

When News Norms Collide, Follow the Lead: New Evidence for Press Independence

SCOTT L. ALTHAUS

The literature on media independence shows that the public statements of government officials can simultaneously stimulate news coverage and regulate the discursive parameters of that coverage. This study investigates two sources of uncertainty in that literature which have limited the ability of researchers to draw firm conclusions about the nature of media independence: how critical the news actually is, and how journalists put the indexing norm into practice. I examine policy discourse appearing in evening news broadcasts during the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf crisis, and find that sources outside the institutions of American government produced far more discourse critical of American involvement in the Gulf crisis than was produced by the “official” debate among domestic political leaders. Moreover, changes in the amount of governmental criticism coming from official circles did not tend to produce parallel changes in the amount of critical news coverage. This suggests that criticism of government in evening news discourse was not triggered by or closely tied to patterns of gatekeeping among elected officials. Television news coverage did not merely toe the “line in the sand” drawn by the Bush administration. Instead, the evidence from this case suggests that journalists exercised considerable discretion in locating and airing oppositional voices.

Keywords framing, indexing hypothesis, journalistic norms, news coverage, Persian Gulf crisis, policy discourse, press independence, television news

In Walter Lippmann’s (1922) famous dictum, “News is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself” (p. 216). Since governmental institutions provide the most efficient, reliable, and legitimate means for registering socially important obtrusions, one can hardly conceive of a functional press system in which news coverage does not closely shadow the activities of governments. What government officials are willing to say “on the record” can also regulate the boundaries of news coverage, and political communication research over the last 30 years (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Gans, 1979;

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Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Mermin, 1999; Nacos, 1990; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978) has cast doubt on whether news systems in democratic societies are as independent from government influence as the venerable “fourth estate” view presumes them to be.

The amount of scholarship devoted to studying the question of press independence underscores how just how high the stakes are in this debate. If the press cannot independently hold officials to account, if it is unable to constitute a critical forum for the exchange of ideas about what the government should or should not be doing, then it becomes difficult to imagine how the people at large can exercise popular sovereignty over their institutions of government. Given the importance of this question, it is notable that the voluminous literature generated by it has been more successful at overturning the presumption of independence than at providing consistent answers about the extent of the problem. I will argue below that the ability of researchers to draw general conclusions from this literature has been frustrated by inconsistent methods for analyzing news content, conflicting ideas of what “independent” news coverage might look like, and the tendency to study press-state relationships using stand-alone case studies having unique policy contexts and dynamics that obscure common patterns.

The present study addresses two key points of uncertainty arising from these conflicting findings: How critical is the news, and what causes journalists to shape news coverage around the parameters of official debate? In doing so, this study builds upon previous research in three ways. First, I look for evidence of press independence in a broader range of policy discourse than has previous research. This study distinguishes between discourse about policy means, policy ends, and contextual frames to clarify whether journalists are more likely to exercise independence in certain types of discourse than others. Second, I test some hypothesized mechanisms for explaining why journalists defer to officials by examining whether news coming from government-controlled beats is more supportive of administration policies than news from uncontrolled beats. I also explore whether critical voices tend to enter news discourse through journalistic gatekeeping or journalistic initiative. Third, I examine the process of news construction at a finer level of detail than previous studies have been able to do. Using full-text content analysis data from every ABC, CBS, and NBC evening news broadcast aired during the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf crisis, I examine daily changes in news coverage to shed new light on whether the degree of consensus among officials limits the appearance of critical news coverage.

The findings from this case study suggest that there is more critical discourse in the news than many studies have recognized, in part because much of this critical coverage resides in framing discourse about policy debates that previous research had not analyzed systematically. Moreover, this study finds no clear evidence that criticism of the Bush administration’s activities in evening news discourse was triggered by or even dependent upon changes in the amount of opposition coming from official circles. Instead, oppositional voices appeared to enter news discourse through the “narrative imperative” of American journalism, either from routine application of the fairness norm by individual journalists or because the need for conflict and drama created an oppositional space in the news that required filling even when government officials closed ranks (Cook, 1996). Because of this, the relative number of critical statements coming from government officials and the relative amount of news coverage originating in government beats—where spin strategies and news management tactics should produce especially favorable news coverage—do not affect overall levels of critical discourse about administration positions in the news. In short, this study concludes that the press may be more independent from government sources than previously thought.

What We Still Don't Know About Press Independence

The political communication literature has identified three main reasons why the press can have difficulty exercising its independence from governing officials. First, because the outside voices challenging official perspectives tend to be less newsworthy than the officials they hope to debate, they are likely to be seen by journalists as undeserving of coverage (e.g., Graber, 2002; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Second, because government officials tend to agree on first principles even when they disagree on how to translate those principles into policy, journalistic reliance on official sources often limits press criticism to procedural rather than substantive issues, and to tactical matters of implementation rather than the strategic dimensions of policy problems (e.g., Entman & Page, 1994; Hallin, 1994; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Hertog, 2000; Mermin, 1999). Third, because the news agenda is influenced so heavily by the workings of governmental institutions, criticism of a governmental policy is likely to emerge only when officials are publicly divided over it (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Hallin, 1986; Zaller & Chiu, 1996). When domestic officials are in agreement over policy issues, the conventions of American journalism suggest that this consensus defines the relevant story.

Most critiques of news media autonomy draw on one or more of these three reasons, but the best documented and most theoretically nuanced area of research deals with the third factor: the tendency for journalists to “index” coverage to levels of conflict within governmental circles. In Bennett’s (1990, p. 106) original formulation of this hypothesis:

Mass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to “index” the range of voices and viewpoints in both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic. This working hypothesis implies that “other” (i.e., non-official) voices filling out the potential universe of news sources are included in news stories and editorials when those voices express opinions already emerging in official circles.

Among the important strengths of the indexing literature are its methodological diversity, its interest in developing testable hypotheses about the mechanisms of governmental influence, and its close attention to the dynamics of mass-mediated deliberation in a wide range of case studies, most dealing with foreign policy issues. These strengths also produce an important shortcoming in this literature, as the multiplicity of unique contexts and policy dynamics of specific cases make it difficult to generalize to fundamental rules or norms governing the news-making process. Two key research questions remain open: how journalists put the indexing norm into practice and the degree to which news discourse stays within the bounds of public debate set by government officials.

How Indexing Is Put Into Practice by Journalists

Journalistic indexing is thought to occur simultaneously at all levels of the newsroom hierarchy (“from the boardroom to the beat”). However, the specific mechanism by which news indexes are internalized and imposed by journalists never has been detailed in the literature. In its earliest formulation, Bennett (1990) suggested that “the existence of an indexing norm does not necessarily mean that the editorial board of the *New York*

Times or the producers of the 'NBC Nightly News' invoke it directly in the course of decision making. . . . Journalists, in this account, 'just know' most of the time what is and what is not news; for those stories that qualify, they also 'just know' how to develop reportage and editorial content" (pp. 110–111). In a later elaboration on this point, Bennett (1994) notes that "reporters and editors tend to index the voices and viewpoints in stories to the range of official debate available to reporters on the news beats of decision-making institutions of government" (p. 31). This account resonates with a wide range of research on newsroom sociology, which documents how journalists unconsciously internalize common frames of reference as a result of organizational pressures and incentives (Cook, 1998; Epstein, 1973; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973; Sparrow, 1999; Tuchman, 1978). However, it is notable that this hypothesis never has been tested in the indexing literature, since beat-level measures of news content have rarely been examined.¹

Bennett makes clear (1990, p. 111) that "indexing is not just an individual-level variable" but rather a norm that is constituted in collective interactions among individuals. However, the mechanism by which indexing is translated into "news sense" for particular stories must involve individual-level judgments. It seems consistent with Bennett's formulation to propose that translation of the norm into particular news decisions involves (a) heuristic judgments made independently by individuals in a news organization that (b) may occur beneath the threshold of conscious thought and (c) require an awareness of the legitimate "sides" in mainstream official debate that is (d) communicated through reporters. Parsing the norm in this way clarifies why indexing often might take a different form in the boardroom than on the beat.

Indexing should usually result from a dynamic, adaptive process that is only loosely and informally coordinated among individuals in an organization. As with any dynamic process, there is likely to be a time lag before journalists "just know" what the range of official viewpoints is for any given controversy, and the pace of an unfolding policy crisis or controversy may generate enough uncertainty to obscure the range of official views at least temporarily. This is particularly likely if a major institutional player (such as a party caucus in Congress) gives mixed signals or defers taking a position in the debate. Like any heuristic process, indexing decisions should be influenced by the relevant considerations that are temporarily most accessible in a journalist's working memory (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1999). Recent and frequent exposure to particular considerations should make them more chronically accessible, and if the primary social environment for reporters is constituted by their sources and fellow beat reporters rather than by their own organization's newsroom (Cohen, 1963; Epstein, 1973; Gans, 1979; Sigal, 1973), then journalists' perceptions of official debate may be influenced more heavily by the range of views expressed in their particular beats than in government circles as a whole. Of course, if journalists define official debate primarily as the "public" debate appearing in print each day, then there may be less room for perceptual biases of this sort to influence indexing judgments. But to the extent that cues about the range of official debate are communicated interpersonally among reporters, the news index guiding news decisions may extend well beyond the contours of "on the record" statements made by government officials. Because beat journalists frequently interact with sources under anonymity agreements, they may be aware of fundamental criticisms among official sources who are unwilling to take them "on the record." Possessing a clear sense of the "real" versus "public" range of opposition, journalists may be emboldened to index according to the real level of latent criticism. Indexed news in

such situations could appear more critical than seems justified by the contours of official debate.

All of this suggests that adherence to a single norm of indexing may produce quite dissimilar news judgments across beats. Perceptions of official debate may be socially constructed and, in the short term, loosely coordinated. If individual journalists are more attentive to their beats than to the government as a whole, then editors and producers may have ample opportunity to exercise independent judgments about the boundaries of the policy debate. This is because editors and producers would have to take an active role in balancing views among beats to achieve a tight index to government debate as a whole. The easiest (and perhaps typical) way to do this would be to report the debate primarily from within government institutions, thereby “domesticating” a crisis by capturing journalists in government-controlled beats (Cook, 1994; Kirton, 1993). However, even in the face of unified governments, editors and producers could seek out critical views by shifting the story beyond the scope of governmental institutions. In this way, journalists may have substantial freedom to construct the relevant parties in a given controversy, sometimes limiting the debate to official voices and sometimes expanding the “scope of conflict” (Schattschneider, 1960) to include the perspectives of newsworthy nongovernmental actors (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995: chap. 3; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Bennett and Klockner (1996) demonstrate this behavior in their study of indexing norms in the selection of poll results across topics: When journalists have reason to believe the scope of conflict has extended to include non-official groups or ordinary citizens, they feel less obliged to follow the index set by U.S. officials. In addition, subtle cues from U.S. officials that public opinion is an important consideration in government planning should lead journalists at all levels to bring ordinary citizens and polls into the news index.

