “we may have too much firepower,” enabling a “tendency not to come to grips with the more subtle problem of the war.”<sup>133</sup> *Esquire* reporter Michael Herr echoes that the rules of engagement “got fucked up when they

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<sup>128</sup> Powell, cited in Rid, p. 55.

<sup>129</sup> FitzGerald, p. 363-4.

<sup>130</sup> FitzGerald, p. 362.

<sup>131</sup> Sheehan, p. 130-1.

<sup>132</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 49.

<sup>133</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 182.

made it as easy for us to shoot as not to shoot.”<sup>134</sup> Despite the escalation,<sup>135</sup> Halberstam writes in 1964, “the American mission never understood the war as the enemy did.”<sup>136</sup>

With “the increased number of troops” came “more bombings, more deaths and more suffering” something the American military countered with “their talk of ‘winning the people’”.<sup>137</sup> The problems journalists chronicled were systemic, found in the absurdity of America’s “great web of military and civilian bureaucracies that World War II had created”<sup>138</sup> and its end product: conditions in which members of the military command “could receive no bad news.”<sup>139</sup>

Halberstam writes “The American military high command was a willing partner in this self-delusion” as it was “only too glad to listen to favorable statistics.”<sup>140</sup> On a broader scale, incidents such as Tito’s decision to break with the Soviet Union and lead a nationalist communist movement in Yugoslavia “led by native communists, was not a matter to which Americans gave serious thought.”<sup>141</sup> Reporters who reflected on the optimism “among top Americans in Saigon” found that what they were seeing was “essentially self-deception”<sup>142</sup> where “the client state does not really come to life but the illusion does”.<sup>143</sup>

Reporters also found Washington unwilling to believe the worst news, except for men like Bobby Kennedy who “had stopped at the Saigon airport long enough” and

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<sup>134</sup> Herr, p. 57.

<sup>135</sup> President Kennedy told Arthur Schlesinger that sending more troops into Vietnam is “like taking a drink. The effect wears off and you have to take another.” Quoted in Halberstam (1993), p. 175.

<sup>136</sup> Halberstam, p. 94.

<sup>137</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 57.

<sup>138</sup> Sheehan, p. 13.

<sup>139</sup> FitzGerald, p. 363-4.

<sup>140</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 94.

<sup>141</sup> Sheehan, p. 60.

<sup>142</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. viii.

<sup>143</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. 149.s

“learned a very important lesson: that most of the official reporting was mythological.”<sup>144</sup>

Such instances were rare, though, and for the most part “Touring congressman and generals and civilian officials from the Pentagon” were invariably flown down for a briefing by the Vann-Cao team that was shooting record numbers of guerrillas.”<sup>145</sup>

The capacity for self-deception could be found in parallel in the civilian world: “Most Americans would rather be told that their son is undergoing acute environmental reaction,” Michael Herr writes, than deal “with the reality of what had happened to this boy during his five months at Khe Sanh.”<sup>146</sup>

After the publication of an article written by Seymour Hersh in late 1969 which offered a “detailed account of charges that American soldiers had massacred hundreds of South Vietnamese civilians at a hamlet near Da Nang named My Lai”, official optimism of the war effort appeared increasingly incongruous to the reality.<sup>147</sup>

This discrepancy was exacerbated by the fact that “In the weeks that followed the My Lai revelations, stories began to appear in the press that atrocities by Americans and their allies were far more commonplace in South Vietnam than the U.S. government was willing to admit.”<sup>148</sup> Anthony Lewis noted in the spring of 1971 that efforts at deception continued, “as Americans are told by their government that the war is winding down, the number of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians being killed and maimed and made homeless is at a record high level.”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. 274.

<sup>145</sup> Sheehan, p. 94.

<sup>146</sup> Herr, p. 85.

<sup>147</sup> Hammond, p. 217.

<sup>148</sup> Hammond, p. 237.

<sup>149</sup> Lewis quoted in Knighley, p. 437-8.

