The Real War Will Never Get On Television

An Analysis of Casualty Imagery in American Television Coverage of the Iraq War

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Abstract

This paper reports the results of an analysis of battle and casualty imagery in television coverage of the 2003 Iraq War. A team of three graduate coders and two professors analyzed 200 hours of coverage aired from March 20 (the beginning of the war) through April 9 (the day the government of Saddam Hussein was deposed). Ten hours a day on three channels – CNN, Fox News Channel, and ABC – were coded: 7:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. (to capture highly rated morning shows), and 1:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m. Results show that the networks presented an almost entirely bloodless war to viewers, emphasizing the "video game" aspects of technical wizardry of American military power far more than the human ramifications of that power. This coverage is compared with that of earlier American wars, and implications for effects and future research are discussed.

In 1862, photographer Alexander Gardner visited the battlefield at Antietam and shot several dozen pictures for the New York gallery run by his employer, Matthew Brady. Most of the images he captured were landscapes and group portraits, reflecting the tastes of the limited but enthusiastic contemporary market for photographs, which had only begun to be in mass circulation for about two decades. About a third of his exposures, however, were of dead Confederate soldiers who had not yet been removed from the field.[1] At the time, Gardner had no reason to think these shots would be of any commercial interest; they were, after all, the first images of battlefield death scenes circulated in America. As it turned out, the pictures were a sensation, stimulating a highly profitable frenzy of interest in similar scenes from other battles. When Gardner went to Gettysburg a year later, having set off on his own business, three-quarters of his pictures were graphic depictions of the dead, albeit often rearranged into romanticized poses (Hess, 2002).

Today, our historical memory of the gruesomeness (and romanticism) of the Civil War is illustrated by the pictures taken by Gardner, Brady, and others, of dead soldiers. Several factors made it possible to capture these images, notably the wet plate processing method that made outdoor photography easier and the proximity of many important battles like Antietam and Gettysburg to population centers and roads, especially in the north. Despite these factors, though, the rapid mobility of the armies and the still cumbersome technical requirements of the medium meant that only six battles yielded

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[1] Granted, the audiences for their work were northerners and all the dead pictured were Confederates. But this was due to the requisite delays in reaching the battlefield and setting up the camera. By the time that had happened, union soldiers had already buried their own dead (always the priority) and the only bodies left on the field were those of the enemy (Hess, 2002).

pictures of dead soldiers.[2] In all, probably no more than 100 such photographs were taken during the entire war (Hess, 2002).

Yet the history of war photography in the Civil War offers several interesting points of departure for understanding the images transmitted through television coverage of the recent Iraq War. First, as in the 1860s, important technological advances in the visual medium, most notably mobile satellite video, allowed reporters to get closer to the fighting and, if they chose to, show the gory reality of modern warfare to their audiences back home. Second, changes in military policy allowed journalists to be embedded with military units and have even better battlefield access than their civil war counterparts. More recently, journalists covering the last several American military engagements before Iraq were intentionally kept from the front by the military. The question is whether American journalists chose to take advantage of these technological advances and increased battlefield access to show audiences not only the exciting whiz bang nature of American military power, but also the grim ramifications of its use.

This study begins to answer this question through a detailed and comprehensive content analysis of battle and casualty coverage of the Iraq War on CNN, Fox News Channel (FNC), and ABC.[3] At its most basic level, we are asking: Given that broadcast news had the ability to generate a complete portrait of the war, did it do so? Or did it instead reduce the war to a video game and shield viewers from the dead and wounded? This question takes on added significance in light of criticism that the 1991 Persian Gulf War was covered in a sanitized fashion. In that case, though, much of the blame could

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[2] Antietam, Corinth, Marye's Heights during Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Alsop's Farm during Spotsylvania, and the capture of Fort Mahone on the Petersburg lines (Hess, 2002).
[3] Only network news on ABC was analyzed, not news on its local affiliate. "Network" news included Good Morning America, World News Tonight, and, when it occurred, national break-ins and extended coverage at other times of day that fell during our sample period.

fairly (if not wholly) be placed on the Pentagon for restricting press access to the front and censoring the broadcast of casualty visuals (Hallin, 1991; Norris, 1991; Cheney, 1993; Patterson, 1995). In the Iraq War, military censorship was not nearly as severe, meaning that reporters generally had the freedom, access, and technological means to accurately report on the war if they chose to.