We would see this evidence of journalistic independence not merely in the raw amount of critical coverage, but also in the decisions to report the story beyond the confines of government-controlled beats. Additional evidence for journalistic independence could be found by examining the sources of criticism toward government policies. Journalists have long been known as producers rather than merely gatekeepers of critical discourse about election campaigns (Capella & Jamieson, 1997; Fallows, 1996; Patterson, 1993), policy debates (Lawrence, 2000), and dramatic events (Bennett & Lawrence, 1995; Lawrence, 1996, 2001; Molotch & Lester, 1974). However, because the prevailing view in the press independence literature has been that journalists serve as gatekeepers rather than sources of oppositional discourse, little attention has been given to the possibility that journalists might be making independent contributions to critical policy discourse. Even if journalists themselves produced only a small amount of critical discourse entering the news, evidence of such independent activity would cast journalists in much more flattering light than the conventional portrait of sheepish adherents to the boundaries set by elite debate.

How Critical Is the News?

A second area of uncertainty is that while we know that the news is neither completely dependent on nor fully independent of current policy debates occurring in government circles, it is anybody’s guess where the news actually falls within this wide latitude of possibilities. Some studies of news indexing in foreign policy reporting find abundant criticism of the U.S. government even in situations where domestic officials are unified in support of a policy (Althaus, Edy, Entman, & Phalen, 1996; Fico & Soffin, 1995;

Livingston & Eachus, 1996), but most research in this tradition concludes that news coverage is unlikely to criticize administration policies unless prompted to do so by domestic officials (Alexseev & Bennett, 1995; Bennett, 1990; Bennett & Manheim, 1993; Dorman & Livingston, 1994; Eilders & Lüter, 2000; Nacos, 1990; Zaller & Chiu, 1996). It is not merely that these two sets of conclusions are drawn from different cases: One study focusing on the combat stage of the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf Crisis found that news coverage was overwhelmingly supportive of the Bush administration (Mermin, 1999), while another concluded that the news during this period was skewed lopsidedly against the Bush administration (Fico & Soffin, 1995). From whence does this confusion arise?

One reason studies disagree on levels of critical coverage is that they disagree on what constitutes “critical coverage.” A number of scholars have pointed out that news coverage of foreign affairs often (and perhaps usually) contains ample press criticism of a tactical or procedural nature, but few fundamental criticisms of U.S. policy or the legitimacy of U.S. interests in international conflicts (Entman & Page, 1994; Hallin, 1986, 1994; Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Hertog, 2000; Mermin, 1996, 1999). In one of the most extensive studies of American news coverage given to military interventions in the post-Vietnam era, Jonathan Mermin (1999, p. 9) concludes that

when there is no policy debate in Washington, journalists find “conflicting possibilities” not in the wisdom and justification of U.S. policy itself, but in the *execution* and *outcome* of U.S. policy, and the possibility for political triumph or disaster for the president. When there is no policy debate in Washington, reporters offer critical analysis *inside the terms of the Washington consensus*, finding a critical angle in the possibility that existing policy, on its own terms, might not work.

A similar dynamic has long been observed in news coverage of American presidential elections, where journalists focus critical coverage on the political horse race and strategic intentions of the campaigns while neglecting fundamental disagreements about the policy positions taken up by each side, unless such disagreements are discussed by the candidates themselves (Page, 1978; Patterson, 1980, 1993). One reason for the divergent conclusions on press criticism is therefore that the studies finding ample conflict include policy-specific and procedural criticism in the count, while the studies finding little conflict typically do not.

A second reason is that some studies look only at direct statements of opposition to administration policy, such as “voiced opinions” criticizing the policy positions staked out by the president (Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1990; Nacos, 1990) or the strategic rationale for pursuing action in the first place (Mermin, 1999)—while others consider more subtle forms of oppositional discourse. Dorman and Livingston (1994) found that references to the Saddam-is-Hitler analogy far outnumbered references to the U.S. buildup of Iraqi military capability that were made in the early months of the Gulf crisis (see also Kirton, 1993). Hallin (1994) examined the framing of U.S. policy by analyzing references to the Cold War, human rights, and Vietnam in network news coverage of Central America during the 1980s. His study revealed a large amount of critical framing in the news, but also that Central America coverage tended to be cast through a Cold War lens. Entman and Page (1994) likewise found ample press criticism toward the Bush administration’s Iraq policy in late 1990 and early 1991, but also that journalists framed this criticism in ways that highlighted the decision-making process itself rather than the substantive policy options under consideration.

Taken together, these more subtle types of critical discourse play important roles in policy debates. By organizing policy discourse around certain problems rather than others, frames heighten the apparent utility of some solutions over others (Entman, 1991; Iyengar, 1991; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley, 1997). For instance, if allied military superiority over Iraqi forces is in question, then it might seem prudent to give sanctions more time to work. If a swift military victory is assured, then the use of force might seem more acceptable. Frames may also direct attention away from alternative problem definitions and reduce the likelihood of critical debate (Dorman & Livingston, 1994). To the extent that ordinary citizens accepted the Hussein-is-Hitler comparison, and to the degree that American elected officials validated it, further arguments about the legitimacy of U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf became moot. Given the importance of framing discourse, the fact that research on press independence has yet to analyze a broad range of framing discourse relevant to a foreign policy issue is a notable omission in the literature.

A third reason studies disagree on levels of press criticism is that they operationalize the relevant news coverage in different ways. Many of the studies supporting the “lapdog press” hypothesis (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995) have used proxy data such as the Vanderbilt Abstracts (e.g., Cook, 1994) or the *New York Times Index* (e.g., Bennett, 1990; Bennett & Manheim, 1993) in place of full-text news content. Because both of these proxies overstate the amount of support for administration policies contained in news discourse (Althaus, Edy, & Phalen, 2001, 2002), the apparently high levels of support for administration policies recorded in many studies of press independence are likely inflated by the use of proxy data. In contrast, studies that analyze full-text stories (e.g., Althaus et al., 1996; Entman & Page, 1994; Livingston & Eachus, 1996; Nacos, 1990; Peer & Chestnut, 1995) typically find higher levels of criticism in the news. However, because the population of relevant stories in a particular news outlet may be quite large, and because it is so time-consuming and labor-intensive to code full-text content, few studies using full-text data analyze the complete populations of news stories relevant for particular cases. Instead, most full-text studies either examine particular weeks of intense policy debate (Entman & Page, 1994; Peer & Chestnut, 1995), key periods in ongoing policy crises (Mermin, 1996, 1999), or they randomly sample news stories across periods of interest (Patterson, 1993; Zaller & Chiu, 1996). Since the level of press criticism will vary over time, choices about relevant news outlets, key periods, and sampling frames are likely to influence the apparent levels of press criticism.

Many studies supporting a view of the press as dependent and complacent also define the relevant news discourse as consisting only of utterances by American voices, despite the fact that a large amount of foreign affairs coverage relates the perspectives of international players. This omission is sometimes justified on methodological grounds (e.g., Bennett, 1990), and sometimes on grounds that American audiences are unlikely to find foreign sources persuasive (e.g., Mermin, 1996, 1999). Yet, if indexing applies to the full range of news discourse constituted in domestic news media rather than the smaller set of views articulated by domestic voices, the decision to exclude non-U.S. voices becomes difficult to defend. It requires ignoring a potentially large amount of relevant news discourse: indexing studies that look at the full range of policy discourse tend to find widespread use of sources from outside U.S. government circles (Althaus et al., 1996; Kim, 2000; Lawrence, 2001; although see Bennett & Manheim, 1993). Moreover, excluding non-U.S. sources from measures of news discourse obscures whether journalists index the news only (or even primarily) to domestic officials rather than to a broader range of elite and popular voices. If we want to better understand indexing

processes, then we will need to include the full range of relevant discourse in a news outlet to confirm that the expected influences are working as presumed in a given case.

The bottom line arising from all of this confusion is that we simply don't know how independent news discourse might be from the parameters of official debate. Different studies touch different dimensions of press criticism, but like the blind men sizing up the elephant, none has yet fitted these pieces into a picture of the whole. This bigger picture would become clearer in an analysis that (a) considered all sources of relevant discourse appearing in a news outlet, not merely the views of American citizens; (b) simultaneously analyzed discourse about the problems justifying political action, the policies identified as possible solutions, and the broader contexts into which these problems and solutions might be placed; and (c) examined the entire population of relevant stories in a given news outlet for the entire crisis period, rather than sampling from a policy debate or using proxy data for news content. This study is the first to do all three.

Data

Measures of news coverage during the Gulf crisis come from content analysis data collected by the author for every nightly news broadcast on each of the three major networks that appeared between August 2, 1991, the day that Iraq invaded Kuwait, and February 23, 1991, the day before the Allied ground assault into Kuwait was reported to American audiences. Compiled from full-text transcripts, the data set includes every news story relevant to the crisis with Iraq that appeared on ABC's *World News Tonight*, CBS's *Evening News*, and NBC's *Nightly News* ($N = 3,854$ stories).²

The coding protocol for these data is an unusually detailed coding method designed to capture not only the substance of the policy debate among government officials, journalists, and other sources appearing on the nightly news, but also the supporting arguments and frames of reference used by those sources to lend credibility to their policy positions.³ The coding scheme for this study (see the tables in the Appendix for details and a complete listing of themes) follows prior studies (e.g., Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Pan & Kosicki, 1993) that identify discrete thematic elements in discourse corresponding to available policy opinions, the rationales for implementing policies or the goals to be achieved by those policies (Mermin, 1996, 1999; Nelson, 1999), and context discourse suggesting core problems or frames in which the policies might be located (Dorman & Livingston, 1994; Kirton, 1993; Lang & Lang, 1994). The content analysis protocol focuses on three types of textual elements categorized according to the kind of information they lend to policy discourse in the news.

Means discourse: Means themes advocate for or against a policy or particular course of action, such as "we should use military force against Iraq" (pro-force). A total of 9 means themes were coded, ranging from advocating military force to sanctions, negotiations, and even to conserving energy as an appropriate response to Iraqi aggression. Each of these themes was later categorized as supporting, opposing, or neutral toward the administration's policies.⁴

Ends discourse: Ends themes represent justifications or intended outcomes for a policy, as in "we need to prevent Kuwait from being utterly ransacked by Hussein" (pro-restore Kuwait) or "protecting the lives of American hostages is our number one priority" (pro-protect hostages). A total of 23 ends themes were coded, ranging from the need to deter Iraq's nuclear capability to protecting hostages held by Iraqi forces and minimizing U.S. or allied casualties. Each of these themes was subsequently catego-

rized as supporting, opposing, or neutral toward the administration's goals and strategic justifications.⁵

Context discourse: Context themes define the larger political context associated with a policy or the dominant problem for which the policy is supposed to be a solution. Examples include references to the inevitability of war between the U.S. and Iraq (pro-war likely), Iraq's potential to use or develop nuclear weapons (pro-nuclear deterrence), demonizing Hussein as Hitler (pro-demon), and touting the superiority of allied military forces relative to Iraqi forces (pro-allied superiority). Individual context themes were categorized as supporting, opposing, or neutral toward the administration's preferred contexts.⁶

I have included an appendix containing brief descriptions of all of the themes constituting these three types of discourses, as well as the frequencies with which these individual themes appeared in news coverage. As these discourse elements can be advocated ("war is inevitable") or repudiated ("war is not inevitable"), the themes listed in the Appendix were coded as either "invoked" or "criticized." All themes in the coding protocol found in the Appendix are worded in their invoked or "pro" form. To derive the criticized or "con" versions of means or ends themes, replace "should" with "should not" in the theme description. The "con" version of a context theme would take the form of a rebuttal, attacking the "pro" version of the theme as inaccurate or invalid, or an argument against the theme, as with the con-patience theme (e.g., "we should not wait to act") or the con-Vietnam theme (e.g., "this war will be nothing like Vietnam").