Reporters like Halberstam covered the war as they did because “an American reporter must believe, if he believes nothing else, that the United States has never survived in times of crisis by playing ostrich.”<sup>150</sup> In Vietnam, he found the United States was “psychologically unprepared” for the conflict because the postwar order brought a profound amount of confusion that “necessitated the reorientation of our demonology (from the wartime of Good Russians Bad Germans and Good Chinese, Bad Japanese to the postwar period of Good Germans, Bad Russians, Good Japanese, Bad Chinese).”<sup>151</sup>

Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay observes that in combat veterans suffering severe trauma he has treated, “psychological injury originates in violation of trust”. Shay describes a much greater problem of moral injury, “When mistrust spreads widely and deeply,” yet an even greater problem surfaces as, “democratic civil discourse becomes impossible.”<sup>152</sup>

A generation of demoralized officers resulted from the military’s confrontation with the media.<sup>153</sup> Many in the military command concluded, “uncensored media reportage destroyed public support for the war, thus stabbing the US military in the back”.<sup>154</sup> Critics of the coverage charged the press had demonstrated the “potential to undermine public support for an operation and erode troop morale on the ground”.<sup>155</sup>

The result was that within the military, “the entire organization, from its top management

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<sup>150</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 154-5.

<sup>151</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. 115.

<sup>152</sup> Shay, p. 195.

<sup>153</sup> Rid, p. 15. For Rid, the culture generated by military defeat presents a vicious, negative cycle of which the media is only represents a portion of the overall malaise. Similarly, Rid writes “public affairs is not merely about the public.” (p. 36)

<sup>154</sup> Carruthers, p. 21.

<sup>155</sup> Livingston, p. 4.

down to the captains, lieutenants, corporals, and sergeants” maintained “a hostile attitude toward the press.”<sup>156</sup>

Media-military tensions were the greatest in American history following Vietnam, a trend unprecedented since the Civil War.<sup>157</sup> American military critics acknowledge that if “a society has permitted its military establishment to insulate itself against effective public scrutiny that military establishment has ended up destroying the people it was supposed to protect”<sup>158</sup> most noticeably perhaps, the men and women who make up the rank-and-file of its command. Perceptions of failure, however, eroded the military’s self-esteem and had an overall effect of “demoralization” on “the first generation of American officers to lose a war.”<sup>159</sup>

Critical reporting, Halberstam concludes, was not “the result of a bad press policy, or poor handling of the press... News management cannot turn a bad government into a good one”.<sup>160</sup> As “The gap between the Army and the society as a whole... widened” there came to be “a growing sense of antimilitary feeling in the country”.<sup>161</sup> Halberstam finds “the real weakness of the press corps” was “that such a major American commitment – this country’s only war – was covered by so few reporters” – a fact that is “almost never cited by our critics.”<sup>162</sup>

Much like Liebling in the Second World War, FitzGerald is uncomfortable with American understanding of justice as it relates to foreign policy. “To the end of ‘helping’ the Vietnamese government,” FitzGerald notes “American officials not only concealed

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<sup>156</sup> Rid, p. 60.

<sup>157</sup> Braestrup, p. 61.

<sup>158</sup> Kennedy, p. ix.

<sup>159</sup> Rid, p. 61.

<sup>160</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 7.

<sup>161</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. 657-8.

<sup>162</sup> Halberstam (1964), p. 155.

Vietnamese corruption” but a range of other crimes as well: “extortion rackets, rape, pillage, and outright military atrocities.”<sup>163</sup> At war’s end, “Many writers noted that a new kind of soldier had come into being in South Vietnam, one who questioned his orders” more than in previous American wars.<sup>164</sup>

Reporters recorded in detail instances of drug abuse and disobedience within the military during the Vietnam War. Herr writes of a marine who had “a few joints left” but “didn’t want to be stoned” when a ground attack came, as he anticipated one was.<sup>165</sup> A military study later noted that, “By the end of American involvement in the war, more soldiers were being evacuated to the United States for drug problems than for wounds.”<sup>166</sup>

Following the Vietnam War effort, a desire for greater accountability of human rights concerns emerged.<sup>167</sup> Part of the liberal shift in American foreign policy signaled the need for moral recovery. The Helsinki Final Act, signed in 1975, laid the foundation for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, an effort to move forward relations with the Soviet Union in light of the failure of *détente*.<sup>168</sup> As an almost aside to the larger treaty and international organizations, a small rights group that would first be known as Helsinki Watch, later Human Rights Watch, has its origins in the Accords.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> FitzGerald, p. 366.

<sup>164</sup> Hammond, p. 373.

<sup>165</sup> Herr, p. 82.

<sup>166</sup> Hammond, p. 390.

<sup>167</sup> “For most liberals, Carter’s leadership on human rights afforded not a substitute utopia but a sense of collective national recovery. It was the reestablishment of the country’s moral and missionary credentials in the world,” Moyn, p. 159. Psychiatrist Jonathan Shay follows up: “Unhealed combat trauma blights not only the life of the veteran but the life of the family and community. In some instances, such as the Weimar Republic in Germany after World War I, it can substantially weaken society as a whole.” (p. 195)

<sup>168</sup> Moyn, p. 149 writes, “What began as a Finnish initiative in 1972 for chiefly intra-European imperatives was not intended by negotiators as a stimulus to human rights activism. For the Soviets, the point of the process was to formalize *détente* by securing international recognition of the three decade-old takeover of Eastern Europe.”

<sup>169</sup> Moyn, p. 172.

“When it was signed,” human rights Scholar Samuel Moyn writes, “no one could have predicted that Eastern bloc dissidents would mobilize in such numbers, or that an American president would throw himself into the cause.” (p. 172). On the occasion of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, President Gerald Ford said, “nations now have the capacity to destroy civilization,” and Americans hope for a “future be brighter than the past”. Ford was also clear that the treaty reaffirmed “the most fundamental human rights: liberty of thought, conscience, and faith; the exercise of civil and political rights; the rights of minorities.”<sup>170</sup>

Human rights were otherwise not a high priority late in President Ford’s administration and Henry Kissinger, “who went along with the intra-European process,” involved in the Helsinki Final Act remarked that the provisions “could be written ‘in Swahili for all I care.’”<sup>171</sup> Soviet officials expressed similar disdain by “mocking racist America for its hypocrisy.”<sup>172</sup> The policy however signaled a shift from American foreign policy just a generation prior, when an effort to avoid confrontation with China over communism in Asia led to a quagmire, in the language of the era, in Vietnam.<sup>173</sup>

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 was initially only an effort to allow “family contact and unification across the Iron Curtain,”<sup>174</sup> something Frances FitzGerald almost anticipates by the late sixties. In her critique of Diem’s regime earlier that decade, she

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<sup>170</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

<sup>171</sup> Moyn, p. 150.

<sup>172</sup> Moyn, p. 156.

<sup>173</sup> Halberstam (1993), p. 103-4. Halberstam writes, “The failure to come to terms with China... because it was not coming to terms with China, the Kennedy Administration would soon expand the Eisenhower Administration policy and commitment in Vietnam. Above all, John Kennedy did not want to revise America’s Asia policy (even in October 1963, with Vietnam falling apart, he told television viewers that he did not want to cut off aid to Vietnam because that might start events comparable to those preceding the fall of China, and that was the last thing he wanted.” In essence, Kennedy’s policy was to address China after handling the problems in Vietnam; the Helsinki Final Act was an effort to address lingering tensions with the Soviet Union before another Vietnam-type quagmire scenario developed in Eastern Europe.