The content analysis identified specific themes uttered by specific sources within a paragraph of text. Means and ends themes were coded only if they related to U.S. policy or the policy of groups to which the U.S. belongs, such as the United Nations or "allied nations." Context themes are all relevant to U.S. policy and were coded whenever they appeared in Gulf crisis coverage. The following excerpt from an ABC transcript illustrates the use of this coding protocol in practice:

Bob Zelnick: Powell said a ground campaign need not produce high U.S. casualties because it would not be fought on Saddam Hussein's terms. He emphasized how allied air supremacy had produced heavy Iraqi losses at Khafji [PRO-ALLIED SUPERIORITY CONTEXT]. Powell's and Cheney's first stop in Saudi Arabia was at a Western air base, headquarters for the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing.

General Colin Powell: We tried to give him some good advice a few months ago, we told him move it or lose it [PRO-FORCE MEANS, PRO-WITHDRAWAL ENDS]. They wouldn't move it, now they're going to lose it [PRO-KICK ASS CONTEXT].

Despite the complexity of this coding scheme, it produced highly reliable data. Intercoder reliability tests were performed on a sample of 101 randomly selected ABC *World News Tonight* stories for all means, ends, and context codes taken together, producing intercoder agreement on the presence of specific themes in 88% of cases (Cohen's kappa = .875). Higher reliability scores were obtained for the aggregated measures used in the analysis that follows.⁷ It should be noted that the tests themselves were quite strict, requiring accurate matches in thematic content at the level of individual paragraphs within stories rather than at the level of complete stories.

Findings

The various elements of Gulf crisis discourse distributed evenly among three types of themes: 35% of all Gulf crisis discourse dealt with the policy options available to the Bush administration (means discourse $n = 2,151$ themes), 24% addressed possible goals and justifications for implementing those policies (ends discourse $n = 1,476$ themes), and 41% involved context discourse that frames elements of the crisis in particular ways (context discourse $n = 2,522$ themes).

Only in the case of means discourse were focused debates explicitly constituted in evening news discourse: 41% of means discourse themes opposed particular policies (“we should not use military force”), while 59% supported particular policies (“military force is the only effective option”). But while means discourse was constructed as a series of debates over the merits of particular policies, ends and context discourse was constructed as sets of alternative possibilities. For instance, 92% of ends discourse advocated for the worthiness of particular goals (“we should restore Kuwaiti sovereignty” or “we should overthrow Saddam Hussein”), but only 8% questioned the merits of achieving these goals. Likewise, 87% of context discourse invoked particular frames of reference (such as referring to Hussein as Hitler or noting the superior capability of allied military forces relative to their Iraqi counterparts), but only 13% disputed whether these contextual elements applied to the case of the Gulf crisis (most of these were assertions that the present conflict would be nothing like Vietnam).

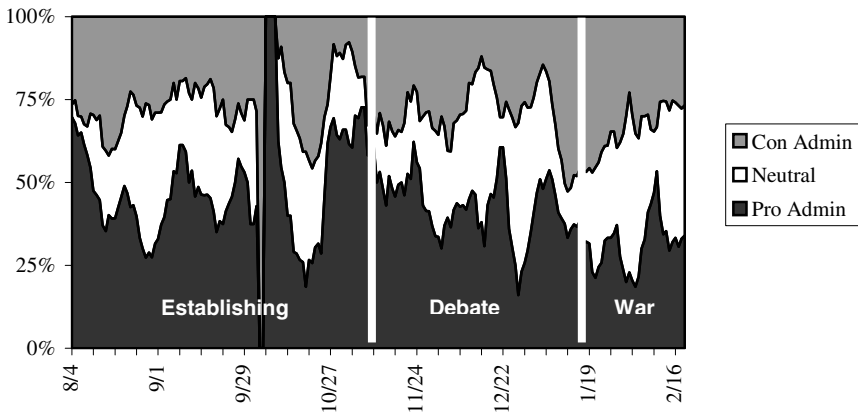
Administration and congressional sources were also less dominant in television coverage than they typically seem to be in the indexing literature: Just 36% of total Gulf crisis discourse came from administration sources, and only 6% came from members of Congress. Behind administration officials, the next most common sources in the news were journalists speaking through unattributed narrative (17% of all themes), American citizens (14%), foreign officials from countries other than Iraq (10%), Iraqi officials (7%), experts (5%), foreign citizens from countries other than Iraq (4%), and Iraqi citizens (1%).

Amount and Sources of Critical Discourse

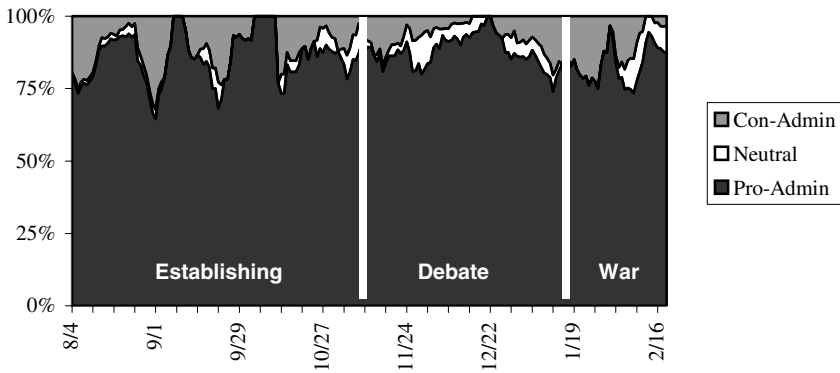
Most observers divide the Persian Gulf crisis into three major stages (e.g., Dorman & Livingston, 1994; Mermin, 1996, 1999). Borrowing terms from Dorman and Livingston (1994), the “establishing phase” ran from the August 2, 1990, invasion of Kuwait until shortly after the November congressional elections. The “debate phase” lasted from November 9 through January 15, capturing the period ushered in by President Bush’s announcement of major troop escalations in the Gulf region (which signaled a clear intention of using offensive military action against Iraqi forces) and capped with the passing of the January 15 United Nations deadline for withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. This period was marked by active deliberation among American officials over the merits of using military force in the Gulf. The “war phase” lasted from the start of the air war on January 16 through the end of the ground war on February 28, 1991. Since the focus of this study is on public deliberation leading up to the ground war, the content analysis data end on February 23, the day the ground war began.

Figure 1 reports 7-day moving averages in the percentage of supportive and oppositional discourse contained in evening news coverage over the entire Gulf crisis period. Examining trends in this way helps to clarify changes in the balance of discourse over time, which tend to be obscured in figures charting the actual numbers of critical and

a. Means Discourse



b. Ends Discourse



c. Context Discourse

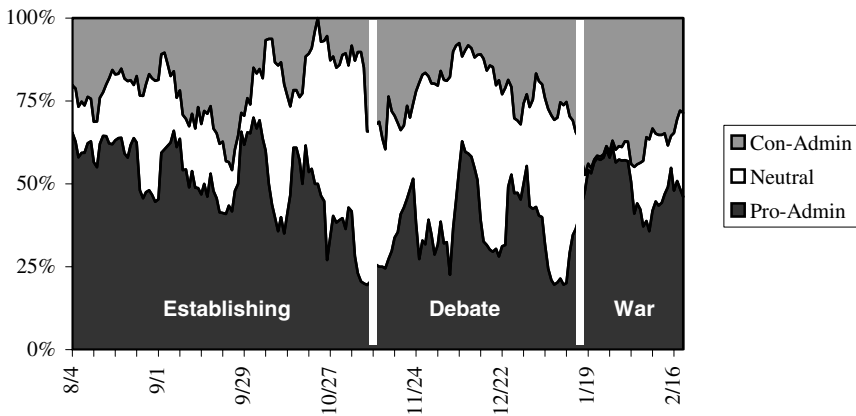


Figure 1. Tone of 1990–1991 Gulf crisis discourse, by stage of crisis. (Charts show values for 7-day moving averages.)

supportive statements over time.⁸ Three patterns in these trends are especially noteworthy. First, voices critical of Bush administration positions are given prominent exposure in context and especially means discourse throughout the crisis period. For the period as a whole, 36% of means discourse was opposed to policy options advocated by the administration, while another 49% was supportive. Likewise, 28% of context discourse challenged the administration's preferred contexts, while 48% invoked them. These discourses certainly favored the government's viewpoints, but they also created abundant space for critical voices. Only in the case of ends discourse is criticism severely muted: Just 9% of ends statements in the news challenge the goals or justifications for administration policies, while fully 87% of such themes endorse them. It would seem that fundamental criticisms of U.S. policy were indexed to domestic elite opinion much more than criticisms of the administration's favored policy options or contextual frames. Differences in the apparent indexing of means and ends discourse are consistent with prior research distinguishing between tactical and strategic criticism (Entman & Page, 1994; Hallin, 1994; Hertog, 2000; Mermin, 1996, 1999); the novel finding here is that context discourse contains so much oppositional content.

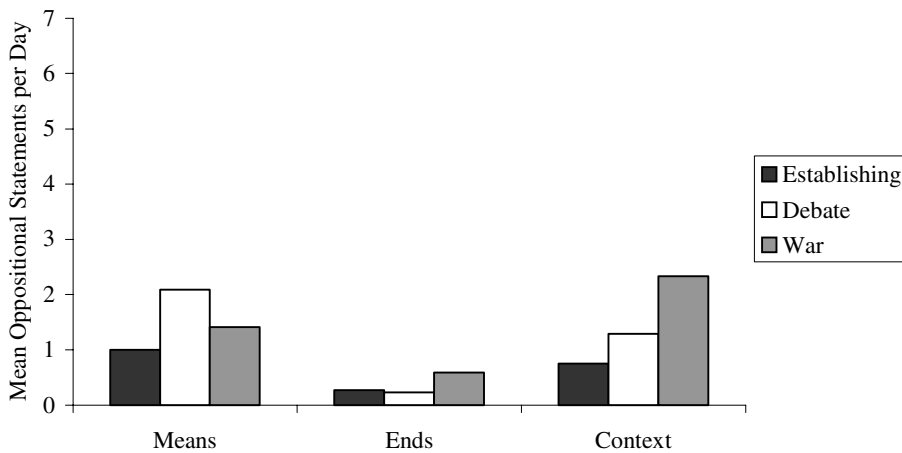
Second, if the parameters of news discourse are governed solely by the indexing norm, we should find critical discourse in the news to be minimal during the establishing and war phases, when American officials were relatively unified, and more prominent during the debate phase, when officials were more divided.⁹ However, taken as a whole, television news discourse did not follow the predicted pattern. Means discourse was slightly more critical during the debate phase—when 37% of policy discourse opposed administration positions—than during the establishing phase (33% opposed), but slightly less critical than during the war phase (38% opposed).¹⁰ Ends discourse was stable over the run of the crisis, with 9% critical statements during the establishing phase, 8% during the debate phase, and 9% during the war phase. In contrast, oppositional context discourse held stable during the first two stages—21% and 23%, respectively—before jumping to 39% during the war phase to outweigh the amount of supportive context discourse (33% of context themes) in the weeks between the start of the air and ground campaigns. If American officials were unified, divided, and then unified again, these changing levels of elite dissensus did not affect in obvious ways the entry of critical discourse into the evening news.

Third, the variability of trends in discourse tone is a striking feature of Figure 1. Levels of oppositional discourse often shift rapidly even in the two periods marked by official consensus around administration policies. Standard deviations for the percentages of critical content in the smoothed data shown in Figure 1 are 12 percentage points for means discourse, 7 points for ends discourse, and 11 for context discourse. However, the raw daily trends are twice as volatile than these charts suggest, with the daily percentages of oppositional statements taking standard deviations of 21 percentage points for means discourse, 16 points for ends discourse, and 24 points for context discourse. If the parameters of official debate are not given to gross vacillations that journalists are remarkably quick at detecting, it would seem that the daily mix of critical perspectives in the news is being wagged by a different dog. Rapid shifts of this sort could be prompted by new policy developments, critical events, and controversies of the moment. But much of this volatility appears random, and if it is, then its most likely cause is the looseness and lack of coordination with which journalists apply the indexing norm. It is difficult to say whether such volatility is characteristic of press coverage in general or merely of this particular case, but to the extent that the indexing norm is regulating news content, it seems to be applied haphazardly across the crisis period. Since previous

research has examined indexing behavior at much higher levels of aggregation (e.g., weeks, months, and years), the daily volatility of the news index is a finding as puzzling as it is unexpected.

It is more telling that these changing levels of critical discourse did not mirror the course of debate among U.S. officials carried in the news. One way of seeing this is to step back from daily shifts in discourse to consider the broader patterns in each of the three crisis stages. Looking first at the average numbers of critical statements uttered by U.S. government sources (defined as administration officials and members of Congress), the top chart in Figure 2 shows that only means discourse followed the expected pattern, with government sources providing more statements opposing the administration's policies in the debate phase than in either the establishing or war phases. Government

a. U.S. Government Sources



b. All Other Sources

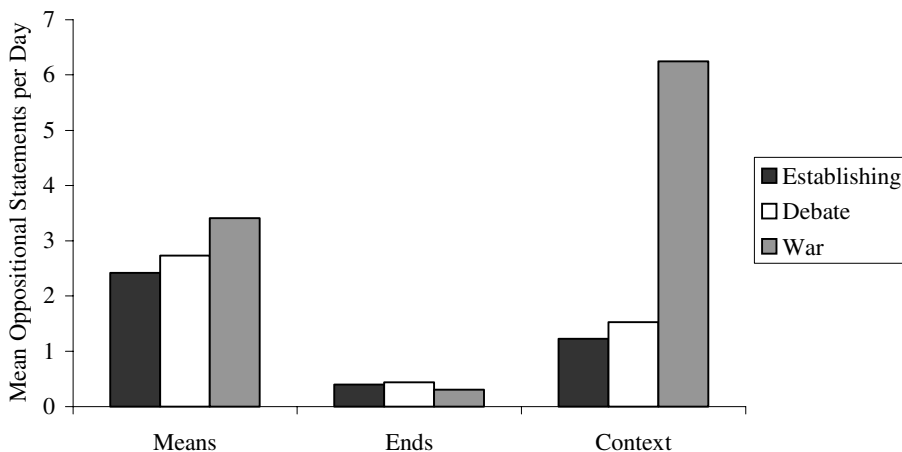


Figure 2. Oppositional discourse from official and nonofficial sources, by stage of the Gulf crisis.

officials made relatively few critical statements about administration ends in any of the stages, but levels of critical context discourse rose steadily over the course of the crisis. There is no evidence in these two types of discourse that government officials were any more critical than usual of administration ends and preferred contexts during the debate phase.

The bottom chart in Figure 2 reports the levels of critical discourse coming from all other sources in the news. It reveals not only that the largest share of oppositional statements came from sources outside the U.S. government, but also that the levels of opposition among nonofficial sources followed different patterns than those among domestic government sources. The average daily number of critical ends statements was about the same as that for government sources, but nonofficial sources often provided more than twice as many statements critical of administration means and preferred contexts. Moreover, average levels of oppositional discourse coming from outside the U.S. government followed different patterns than those from government sources. The average number of critical means statements rose steadily over the three stages among nongovernmental sources, compared to the rise-and-fall pattern among official sources. The average number of critical context statements rose only slightly from the establishing to the debate stages until suddenly increasing fivefold in the war phase, compared to a more gradual rise among elite sources. More critical ends statements were uttered by non-governmental sources in the establishing and debate phases than during the war phase, but among governmental sources the average number of critical ends statements doubled in the war stage after holding steady up to that period.¹¹

Another way of illustrating how opposition in the news as a whole failed to follow the patterns of opposition among government officials is to more closely examine the timing of critical statements about administration ends. These data contain few examples of critical ends discourse: only 129 such statements were found for the entire period. However, since ends discourse opposing the administration included some of the most “fundamental” (Mermin, 1999) or “strategic” (Hertog, 2000) criticisms of all the discourse categories considered here,¹² the timing of critical ends discourse should provide a good test of the indexing hypothesis. If elite debate opens the gate for critical voices outside of government, we should find a strong positive correlation between the number of critical ends statements attributed to U.S. officials and all other sources. We should also find that critical themes are voiced first within the legitimate boundaries of mainstream government debate before they are brought into news discourse by other sources.

To test the first relationship, I aggregated the number of critical ends statements uttered by U.S. officials and all other sources into daily ($n = 207$) and weekly ($n = 30$) totals. Contrary to expectations, the number of official and nonofficial criticisms of administration ends were statistically unrelated to one another at both the daily (Pearson's $r = .06$, $p = .40$) and weekly (Pearson's $r = .18$, $p = .34$) levels. However, a more precise test would consider the lagged relationships between these counts, since critical discourse from U.S. elites might prompt further discussion in following days or weeks rather than merely in the same time period. I therefore reanalyzed these data using Granger causality tests (Granger, 1969; Gujarati, 1995) with lags to predict the current number of critical ends statements from each of the preceding seven time periods. The results were the same at both the daily and weekly levels: Even after taking lagged relationships into account, the number of critical ends statements from official and non-official sources were statistically independent from one another. In no case were current levels of criticism from sources outside the U.S. government predicted significantly better by adding the lagged values of official criticism to the lagged values of criticism

from nonofficials. These findings suggest that ends criticism from within governmental circles is not required to open the door to ends criticism from outside Washington.

Not only did changing levels of official debate fail to regulate the numerical appearance of ends criticism from nongovernmental sources, but most categories of ends criticism were introduced by sources outside U.S. government circles. Of the 13 categories of ends criticism leveled by sources from outside governmental circles, only four were introduced into news discourse by officials of the American government. Another five of these categories were never articulated by U.S. officials in the entire crisis period, and the four remaining categories were first introduced into news discourse by sources outside American government circles.¹³

Figure 3 reveals which sources were bringing these critical perspectives into the evening news. This figure shows the percentage of oppositional statements within each type of discourse that were contributed by each source category (the bars for each type of discourse sum to 100% when added across the different source categories). The important comparison here is the amount of oppositional discourse generated by U.S. government officials—including members of the administration as well as members of Congress—relative to the amount contributed by journalists speaking through unattributed narrative and the amount produced by all of the remaining sources. Looking first at means discourse, it is not surprising that so few critical statements about administration policies should come from within administration circles, but even when added to the amount of means criticism generated by members of Congress, government officials as a whole contributed less than a quarter of critical statements about administration policy appearing in the news. Journalists contributed almost no critical statements about administration means. In contrast, American citizens¹⁴ were the most prominent source of means criticism, responsible for nearly a third of all opposition statements about administration policies, followed by Iraqi leaders.¹⁵

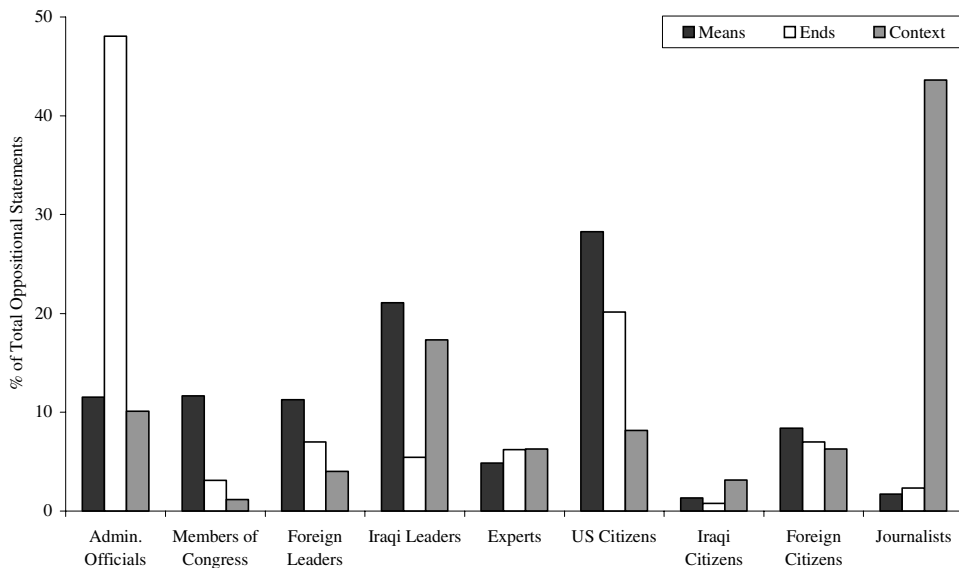


Figure 3. Sources of oppositional discourse. (Percentages are for each type of discourse. The bars for each type of discourse sum to 100%.)