<sup>174</sup> Moyn, p. 155.

notes that he reacted to the political division of Vietnam by sealing the border between north and south “with surgical precision,” effectively denouncing the Geneva accords.<sup>175</sup> The consequence of such policies was, “a bitter blow to those thousands of families whose members the war had scattered between north and south.”<sup>176</sup>

President Carter’s inauguration on January 20, 1977 continued the “American liberal shift in foreign policy” towards a vision of the world “in new, moralized terms, after the Vietnamese disaster.” In the same year, Amnesty International received the Nobel Peace Prize and Charter 77 emerged in the eastern bloc from an obscure incident, the prohibition of a concert by a psychedelic rock band in the Czech Republic.<sup>177</sup>

The press, in the case of Vietnam, served to highlight and steer the public’s feeling of mistrust towards the government and by association, the military. The human rights resolutions that emerged following the American withdrawal from Vietnam were the largest in history, with multiple seemingly organic sources.<sup>178</sup> After “the passing of the anticolonialist moment in human rights history” was it be possible for a “surprising reclamation” in the late 1970s in “antitotalitarian guise”.<sup>179</sup> These resolutions present a formidable effort to reconcile lingering moral tensions in the West, left raw in the wake of press coverage of the war in Vietnam.

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<sup>175</sup> FitzGerald, p. 85.

<sup>176</sup> FitzGerald, p. 85.

<sup>177</sup> Moyn, p. 155 and 161.

<sup>178</sup> Moyn, p. 161.

<sup>179</sup> Moyn, p. 179.

*Post-September 11 Conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq*

Terrorist attacks, like the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, demonstrate the “ease with which the usual hierarchies of access to media can be overturned”,<sup>180</sup> forcing states to react in order to “wrest control of the camera back from terrorists”.<sup>181</sup> After September 11, the U.S. found itself engaged in special operations in Afghanistan with a closed media structure initially.<sup>182</sup> Later this approach was revised following grumblings from both the media and within the military command.

For the purposes of a preliminary discussion included here of the larger meaning of these events and the relationship between the media and the military, both conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq will be used to assess the overall press climate. These two wars have dominated discussion, headlines, and critically, the literature of iconic journalists whose words will likely come to define these times. The lessons of one war have been applied to the other theater.

General David Petraeus is senior commander in Afghanistan now because of the success and understanding of counterinsurgency derived from his experience in Iraq. In 2008, President Barack Obama was able to sight the good war in Afghanistan as not only a reason why he is not a dove, but as a reason to withdraw military forces from Iraq in his successful campaign for the American presidency.

Terrorist groups like al Qaeda and others are able to seize control of the narrative temporarily, but the “‘globalised’ media broadly reflects... First World elites.”<sup>183</sup> For

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<sup>180</sup> Carruthers, p. 21.

<sup>181</sup> Carruthers, p. 21 and 171.

<sup>182</sup> Rid, p. 89.

<sup>183</sup> Carruthers, p. 202.

these reasons, Richard Haass, one of modern America's dwindling postwar foreign policy establishment figures, cautions that the "media should not be regarded solely as an impediment or obstacle to policy makers."<sup>184</sup>

The intent of military planners was to use an "open access policy" that placed reporters with preselected military units in an effort "to use images of superior US military force as a deterrent".<sup>185</sup> One "necessary precondition" for the military to arrive on the system of embedding was the "unlearning of the legacy of Vietnam".<sup>186</sup> For the military, failure in Vietnam did not only "mean defeat" it also meant "large-scale loss of human life and political disaster."<sup>187</sup>

In a sense the terrain of the new battlespace, and accompanying "human terrain," "essentially the social aspects of war,"<sup>188</sup> required confronting the media in a "proactive" fashion. Critics contend the practice of embedding has made journalists into little more than "extras in a piece of theater".<sup>189</sup> In other words, "the American military had learned to co-opt the media" while the media acknowledges, "the Pentagon had become better at its news management."<sup>190</sup>

The Marines and "communities-of-practice" receive much of the credit in public affairs literature for taking the initiative in such an approach. A community of practice in the military is a group of officers with similar positions extending across different commands; some examples would include online forums, conferences and other informal

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<sup>184</sup> Livingston, p. 12.

<sup>185</sup> Rid, p. 103-4 and 142.

<sup>186</sup> Rid, p. 111.

<sup>187</sup> Rid, p. 15.

<sup>188</sup> Junger, p. 43.

<sup>189</sup> Knightley, p. 535.