The small amount of ends criticism in the news was dominated by voices from within the administration. Curiously, U.S. citizens were the next largest source of “strategic” criticism, matching the combined total coming from Congress, foreign leaders, Iraqi officials, and policy experts. Yet, the most important finding in Figure 3 is that journalists themselves were the dominant source of context criticism, contributing nearly half of statements challenging the administration’s preferred contextual frames. Official voices made hardly any contribution to context criticism: Only 10% of critical context statements came from within the administration, and just 1% came from members of Congress.

However, a closer look at the types of contextual criticism that journalists were willing to make helps to clarify the limits of press independence in framing national security crises. Critical context statements by journalists were almost completely limited to four themes: framing the present crisis in terms of the Vietnam War (57% of critical context statements coming from journalists), the potential for violence to spiral out of control in the Middle East (31%), the potential for Hussein to be elevated as a hero to Arabs because of the American confrontation (6%), and questioning the morale, readiness, or superiority of allied military forces (4%). No journalist ever questioned the demonization of Saddam Hussein. No journalist ever hinted that the United States had taken an inappropriately aggressive posture toward a regional conflict among sovereign Arab states. At no time did a journalist question whether Iraq’s chemical, biological, or nuclear capability presented a real threat to the Western world in the foreseeable future. Only once did a journalist allow the possibility that allies were intentionally targeting civilian areas to slip unsourced into the news narrative. The pattern could hardly be more clear: Journalists were willing to criticize the administration’s preferred contexts using discourse that elevated the sense of drama, conflict, and uncertainty surrounding the rationale for or potential outcome of the conflict, but only using those themes that left the legitimacy of American actors and motives unquestioned¹⁶ and that resonated with the cultural values of American audiences (see Hallin, 1986). Journalists felt free to challenge the administration when doing so (a) fit with established news values and (b) moved the story forward (Cook, 1996).

Recognizing this should not take away from the value of such contextual critiques to policy debates. Journalists were independently generating critical perspectives about which other sources were silent: 71% of all the references suggesting that American military involvement might turn into another Vietnam came directly from the mouths of journalists. Considering that other research cites the Vietnam analogy as a counterhegemonic critique of American policy (Hallin, 1994), the boldness with which journalists offer it as a foil for American involvement is a striking finding. Consider the closing comments in an ABC news story from January 18, 1991, two days after the start of the air war:

President Bush: This will not be another Vietnam.

Jeff Greenfield: At this point President Bush has much to gain from a quick decisive victory and he would probably retain support even for a long war if the cause appeared clear. But history does show that a protracted war with an uncertain purpose is as heavy a political burden as any a president has to bear. Jeff Greenfield, ABC News, New York.

At a high point of American patriotic fervor, Greenfield suggests that the military action could produce “a protracted war with an uncertain purpose.” As fundamental a

critique as this is hard to come by, but Greenfield gets away with it by couching it in terms of the president's "political burden." Greenfield uses the Vietnam analogy to heighten the narrative suspense about whether military action will produce a quagmire or a decisive victory. Some might dismiss such criticism as merely tactical rather than strategic (Mermin, 1999), since it fails to unambiguously attack the fundamental rationales of American policy, but it can also be seen as an embryonic criticism of strategic rationales. As the indexing norm suggests, journalists should rarely step out on a limb by making fundamental critiques of American policy that are both unsourced and unambiguous ("the United States has no business sending troops to the Gulf"). Yet, the professional conceptions of their own roles compel journalists to raise serious questions regarding the merits of government policies (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995), and the evidence here suggests that they find imaginative ways of doing so without themselves becoming advocates for the opposition.

Taken together, these findings on sources of oppositional discourse suggest that journalists admit sources bearing critical means and ends discourse through the news gate, but they frequently initiate critical context discourse independently from other sources. Yet, thus far we are left with few answers about the mechanisms by which news organizations regulate the flows of oppositional discourse. Getting them requires examining three things: whether Gulf crisis discourse emanated primarily from government-controlled beats, whether the level of critical discourse was regulated uniformly across news beats, and, if not, whether news producers actively balanced the number of supportive and oppositional statements at the level of individual broadcasts.

Regulating Critical Discourse

More than half of the evening news coverage about the Gulf crisis (57%) originated from domestic locations, and another 20% came from U.S.-controlled locations in the Gulf region. Of all the Gulf crisis-related coverage appearing on evening news broadcasts, 27% came from U.S. government beats; 20% from the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations, defined as Saudi Arabia, allied naval vessels, and undisclosed allied military locations in the Persian Gulf region; 22% from international locations other than the KTO; 18% from American locations outside Washington, D.C., and 12% from network studios.¹⁷

Despite the tendency for news of the crisis to come from domestic or government-controlled locations, Figure 4 shows no evidence that Gulf crisis coverage as a whole was effectively "captured" in government-controlled beats. The total amount of coverage originating in Washington, D.C., and the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations rose steadily from around a third of airtime in August to around two thirds of airtime in October. Although the percentage of crisis paragraphs reaches a peak of nearly 70% from government-controlled beats in late October, it falls back swiftly to hover around 50% of coverage for the remainder of the crisis. Gulf crisis coverage may have been geographically "domesticated" (Cook, 1994), but over time there was consistent balance in the amount of coverage coming from controlled and uncontrolled beats.

If producers did not attempt to index the news by consistently shifting Gulf crisis coverage into controlled beats, neither did journalists impose uniform definitions of the news index across beats. The simple comparison offered in Figure 5 shows levels and total amounts of oppositional discourse by aggregating all story datelines into five categories: the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations (KTO); U.S. government beats within Washington, D.C. (GOV); all international locations outside the KTO, including Iraq (INT); network studios in New York (STU); and all other "hinterland" locations in the United

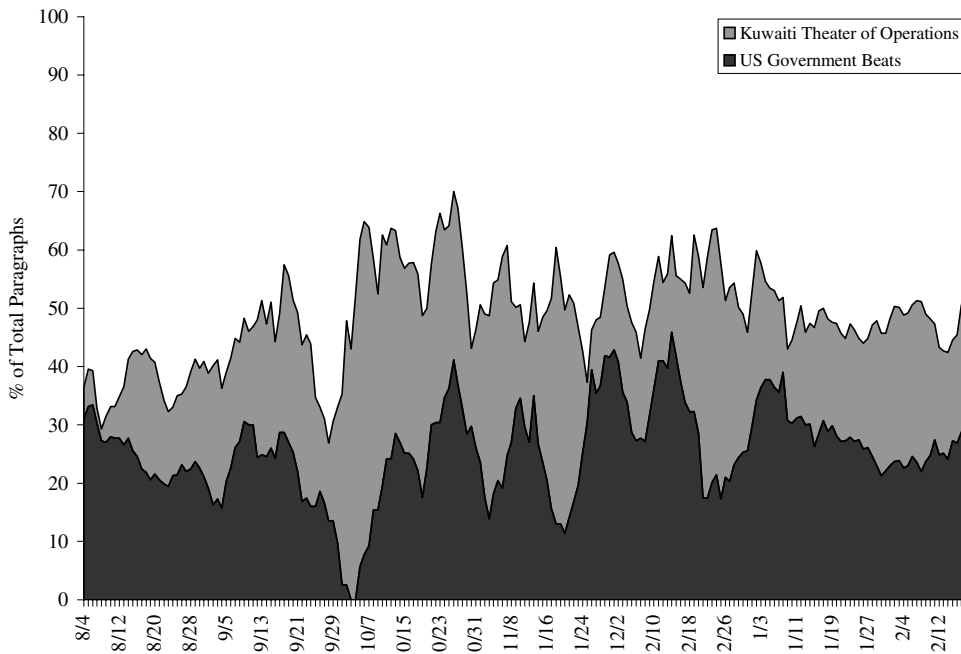


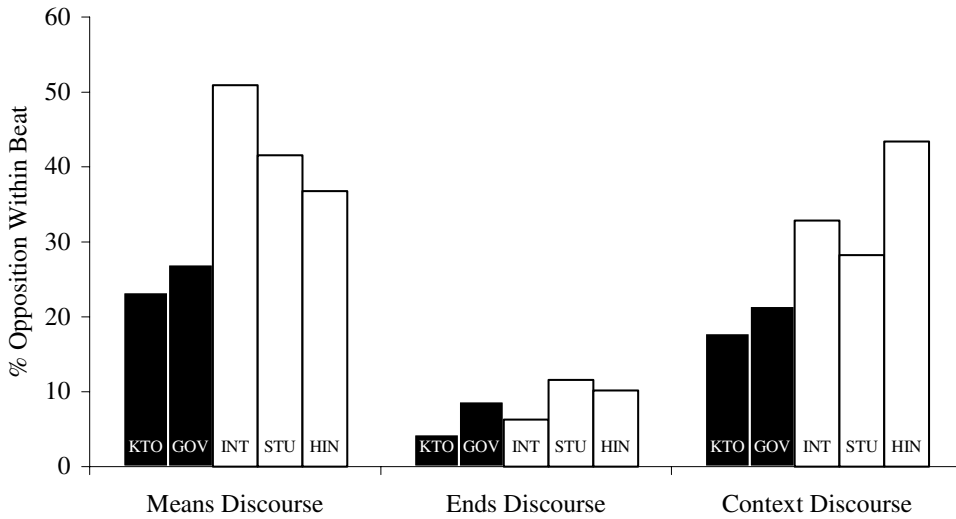
Figure 4. Average percentage of daily broadcast news paragraphs related to the Gulf crisis, by dateline. (Values for 7-day moving averages are shown.)

States (HIN). I loosely refer to these five categories as “beats” to distinguish story locations from the individual “sources” appearing in news stories, but all of the categories except studio reports are aggregations of multiple beats. For instance, U.S. government beats include reporting from the White House, Capitol Hill, the Pentagon, and the State Department, each of which is typically assigned its own reporter.¹⁸

The top chart in Figure 5 shows the percentage of discourse from within each beat that opposes the administration’s policy means, ends, and preferred contexts. In ends discourse alone do we see uniformly low levels of criticism across all five beats. By contrast, means and context discourse emanating from government-controlled beats (shaded black in this figure) was much more favorable to the Bush administration than coverage coming from the three uncontrolled beats. Means discourse coming from international locations was twice as critical of the Bush administration as means discourse from within the institutions of American government. Context discourse coming from beyond the Beltway was twice as critical as that coming from inside Washington, D.C., or Saudi Arabia.

Among the government-controlled beats, President Bush’s military commanders enjoyed extraordinary control over press coverage coming from the KTO. The pool system limited press access, military public affairs officers maintained a chilling influence over interviews with troops—which were all “on the record”—and daily briefings by military officers became the primary sources of news from the region (Carruthers, 2000; Manheim, 1994). We might expect, as a consequence, that discourse coming from the KTO should be most supportive of the Bush administration. However, the top chart in Figure 5 shows that the tone of coverage coming from the KTO was only slightly warmer than the tone of coverage coming from Beltway beats. To be sure, the evidence

a. Percentage of Oppositional Discourse Within Each Beat



b. Amount of Total Oppositional Discourse Contributed by Each Beat

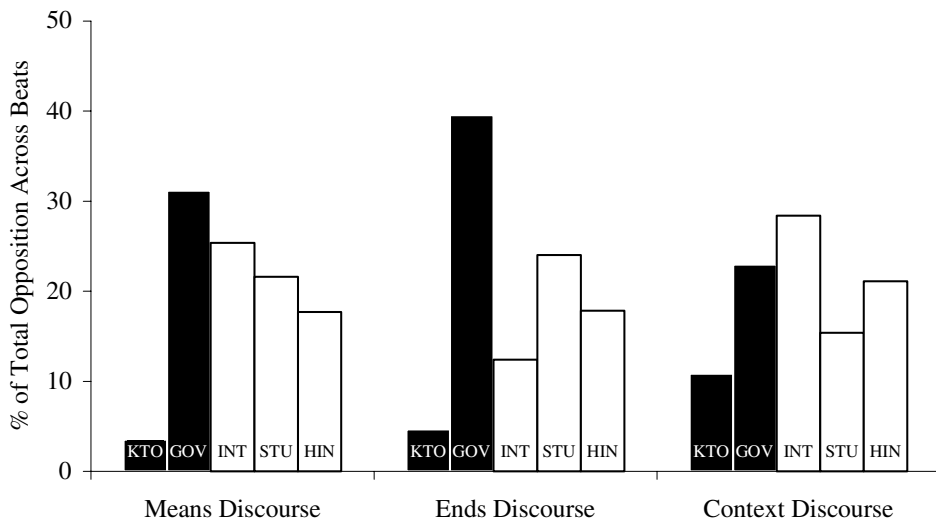


Figure 5. Oppositional discourse within and across beats. (Shaded bars indicate beats controlled by the U.S. government, while unshaded bars mark coverage coming from uncontrolled beats.)

here suggests that governmental spin strategies were effective to a point at minimizing unwanted coverage from within government-controlled beats. But as revealed in the lower chart, this was accomplished most effectively by minimizing politically charged discourse altogether. Only a tiny amount of political discourse aired in stories from U.S.-controlled areas in the Gulf region, which produced a grand total of 427 context statements (of which a third came from reporters, and another third from military briefers), 116 means statements, and 140 ends statements during the entire crisis period—this despite the fact that a fifth of all Gulf crisis coverage on the nightly news originated in

the KTO. Since nearly all of these few statements supported the Bush administration, oppositional discourse was effectively shut down by government and military officials in the ideal strategic communication environment of Saudi Arabia.

Not only did levels of opposition tend to vary across beats, but the lower chart of Figure 5 also shows that the vast majority of critical discourse came into the news from outside government-controlled beats. In this chart, each block of bars sums to 100% within each type of discourse. The two controlled beats together contributed just 35% of critical statements about the government's means, 45% of critical statements about its ends, and 34% of references challenging the government's preferred contexts. We saw earlier that the bulk of critical statements were made by sources other than government officials (Figure 2); here we see that most of the critical discourse came from stories filed outside Washington, D.C., and the KTO.

If there is not an even distribution of criticism across beats, it would seem by default that the indexing norm must be imposed by producers or news executives rather than by beat journalists. And if producers are adhering tightly to something like the indexing norm, they must be balancing critical coverage with supportive coverage across beats, since they did not report the crisis exclusively from within government-controlled beats (Figure 4). This possibility is examined in Table 1, which reports multiple regression analyses of these relationships at the level of daily news broadcasts.¹⁹ All of the regressions control for the total number of Gulf crisis paragraphs per broadcast, since levels of support and opposition should both tend to increase as the amount of news coverage goes up.

Table 1
Regression equations predicting opposition statements
overall and from uncontrolled beats, by type of discourse

	Oppositional statements per broadcast (all stories)			Oppositional statements per broadcast (only stories from uncontrolled beats)		
	Means	Ends	Context	Means	Ends	Context
Total paragraphs on Gulf crisis	.26**	.22**	.54**	.23**	.03	.40**
% paragraphs from controlled beats	-.06	.02	.02	-.16**	-.01	-.12**
Supportive statements from controlled beats				-.05	.00	.09*
Oppositional statements from controlled beats				.07	.02	.05
Supportive statements from uncontrolled beats				.26**	.18**	.10*
<i>N</i>	419	404	435	419	404	435
<i>R</i> ²	.08	.05	.29	.22	.03	.29

p* < .05; *p* < .01.

Note. Cells contain standardized OLS (beta) coefficients.

The first set of equations in Table 1 examines whether the total number of opposition statements in a broadcast is related to the percentage of crisis coverage coming from government-controlled beats.²⁰ Although we might expect that shifting coverage into government-controlled beats would reduce the amount of critical coverage, these equations show that the percentage of coverage coming from Washington, D.C., and the KTO is statistically unrelated to overall levels of opposition in news broadcasts. The coefficient for means discourse is negatively signed, indicating a slight tendency for criticism to diminish with larger amounts of reporting from institutional venues, but this relationship is both statistically and substantively insignificant: 48% of the Gulf crisis coverage in an average news broadcast came from controlled beats, and increasing this amount to 75% controlled coverage would reduce the amount of critical means discourse by 0.13 statements.

This lack of relationship could be consistent with at least two explanations. Producers might be balancing critical discourse across beats, so that the effect of shifting coverage into more administration-friendly controlled beats is offset in a broadcast by increasing the amount of critical coverage coming from uncontrolled beats. Alternatively, individual journalists might be striking a balance between critical and supportive perspectives regardless of whether they air stories from Washington, D.C., or Washington State. These possibilities are tested with the second set of equations in Table 1, which predict levels of critical discourse in uncontrolled beats from the amount of supportive discourse in controlled and uncontrolled beats as well as the amount of critical discourse from controlled beats. If producers or news executives are balancing discourse *across* beats, we should find that critical discourse from uncontrolled beats is positively related to supportive discourse from controlled beats (or, alternatively, negatively related to critical discourse from controlled beats). On the other hand, if journalists are balancing discourse *within* beats, we should find that critical discourse from uncontrolled beats is positively related to supportive discourse from uncontrolled beats but unrelated to the amounts of supportive and critical discourse coming from controlled beats.

The equations on the right-hand side of Table 1 show that opposition coming from uncontrolled beats is usually unrelated to levels of support coming from controlled beats. For means and ends discourse, neither the number of supportive nor critical statements from controlled beats are significantly related to opposition statements from uncontrolled beats, and neither coefficient even has the expected sign. The only support for the possibility that producers balance discourse across beats comes in context discourse, where supportive statements from controlled beats are positively related to the number of opposition statements from uncontrolled beats. In contrast to the largely disconfirming evidence for cross-beat balancing, strong and consistent support is found for the possibility that journalists balance discourse within beats. First, the percentage of coverage from controlled beats is negatively related to the number of opposition statements from uncontrolled beats. Paired with the earlier finding that the amount of controlled beat coverage is unrelated to the total number of opposition statements, this suggests that balance in discourse is being achieved within rather than across beats. Second, levels of opposition from uncontrolled beats are usually unrelated to levels of support and opposition from controlled beats but positively related to levels of support from uncontrolled beats. In other words, levels of supportive and critical discourse rise and fall together within uncontrolled beats.

In short, the patterns in Table 1 are generally consistent with the idea that balance is achieved at the story or beat level rather than at the broadcast level. The sole exception to this pattern comes in context discourse, where uncontrolled opposition is triggered by

controlled support. Yet, even in that equation the percentage of coverage from controlled beats is still negatively related to uncontrolled support, suggesting that producers are not attempting to load concentrated amounts of opposition discourse into a smaller uncontrolled space within the news broadcast. Taken together, the evidence presented here suggests that individual journalists are routinely applying either the fairness norm or the news values of conflict and drama to balance coverage within their stories, regardless of whether they happen to be filing them from governmental or nongovernmental beats. In the one instance where producers consistently balanced discourse across beats, it was done to heighten rather than diminish the amount of critical discourse. This too is more consistent with news values and the norm of fairness or objectivity in news coverage than with an overriding concern to remain within the parameters of official debate.

Discussion: Was News of the Gulf Crisis Critical Enough?

The 1990–1991 Persian Gulf crisis had all of the elements that should have undermined press independence: a unified executive, a deferential Congress, a military buildup signaling American intentions for war, and an easy villain in Saddam Hussein. Yet, by closely examining the pathways and processes by which critical voices entered news about the Gulf crisis, this study reveals that television news did not merely shadow the debate occurring among U.S. officials. Journalists frequently presented competing perspectives and were often the instigators rather than merely gatekeepers of critical viewpoints. These findings suggest that the press was much more independent in reporting the Persian Gulf crisis than scholars of political communication usually presume it to be.

Having concluded this much, the obvious counterpoint must also be stated: the evening news was, on balance, still fairly supportive of the government's designs. It would have appeared even more permissive if this study had followed the conventions of previous research by omitting all but American sources, neglecting context discourse, and omitting neutral discourse from the totals. However, we should not mistake this level of support for a lack of independence. Critical news coverage may be sufficient evidence of the press's independence, but it is not necessary evidence, because exercising autonomy cannot be limited to promoting dissent. If the press is truly independent, it must logically have the option to agree as well as oppose. By examining news broadcasts at a finer level of detail than previous work has done, this study reveals that both options were clearly and frequently exercised by American journalists covering the Iraq conflict. Their reporting tended to support the Bush administration's strategic reasons for going after Iraq, but if the ship of state has government officials at the helm, then television journalists behaved more like dolphins riding the bow wave than mussels stuck to the rudder.

Related to the question of press independence is whether news of the crisis provided a sufficiently diverse "marketplace of ideas." Was the press critical enough to serve the public's informational needs? Answers to this question are more elusive, because they require defining and defending normative standards for evaluating the quality of news coverage. This is rarely done in the literature on press independence, which tends to level what may be called "directional" or negative criticisms—the press is too supportive or, occasionally, too cynical—instead of articulating positive standards that can supply these negative criticisms with a definite meaning.

A common presumption in the literature is that news coverage should reflect an even balance between critical and supportive perspectives on a given issue. When this

presumption appears, it is usually asserted rather than defended, and its theoretical origins are typically left unstated. One suspects that such assertions are sometimes premised on journalists' own claims of objectivity or fairness. In popular circles, the fairness norm is often thought to require an even balance of perspectives on both sides of an issue, so that "fair" reporting ensures that different perspectives get equivalent amounts of time or space in news coverage. However, it is notable that the norm's most cited defenders (Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947; Lippmann, 1922; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956) nowhere suggest any need for equal treatment of relevant perspectives. Moreover, grounding a critique of press performance on a norm that political communication scholars have almost universally criticized for privileging the status quo, impoverishing political debate, and reifying the subjective "news sense" of professional journalists (Bennett, 2001; Patterson, 1993; Tuchman, 1972, 1978) would be ironic indeed.