<sup>190</sup> Rid, p. xi.

gatherings.<sup>191</sup> The military's decision to engage the media by slowly permitting more access was an enormously "counter-intuitive"<sup>192</sup> reach in the wake of Vietnam and successful attempts at press exclusion, Grenada and Panama in the 1980s, to name just two significant instances.<sup>193</sup>

Three initial experiments in embedding in the fall of 2001 in Afghanistan gave way to a larger program in Iraq.<sup>194</sup> In Afghanistan first, then Iraq the embedded media became "entirely dependent on the U.S. military for food, shelter, security, and transportation."<sup>195</sup> If members of the media wished to cover the U.S. military's side of affairs as an embedded reporter, they in essence became "part of the team."<sup>196</sup> In some ways, the new approach was "remarkably similar to the arrangements the British army made for six war correspondents in the First World War."<sup>197</sup>

Since Vietnam, the American military has transitioned to "a professional, volunteer military, and so affecting a relatively small percentage of the American population."<sup>198</sup> The change has created a class divide between members of the military and the journalists more noticeable than previously in Vietnam and the Second World

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<sup>191</sup> Rid, p. 148.

<sup>192</sup> Rid, p. 1.

<sup>193</sup> Rid, p. 111.

<sup>194</sup> Rid, p. 104-6. The experiment more or less evolved into its present form in three stages, which Rid describes, "First, the Marines took the initiative. With a large conventional offensive coming up, Davis wanted his service to get good press. And he knew that putting reporters into units would have that effect." The second experiment was confined to immediate post-conventional conflict Afghanistan in late 2001 with Special Forces "A-Team," that too resulted in positive coverage. Last was the "most daring embedding experiment... Operation Anaconda had the mission, as its name implied, to encircle and squeeze the estimated 2,000 remaining from the well armed and motivated al-Qaeda and Taliban forces hiding in the inaccessible and heavily fortified Shah-i-kot Valley... Only a small group of journalists were embedded, ... and live reporting, because of its operational security concerns, was not permitted." As a result of these successful early experiments, the military felt safe to proceed into more ambitious maneuvers.

<sup>195</sup> Junger, p. xi.

<sup>196</sup> Filkins, p. 197.

<sup>197</sup> Knightley, p. 531.

<sup>198</sup> Ricks, p. 306.

War.<sup>199</sup> In places like Keezletown, where one “of the kids in Bravo Company, Corporal Ritchie” was from, all you had to do was look at ““The guys who stayed, they’re all living with their parents, making \$7 hour,”” for alternatives.<sup>200</sup>

An interesting parallel to the class of men who have stayed home from America’s post-September 11 wars is the curious development of “fobbits” or men who see minimal combat and their professional, military lives which are largely confined to forward operating bases (FOB in military acronym, from which the term “fobbit” is derived) in theater. Reporter Sebastian Junger of *Vanity Fair*, who turned his experience into the book *War*, writes “Soldiers on those bases might go an entire tour without ever leaving the wire, much less firing a gun, and grunts look down on them” (p. 43).

A number of unprecedented consequences have ensued from the current press arrangements.<sup>201</sup> One important corollary to the embedding program is that as the military has invited the media closer to war, members of the military are more likely to see the media as a potential ally. Most important for media-military relations is that the military’s rank and file provided materials to the media documenting the greatest known atrocities in America’s current wars.

Members of the military learned primarily from the Vietnam experience that damaging visual evidence of wartime atrocity effects civilian morale and also works as “a force multiplier.”<sup>202</sup> In Iraq, members of the military were maddened to see a total

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<sup>199</sup> Filkins, p. 198 and Junger, p. 134.

<sup>200</sup> Filkins, p. 198. Junger’s account is also particularly striking as he floats between the Korengal Valley and his home in New York City over the course of the year in the narrative life of *War*.

<sup>201</sup> Ricks, p. 383-5 details Judith Miller’s role in trumping the allegations of Saddam Hussein’s weapons of mass destruction (WMD) laboratories in a series of stories from 2000-2003 in *The New York Times* which were cited repeatedly as a pretext for the invasion of Iraq by the Bush Administration. *Times* and federal investigation revealed most of the stories were based on a single source, Ahmed Chalabi.

<sup>202</sup> Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 4. Dick Cheney, speaking in his capacity in 1995 as former Secretary of Defense prior to becoming Vice-President under George W. Bush, commented on his experience of the

absence of leadership on “a large multiagency civilian mission” for occupying postwar Iraq.<sup>203</sup> As a result, members of the military handed over reports, photographs, and other evidence of crimes resulting primarily from ruptures in the chain of command to newspapers and magazines of great prestige and importance in American public life.

For the military the long-term effects of the unsettling revelations of torture at Abu Ghraib prison are not known.<sup>204</sup> At Abu Ghraib, official blame in the press primarily fell on two women, Lynndie England, a private, and Janet Karpinski, a reservist one-star brigadier general.<sup>205</sup> Writers such as Thomas Ricks, who are not covering America’s post-September 11 wars with any effort or attention to the presence of women are hard struck not to note the disparity between Karpinski and her commanders was not simply due to rank but the fact that she “was smaller, a woman”.<sup>206</sup>

When Seymour Hersh published excerpts in *The New Yorker* from “the Army’s own stunning report” by Anotnio Taguba, a major general, it became clear that the trail led much higher up the command.<sup>207</sup> However an army psychiatrist “involved in the investigation, concluded” along with an “unsympathetic” military establishment that ““She felt herself a victim and she propagated a negativity that permeated throughout the BDE,’ or brigade.”<sup>208</sup>

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media serving as a force multiplier during the First Gulf War: “For an awful lot of Americans, especially in the aftermath of Vietnam, the perception was that the Pentagon’s a place that doesn’t work very well, costs too damn much, and we’re not at all sure they can perform their mission. And then, all of a sudden, bang. There the guys were, and they were doing it. Those cruise missiles were going down the streets of Baghdad, and the precision-guided munitions were going down air shafts and into buildings, and the troops were magnificent. The damn thing worked, and that surprised the hell out of an awful lot of people.” (Aukofer and Lawrence, p. 103)

<sup>203</sup> Ricks, p. 79.

<sup>204</sup> Packer, p. 326 and Ricks, p. 291-7.

<sup>205</sup> Ricks, p. 293-7.

<sup>206</sup> Ricks, p. 293-5.

<sup>207</sup> Ricks, p. 378.

<sup>208</sup> Ricks, p. 297.

The transformation of the military into a professional force, as opposed to a conscripted one, has had an unintended consequence of bringing “the strange new apparition in the battlefield: American girls and women at war.”<sup>209</sup> On a most basic level, soldiers with women in their unit may not have to wait for leave or the end of their deployment to have sex, considerable altering sexual politics within a unit and the much larger chain of command. This is not the case everywhere, though, as Sebastian Junger notes in Afghanistan at the remote Restrepo base in the Korengal Valley<sup>210</sup> that sex is “The one absolute impossibility.”<sup>211</sup>

There are reporters who opted for an alternative route from military control. Nir Rosen covered the insurgency in Iraq in depth in “an attempt to capture the story of the new Iraq from the point of view of the Iraqis themselves.”<sup>212</sup> Jeremy Scahill reported on America’s largest mercenary force Blackwater, responsible for guarding President Bush’s envoy L. Paul Bremer III during the first year of occupation in Iraq among other duties.<sup>213</sup>

In a counterinsurgency theater like the one the U.S. military eventually found itself operating in, the intent behind the “new strategy with a high risk potential” worked well for domestic audiences. But in the battle for “human terrain,”<sup>214</sup> counterinsurgency doctrine is quite clear that “Accidentally killing civilians is a sure way” of losing part of the battle. The flipside of this new population-centric approach to warfare is that it

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<sup>209</sup> Rubin (2010), p. 26.

<sup>210</sup> The same unit was also chronicled by Elizabeth Rubin in “Battle Company Is Out There,” for *The New York Times Magazine*, February 24, 2008.

<sup>211</sup> Junger, p. 151.