In the few cases where the balance presumption is explicitly defended, it tends to be premised on concerns about public opinion dynamics and persuasion processes (e.g., Entman, 1991, 2003). This approach seems to have in mind an elite-driven theory of public opinion formation, something like Zaller's (1992) two-message model, in which opinion holders are thought to enjoy greater autonomy in developing their views when there is a rough parity between supportive and critical discourses. While this approach is grounded in an important theoretical concern—the likelihood that the news will be "effective" in helping people formulate independent opinions—it too requires further justification before it can serve as a positive normative standard. If we are concerned about the potential for attitude change rather than merely for attitude reinforcement, then if the mix of views and credibility of sources appearing in a debate are important determinants of opinion formation, it follows that the implied news audience must consist largely of inattentive independents (cf. Zaller, 1992). Arguments that "good" news should have a rough parity between competing frames or discourses must therefore give reasons why news discourse should maximize the chances of persuasion for this particular subset of a population, when such balanced news may well undersupply the informational needs of partisans and political sophisticates. Such arguments must also explain why maximizing the potential for autonomy in the persuasion process is such a paramount goal. Persuasion is merely one among many functions of democratic communication (e.g., Barber, 1984, chap. 8; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990), and by no means the most important. When lacking either of these additional justifications, the defense of the parity view remains incomplete.

If instead we turn to the writings of political philosophers concerned with public deliberation, we find a very different standard consistently defended. Balance among competing perspectives is rarely an issue. Instead, democratic theorists tend to be more concerned that each relevant voice get its proper say. In the famous words of Alexander Meiklejohn (1960, p. 26), "What is essential is not that everyone shall speak, but that everything worth saying shall be said." For most deliberative theorists, the numerical balance among different voices becomes a relevant concern only after deliberation has concluded and a decision is to be reached (Christiano, 1996; Mansbridge, 1983, 1996; see generally, Beitz, 1989). On this account, "good" news would seem to ensure that a relevant range of critical voices is included in the mix, and that none is systematically marginalized in the deliberative process. Beyond this, deliberative theorists provide little guidance as to how critical or supportive the balance of voices ought to be. To the contrary, this question seems hardly to interest them at all.

This philosophical approach rightly has been criticized for its many shortcomings

(Lupia, 2002). It seems to presume a constantly attentive hall of listeners ever willing to be persuaded out of their opinions, and makes little allowance for the psychology of information processing. It neglects the problem of intermittent and limited audience attention to the debate. Most importantly, this standard provides an especially low threshold for validating the content of deliberation: One suspects that a critical perspective briefly mentioned at the bottom of an inside article would “count” toward meeting this perspective’s minimal threshold. Application of this standard thus turns on identifying the relevant range of alternative perspectives that ought to be present in the debate and determining whether each is somehow “taken seriously” in the deliberative process.

But although the “minimum threshold” standard articulated by deliberative theorists may be less than satisfying, it is better grounded and defended than the “parity” standard common to the political communication literature. Using the minimum threshold standard, in light of the findings presented earlier, it is possible to conclude that evening news coverage was sufficiently critical to serve the informational needs of the American public.

Conclusion

Criticism of government in evening news discourse during the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf crisis was not triggered by or closely tied to patterns of gatekeeping among elected officials. Instead, the evidence from this case suggests that journalists exercised considerable discretion in locating and airing oppositional voices. This discretion did not tend to produce many bold statements of fundamental criticism within ends discourse, but it would be a mistake to infer from this that strategic criticism was thereby marginalized. Rather, strategic criticism can take more subtle forms than have been studied previously. Oppositional context discourse, often initiated by journalists rather than merely passed along by them, constitutes an important venue for strategic criticism.

Timothy Cook (1996, p. 478) has suggested that “when authoritative sources are largely silent and no governmental process is involved, the storytelling imperative can predominate. . . . Indexing thus has considerable power as an explanation for news-making, but it also has limits.” This study finds consistent support for this perspective in the case of the Persian Gulf crisis, and other work has suggested similar conclusions (Livingston & Eachus, 1996). However, extending the analysis used in this article to other cases and other contexts is necessary before we can conclude that these patterns are conclusive and general. The Gulf crisis is unusual in many respects, notably in attracting such intense and widespread international attention, unlike the Contras case from the 1980s (Bennett, 1990) in which the scope of conflict was mostly confined to Nicaragua and the U.S.

Pushover journalism in the realm of foreign affairs still occurs—witness the tepid debate over American involvement in Afghanistan following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. But absent the Cold War–induced consensus about the nature and aims of U.S. foreign policy (Livingston & Eachus, 1996), it should today be the exception rather than the rule to see journalists clam when elected officials close ranks on foreign policy. Conflict among contending perspectives is both a core value and prominent feature in American journalism (Graber, 2002). As Timothy Cook (1998, p. 101) puts it, “the sine qua non of news is not conflict in and of itself but an endless series of conflicts and momentary resolutions.” Even in the absence of core disagreements among authoritative sources, criticism of American foreign policy should tend to arise from journalists’ own sense of professional responsibility (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995), often defined as adherence to

the norm of fairness or objectivity in news reporting. Journalists are trained to focus on the activities of government officials, which inclines them to see the policy world from the view of those officials, but also to seek “conflicting possibilities” from authoritative sources (Tuchman, 1972). If journalists don’t encounter ready sources of dissent, they are trained to prod and cajole sources to provide it for them. The ultimate journalistic carrot is to shield the identities of their government informants. If there is any authoritative dissent to be found, even if only on background, journalists will use it to construct their narratives. When such dissent cannot be found in government circles, journalists may decide to “follow the trail of power” to non-governmental sources that have a legitimate stake in the policy (Althaus et al., 1996; Bennett, 1996) or use “accidental” occurrences as pegs on which to hang criticisms of government policy (Bennett, 1996; Lawrence, 1996; Molotch & Lester, 1974). But journalists do not merely excuse themselves from indexing to follow the trail of power. In large part, they independently decide who has power and where the trail is heading.

Notes

1. The sole exception (Cook, 1994) examines the distribution of sources and coverage by beat but does not analyze the tone of coverage emanating from those beats.

2. Transcripts from ABC broadcasts were obtained from the NEXIS news database, while transcripts from CBS and NBC broadcasts were obtained from Burrell’s transcript service.

3. The theoretical account underlying this content analysis of news broadcasts is based on a method developed for analyzing news frames that appeared during the Libya crisis of 1986 (see Althaus et al., 1993).

4. Themes supporting administration policies were determined according to the public positions taken by the administration. Supportive means discourse included pro-force, pro-sanctions, pro-energy, pro-something, con-nothing, and pro-Gulf policy themes. Critical themes were con-force, con-sanctions, con-energy, con-something, pro-nothing, and con-Gulf policy themes. All mentions of other kinds of policy alternatives were considered neutral relative to the administration’s positions, as these dealt with policies on which the administration had taken no public position.

Two remaining elements of means discourse represented more complicated cases and were coded as follows. Although the administration was careful to point out that it was illegal to use assassination as state policy, administration sources repeatedly hinted that Hussein should be or was being personally targeted in military operations. Accordingly, declarative *statements* advocating assassination (“we ought to assassinate Saddam”) were coded as critical of the administration, and similarly strong statements opposing assassination were coded as supportive, but suggestive hints that assassination might be acceptable (“Saddam had better watch where he sleeps”) were coded as supportive while con-assassination signals were treated as critical of the administration.

Similarly, the U.S. position specifically ruled out a negotiated settlement to the crisis that left Iraqi forces in a position to control or occupy Kuwaiti territory, but American leaders repeatedly expressed a willingness to meet with Iraqi officials in the hope that U.S. aims could be realized without resorting to the use of military force. The administration’s position on negotiation also changed somewhat over time, becoming at least publicly open to the idea as a “last ditch” effort to forestall a bombing campaign and eventually agreeing to hold talks. Yet, the administration consistently signaled its unwillingness to settle for anything less than complete withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and the private memoirs of key administration officials (e.g., Baker, 1995, pp. 350–364) clarify that the talks were primarily held to remove a potential objection to the use of force. No serious consideration of entering into formal negotiations with Hussein was ever undertaken or suggested by the administration. These dual senses regarding the administration’s position were coded accordingly, with pro-negotiation *statements* counted as critical of the administration and con-negotiation *statements* as supportive, but with both pro-negotiation and con-negotiation *signals* counted as neutral with respect to the administration’s position.

5. As can be seen in the Appendix, all of the “pro” ends themes represented aims consistent with administration positions, and all of the “con” themes represented positions critical of the administration’s positions. “Other” goals are coded as neutral with respect to the administration, as they represent aims on which the administration had not staked out a position. The two exceptions are in the “spiral of violence” and “Arab solution” themes, where the “pro” versions are coded as critical of administration positions and the “con” versions are coded as supportive of the administration.

6. Supportive context themes included the following: con-Vietnam, con-Western aggression, pro-mad dog, pro-demon, con-hero, pro-nuclear capability, pro-chemical or biological capability, pro-allied superiority, pro-kick ass, con-spiral of violence, and con-allies targeting civilians. The opposite versions of these themes were counted as critical of the administration. Three other sets of context themes—war likely, delay, and patience—were counted as neutral with respect to the administration. The latter two of these themes dealt merely with the amount of time that should be allowed before the administration enacted a new policy, while the first theme represented characterizations of whether the use of force was ultimately inevitable. None of these themes could be taken as unilaterally supportive of administration positions, and unlike other context themes, both the pro and con versions of each of these themes were used extensively by administration sources appearing in the news.

7. Because levels of coder agreement would be artificially inflated by instances where both coders agreed there was no codable content (which was the case in 83% of the test paragraphs), the kappa score reported above is only for paragraphs in which one or the other coder recorded the presence of thematic content.

8. Across the entire period of interest, each day’s combined discourse from all three networks contained an average of 10.2 elements of means discourse (observed maximum = 42), 7.0 ends themes (max = 26), and 12.0 context themes (max = 63). It is important to point out that the proportional measures used in these area charts are insensitive to changes in the *amount* of news coverage over the crisis period. The combined total number of broadcast news stories per day on the Gulf crisis averaged 16.8 during the establishing phase, 13.7 during the debate phase, and 30.4 during the war phase.

9. This pattern generally has been confirmed in previous studies of this case (e.g., Bennett & Paletz, 1994; Carruthers, 2000; Greenberg & Gantz, 1993; Taylor, 1998), although some work finds this pattern only in the appearance of strategic rather than tactical critiques of American policy (Mermin, 1996, 1999), and a few studies also find elevated levels of critical discourse during both the debate and the war phases (Bennett & Manheim, 1993; Fico & Soffin, 1995).

10. Because these comparisons are being made with population rather than sample data, descriptive information is reported here and elsewhere without conducting statistical tests to evaluate the significance of observed differences.