<sup>212</sup> Rosen, p. 1-2. Ricks notes Rosen received an e-mail from a military public affairs officer to “tone it down, Nir,” after a dispatch reported while embedded with U.S. Third Armored Cavalry Regiment in western Iraq and published in the *Asia Times*. (Ricks, p. 275)

<sup>213</sup> Scahill, p. 55.

<sup>214</sup> Rid, p. 1 and 5-6; Junger, p. 43.

occurred at a time when “security contractors” make their first appearance in the literature of America’s wars. The contractors “amounted to a small private army that existed outside the U.S. chain of command and wasn’t subject to U.S. military discipline or even U.S. law.”<sup>215</sup>

While these accounts can be emotionally charged like the accounts of David Halberstam or Frances FitzGerald were concerning the moral implications of the Vietnam war then, there is much less willingness to go so far. Accounts like Rosen’s work on Fallujah, told from the Iraqi perspective, contains seeds of the military’s subsequent reexamination of counterinsurgency. Rosen also repeatedly sizes down the opposition the United States faces as one the U.S. has puffed up “By blaming every attack on him, they inflated his myth and served as his best recruiters.” “The Iraqi resistance is not monolithic,” Rosen writes.<sup>216</sup>

Vietnam was “considered a morally dubious war” by many in the media afterwards, and the impression has lingered in the press that during Vietnam, “the rest of the nation” back home was “dropping acid and listening to Jimi Hendrix,” and avoiding military service.<sup>217</sup> Afghanistan, by contrast, is “being fought by volunteers who more or less respected their commanders and had the gratitude of the vast majority of Americans back home.”

Junger of *Vanity Fair* writes of an encounter he had “at a dinner party back home” where he was “asked, with a kind of knowing wink, how much the military had

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<sup>215</sup> Ricks, p. 370.

<sup>216</sup> Rosen, p. 174.

<sup>217</sup> Junger, p. 133-4. Packer notes avoiding military service in Vietnam united a number of senior Bush administration officials responsible for the decision to invade Iraq. In parenthetical, he notes, “(Wolfowitz, like nearly every other architect of the Iraq War, avoided military service in Vietnam, in his case through student deferments. Dick Cheney, who received five deferments, later explained, ‘I had other priorities in the sixties than military service.’ John Bolton, who like George W. Bush, joined the National Guard, was more straightforward: ‘I confess I had no desire to die in a Southeast Asian rice paddy.’)” (p. 26)

‘censored’ my reporting.” When Junger “answered that I’d never been censored at all,” he found his audience wilting away, a story nobody wanted to hear,<sup>218</sup> also perhaps a consequence of lingering mistrust between the civilian public and the military in the wake of Vietnam.

In one example from the post-September 11 era, the conversation concerning Guantanamo detainees captured on the battlefields in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere has been guided by the principles laid out by the Geneva convention. In many instances, the term Geneva Convention has served as a potent political symbol, substituting for a range of concerns about detainee treatment and rights. The executive branch under George W. Bush reclassified inmates as enemy combatants rather than prisoners-of-war in an effort to circumvent principles outlined in the Geneva Convention.<sup>219</sup>

A terrorist spectacle or military intervention, conducted by an organization, a nation-state or a coalition, carries no meaning in and of itself. The deeper political context provided by mass media imbues an event with “a gloss on the phenomenal worlds of individuals and groups.”<sup>220</sup> Problems rise to the surface as a result of the “implications for whose power is augmented and whose threatened,”<sup>221</sup> and “not simply because they are there.”<sup>222</sup>

In *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*, Paul Wilkinson notes that a “symbiotic” relationship can develop between terrorists and mass media once an attack is underway. Media coverage of terrorist operations is driven by a terrorist organization’s desire for publicity and increased viewership of media coverage of such

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<sup>218</sup> Junger, p. 133.

<sup>219</sup> Nash, p. 47.

<sup>220</sup> Edelman (1988), p. 93.

<sup>221</sup> Edelman (1988), p. 21.

<sup>222</sup> Edelman (1988), p. 12.

events. However this same desire can also serve the greater public good, potentially “hardening society’s resistance” (p. 182). Resiliency in the larger public is something that benefits a nation’s armed forces in many ways from recruiting to public support.