11. The average day didn’t have a great deal of oppositional discourse. These are used merely for meaningful comparisons across time, since the time intervals for the three stages are of unequal lengths. Examining the total number of opposition statements in each period instead of the average number per day reveals that 37% of all statements opposing administration means came in the establishing phase, compared to 25% in the debate phase and 38% in the war phase. Of the ends statements critical of the administration, 39% appeared during the first period, 24% in the second, and 37% in the third. Of the context themes critical of the administration, 27% appeared during the first period, 22% in the second, and 51% in the third.

12. Means discourse is roughly analogous to the “tactical” policy discourse sometimes studied by other researchers, while ends discourse corresponds loosely to the “strategic” policy discourse discussed by these authors (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Hertog, 2000; Mermin, 1999). However, the fit is not perfect: Some discourse elements described as “strategic” in the literature, such as the Vietnam comparison (Hallin, 1994), are here found in context discourse.

13. The four types of critical ends discourse introduced by U.S. government officials questioned the goal of overthrowing Hussein, protecting oil supplies, restoring Kuwait’s government to power, and enforcing United Nations resolutions. The five types of critical ends discourse

articulated *only* by nonofficial sources questioned the nuclear deterrence rationale, the idea that America's national interests were at stake in the conflict, the goal of sending a warning to other nations bent on military aggression, the need to defend American honor abroad, and the goal of enforcing economic sanctions against Iraq. The four remaining types of critical ends discourse were articulated *first* by nonofficial sources: questioning the goals of getting Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, protecting hostages held in Iraq, and hurting Iraq by destroying its economic or military infrastructures; and suggesting that American policies will produce a spiral of violence in the Middle East.

14. This category includes individual voices as well as poll results and reports of protests within the United States.

15. It is interesting to point out that citizen voices tended to oppose the use of force: taken for the period as a whole, the voices of American citizens in the evening news opposed force ($n = 176$ con-force statements) more than they favored it ($n = 142$ pro-force statements).

16. The Vietnam analogy is an especially good example of this because of its inherent ambiguity. The Vietnam situation theme can be seen as simultaneously jingoistic (emphasizing the need, this time, to use overwhelming force) and pacifistic (emphasizing the importance of exit strategies and long-term consequences).

17. Coverage is estimated here using the number of relevant news paragraphs. A slightly different picture emerges when we consider the distribution of discrete stories rather than of airtime across beats: 22% of stories came from U.S. government beats ($n = 838$), 14% from the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations ($n = 550$), 22% from other international locations ($n = 829$), 11% from American hinterlands ($n = 415$), and 31% from broadcast studios ($n = 1,206$).

Since only 7% of stories from U.S. government beats ($n = 55$) came from Capitol Hill, I treat all stories from U.S. government beats as "controlled." More than nine out of ten KTO stories came from Saudi Arabia ($n = 509$), with a smaller number originating in undisclosed military locations around the Gulf region. Stories from international locations came mostly from Iraq ($n = 285$) or other Arab countries ($n = 258$), and only secondarily from Europe ($n = 154$) or Israel ($n = 104$). Nearly eight in ten of the stories originating in broadcast studios ($n = 962$) were brief anchor-read news items that were only one or two paragraphs in length. Most of the remaining studio-based stories were longer interviews with newsmakers and experts.

18. Although I lump these different locations together for purposes of comparing controlled versus uncontrolled beats, there are differences in the degrees and types of criticism emanating from within these different U.S. government beats. For means discourse, opposition to administration policies was about 20% for stories reported from the White House and the State Department, 32% for stories from the Pentagon, and 43% for stories from Capitol Hill. Ends discourse varied from a low of 2% opposition in Pentagon stories to around 9% in State and White House stories and 16% in stories originating on Capitol Hill. Context discourse was most uniform, averaging 15% opposition for stories from the White House, Pentagon, and Capitol Hill, but with State Department stories containing 26% opposition. A fifth dateline category—stories originating in Washington, D.C., but from outside these four beats—consistently had the highest levels of criticism, averaging 43% oppositional statements in means and context discourse, compared to 15% oppositional statements in ends discourse.

19. Individual broadcasts provide the purest test of these relationships, since the individual stories in each broadcast are assigned, selected, and framed by the news anchor to make a coherent, 22-minute package. Alternative explanations to intentional design become harder to rule out at higher levels of aggregation, such as all broadcasts in a given day, week, or month, since patterns at these higher levels are shaped by the ebb and flow of the crisis itself rather than merely by the conscious decisions of news organizations. Moreover, aggregating the data above the level of individual broadcasts would obscure the unique organizational norms operating in each of the three network news divisions.

20. The number of broadcasts varies across these equations because some broadcasts contained only discourse from one or two of the three categories. Broadcasts with no codable discourse content are excluded from this analysis.

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Appendix: Description of Discourse Themes

Table A1
Means discourse themes

Frequency		Theme
Criticized	Invoked	
517	590	Military force: U.S. should use military force to make Iraq comply with allied demands
14 ^a	34 ^a	Assassination: U.S. should assassinate Hussein or Iraqi leaders, or specifically target Hussein or Iraqi leaders for death
88	198	Sanctions: U.S. should engage in or support diplomatic or economic sanctions, including signing UN resolutions and expelling Iraqi or other diplomats
181 ^a	231 ^a	Negotiations: U.S. should negotiate or support negotiations to achieve peaceful settlement with Iraq
29	58	Energy: U.S. should shed its dependence on Middle East oil by conserving energy, reducing petroleum consumption, exploring domestic oil capabilities, or other means
4	37	Something/unspecified: U.S. should take unspecified action against Iraq
<i>1</i>	11	Nothing: U.S. should take no action at all in response to or against Iraq
27	67	Other: U.S. should take some other action in response to or against Iraq
16	48	“Gulf Policy” [used when “Gulf policy” is used as a subject but described in vague or extremely general terms]
877	1,274	Total means discourse

^aSee Note 4 for details on how assassination and negotiations were coded into pro- and con-administration categories.

Note. Boldface numbers indicate “con-administration” themes, italicized numbers indicate “pro-administration” themes, and numbers in Roman indicate themes that are neutral toward administration positions.

Table A2
Ends discourse themes

Frequency		
Criticized	Invoked	Theme
1	17	Nuclear deterrence: remove the potential that Iraq might someday develop or use nuclear weapons
0	16	Chemical or biological deterrence: remove the potential that Iraq might someday develop or use biological or chemical weapons
1	65	Containment: prevent further acts of Iraqi military aggression, contain Iraqi forces and prevent Hussein from using force against neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia, or prevent Iraq from being an even bigger threat in the future
14	70	Overthrow: the overthrow of Hussein, the removal of Hussein from power, the armed invasion of Iraq, or at least increased dissension or destabilization among Iraqis
4	492	Withdrawal: the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait
26	74	Protect oil: protect the flow or availability of oil from the Middle East
1	24	Protect economy: protect the U.S. economy or U.S. economic interests
3	19	Protect national interests: protect general, unspecified, or other U.S. national interests.
25	82	Protect hostages: protect the lives of hostages or prisoners held by Iraqi forces, or gain the release of hostages or prisoners
6	79	Save Kuwait: restore freedom to Kuwaiti people, save Kuwait from destruction, save Kuwaiti people from mistreatment, liberate Kuwait or restore Kuwaiti government to power
2	42	Warning: show a country (or countries) that it cannot get away with aggression
20	39	Hurt Iraq: damage Iraq's economic and/or political infrastructure
0	19	Spiral of violence: <i>because</i> actions (or proposed actions) against Iraq will increase levels of terrorism, violence, and/or tension in the Middle East or against Western or U.S. targets
1	10	American honor: defend U.S. prestige, principles, and/or international standing
2	27	Arab solution: response to Iraqi aggression should be under taken by Arabs without the interference of Western nations
1	86	Casualties: minimize U.S. or allied casualties

Table A2
Ends discourse themes (*Continued*)

Frequency		Theme
Criticized	Invoked	
0	5	Mad dog: <i>because</i> Hussein is sly, desperate, or “backed into a corner” and is therefore liable to “try something crazy”
0	<i>1</i>	Demon: <i>because</i> Hussein or the Iraqi military is amoral, ruthless, guilty of war crimes, etc., and is likely to engage in further acts of aggression unless stopped by outside force; Hussein is Hitler, a barbarian, a dictator, a mass murderer, etc.
0	<i>61</i>	Enforce sanctions: enforce economic sanctions against Iraq
1	8	Sanctions working/not working: <i>because</i> sanctions are (are not) working, seem (not) to be working, or are (not) likely to work
1	<i>6</i>	Troop readiness: <i>because</i> the combat readiness of U.S. or allied forces is likely to diminish if not used soon
9	56	Other: [other specific goal of U.S. policy toward Iraq]
2	<i>57</i>	Enforce UN resolutions: enforce resolutions passed by the United Nations
120	1,355	Total ends discourse

Note. Boldface numbers indicate “con-administration” themes, italicized numbers indicate “pro-administration” themes, and numbers in Roman indicate themes that are neutral toward administration positions.

Table A3
Context discourse themes

Frequency		
Criticized	Invoked	Theme
37	244	Vietnam: context introduces the U.S. experience in Vietnam as an appropriate parallel or analogy to the current situation
0	18	Western aggression: Actions or threats directed toward Iraq are unprovoked Western, U.S., or Israeli aggression against Arab state
20	46	Mad dog: Hussein is sly, desperate, or “backed into a corner” and is therefore liable to “try something crazy”
6	326	Demon: Hussein or the Iraqi military is amoral, ruthless, guilty of war crimes, etc., and is likely to engage in further acts of aggression unless stopped by outside force; Hussein is Hitler, a barbarian, a dictator, a mass murderer, etc.
2	41	Hero: context emphasizes the potential for elevating Hussein’s status among Iraqis or other Arabs and increasing solidarity among Iraqis and other Arabs
29	189	War likely: war between the U.S. or its allies and Iraq is likely or inevitable
16	79	Delay: emphasis on expecting a long standoff with Iraq or a delay before “action” is likely to begin
4	92	Nuclear capability: context is Iraq’s potential to use or develop nuclear weapons
7	430	Chemical or biological capability: Context is Iraq’s potential to use or develop biological or chemical weapons
34	146	Allied superiority: context emphasizes in sober, rational terms the technological superiority, better success, improved accuracy, or greater power of allied forces relative to that of Iraqi forces
21	82	Kick ass: context emphasizes in affective, belligerent terms the general superiority, better success, improved accuracy, or greater power of allied forces relative to that of Iraqi forces
5	242	Spiral of violence: increase levels of terrorism, violence, and/or tension in the Middle East or against Western or U.S. targets
110	189	Patience: U.S. or allies should wait for further developments to occur, or for sanctions or force to take effect
43	64	Allies targeting civilians: U.S. or allies are intentionally targeting Iraqi or other civilians for death
334	2,188	Total context discourse

Note. Boldface numbers indicate “con-administration” themes, italicized numbers indicate “pro-administration” themes, and numbers in Roman indicate themes that are neutral toward administration positions.

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