Susan Carruthers, writing before the September 11 attacks in 2000, notes that “Insufficient displays of ‘patriotism’ in the war against terrorism have resulted in formal restrictions” being placed upon news gathering. Here she echoes Philip Knightley’s concerns regarding the administration of President George W. Bush promoting a friend or foe policy toward individual members and organizations in the media.<sup>223</sup>

Consequently a mutually congratulatory relationship among members of the military and media has emerged, much at the exclusion of the civilian leadership in the United States. Such a symbiotic relationship though can also develop between the military and the media in the initial stages of an armed intervention. Wilkinson cautions that historically states have “conducted terror on a far more massive and lethal scale than groups”, making use of the instruments of mass media in the process (p. 19).

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<sup>223</sup> Carruthers, p. 196 and Knightley, p. 537.

## Conclusions and Implications

Lacking a system by which the experiential knowledge acquired by one generation can be transmitted to the next, the press suffers from an institutional constraint that confronts the military in a different form. Soldiers must endure basic training before they see a battle; individual correspondents are not subjected to anything comparable prior to arriving in a conflict zone.

The evidence of the military's darker crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan – first with the leaked images from the Abu Ghraib prison revealing torture and mistreatment, later elsewhere – have come to appear in the press through leaks from inside the military chain of command rather than the work of ambitious or sleuthing journalists. Unprecedented in the history of war journalism, such visually graphic evidence suggests chafing from within the military command against popular, more romantic depictions of America's fighting force in the press – the precise media products the Pentagon has spent so much time and money studying in an effort to sculpt and control.

The stark contrast between the visual work the professional journalist and the professional soldier, whose images have come to define the nature of atrocity in these conflicts, suggests that at lower levels in the military (as the original source of the leaked images in both instances remains unknown), there might be a rebellion taking place not against the media, but against the military and civilian elite. Clearly the depiction of the lower ranks differs from how the grunts, suddenly professionals, see the conflict themselves.

The greatest means of combating predictions of the “garrison state” hypothesis outlined by Harold Lasswell in the early twentieth century and freedom from the fear President Roosevelt declared in his “Four Freedoms” speech before the U.S. entered the Second World War, may be in acknowledging the potential for a greater fear – a military coup – if military-media relations continue on their current trajectory. The era of the professional soldier has given way to a mythology about America’s modern fighting men as a super-human, romantic archetype far removed from the humor and imperfections of the Second World War and indeed from reality itself.

At a time when more women appear on the battlefield an entire population of men at the top of the country’s socioeconomic ladder get to stay home because there are better opportunities available to them. Income disparity and the poor being sent by military and civilian elites to fight in wars is not anything new but the presence of a considerable number of women and the unusual sexual politics the military has engaged in surrounding high profile incidents involving ruptures in the chain of command, as witnessed at Abu Ghraib, potentially portend something ominous may be ahead in the nation’s civilian world.

Thomas Ricks published an article written by one young, anonymous marine who “served four *voluntary* tours in Iraq,” on his “Best Defense” blog for *Foreign Policy*. He notes “We have gone from one extreme to the next.” The marine deflates the myth of a professional fighting force, suggesting it is something “We would like to believe” but that reality points elsewhere. “The truest observation I can make,” the young veteran writes, “is that we fight with a conscripted force in all but name.”

Ultimately the stakes for having the burden of national security rest on so few shoulders could be the system on which it rests, as the garrison state hypothesis suggests. Right now, through military and media efforts, the public believes the military is indestructible despite some missteps after September 11, the blame for which has roundly been assigned to lower ranking members of the military and civilian leaders.

The young veteran on Ricks' blog notes the danger of an "I-Am-Special mentality" that isolates the military since it is "all volunteers and thus better humans because we willingly and knowingly gave up our lives in both blood and time and joined a very small club."<sup>224</sup> It is hard to say now, with conflict still ongoing in Afghanistan and a long-term U.S. military presence in Iraq all but guaranteed, what effect, if any, these trends will have on the post-war agreements.

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<sup>224</sup> Ricks (2010).

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