Literature Review

For millennia, war has been captured in imagery, be it on a canvas, a plate, or a broadcast signal. Before photography, these images were invariably captured after the fact (often years later) by artists who were nowhere near the action being depicted, and were heavily romanticized even when they were quite graphic (Franklin, 1991; Haskell, 1993). As mentioned already, these characteristics also describe the photographers and their pictures during the Civil War. Of course, there are important differences between painters and journalists, most obviously that the former are artists and the latter are chroniclers. (Civil War photographers, and the medium itself in the 1860s, are perhaps best considered a hybrid, or bridge, between the two.) And yet battlefield art and battlefield journalism share a basic function described by historian Francis Haskell:

> Closely related to the faith placed in images of the past was the concept (which has proved so influential ever since) that great or extraordinary events will necessarily be recorded as much through the medium of the visual arts as they are in written histories, and that if they are not so recorded they not only lose some of their power to move later generations, but also some of their actuality (p. 86).

Importantly, the recording of these events has historically been done in a way that glorifies the protagonists (typically the victors, but more generally the countrymen of the

artists or culturally similar participants to them). Hence, these images are more artful in every sense of the word than they are literal. One might even refer to them as propagandistic. At the least, they have often been driven by and reflected marketplace demands, be it from sponsors in the case of pre-20th Century painters or collectors and readers of illustrated weeklies in the case of Civil War era photography and woodcuts (Haskell, 1993; Hess, 2002).

In other words, the imagery of war and battle has historically been intended to do two things: rally the public consciousness around the righteousness of the conflict (even, and perhaps especially, as the event itself drifts back in time and memory), and please a commercial audience.

Critiques of contemporary war coverage in the American press, particularly in broadcast news, often make the same case against the media, with coverage of the 1991 Persian Gulf War being a prime example. In that conflict, the Pentagon enforced strict censorship of the press and instituted a system of pool reporting that virtually eliminated the potential for independent journalistic observers and allowed the military to exercise near total control of the portrait of the war fed to American audiences. Although media organizations and reporters complained about the restrictions, at the same time they dutifully saturated their coverage with Pentagon press briefings that included dramatic visuals of bombs mounted with cameras striking targets in Iraq, and effusive claims of technical wizardry and precision, many of which turned out to be gross exaggerations at best and outright falsehoods at worst.

The result was imagery that made the war look, in a popular metaphor, like a video game (Franklin, 1991; Cheney, 1993). Daniel Hallin wrote that coverage defined

the Persian Gulf conflict as "patriotic celebration and technological triumph" (1991, p. 52). He also showed how coverage mirrored that during the early years of the Vietnam War, with war seen as a national endeavor, complete with use of the first person plural, such as "our troops," a trait of some Iraq War coverage, too (Aday, Livingston, and Hebert, 2004); an American tradition, signified by references to World War II and other iconic moments and images in American history; and an emphasis on winning at any cost (Hallin, 1991, pp. 53-54). Others showed how these tendencies were particularly pronounced at CNN, who's need to fill a 24-hour news cycle led them to be less analytical and more focused on event-driven, flashy imagery than the network newscasts (Wicks and Walker, 1993).

In addition to a focus on the alleged technical perfection of the American war effort and the pentagon-produced images purporting to demonstrate it, a key component of the media's sanitization (and indeed romanticization) of the Persian Gulf War was their near total lack of casualty visuals. Hallin's analysis showed that American audiences were shown an essentially "clean" war (1991, p.55), despite the loss of an estimated 100,000 Iraqi soldiers and perhaps the same number of civilians (not to mention more than 100 American troops). Although much of the explanation for the lack of casualty visuals can be explained by the fact that reporters were kept from the front lines and Baghdad where casualties would occur, others have pointed out that press norms and even ideology were also at play. Cheney (1993) for instance, pointed out that the avoidance of casualties extended to the definition of what constituted a story in the first place, with the press largely ignoring coverage of American troops burying Iraqis in mass graves and the massive scale of civilian casualties. Instead, Cheney and others

argue, coverage essentially parroted the White House and Pentagon talking points on the war, complete with visuals that seemed to reinforce them.

That the press largely followed the lead of official Washington in the Persian Gulf War is in many ways to be expected. Between Vietnam and the recent Iraq War, the main finding of scholars looking at war and foreign policy coverage is that the news tends to privilege official sources, especially those from the White House. Most notably, Bennett (1994) has shown that news coverage of war and foreign policy is indexed to the limited range of elite opinions, at least in the short run. Dickson (1994), for example, found that government sources defined the range of debate in New York Times coverage of the U.S. invasion of Panama. Entman and Page (1994) found similar results in coverage leading up to the beginning of the Persian Gulf War, showing that dissenters received less coverage than did officials who exercised some control over war policy, and that even when the press did air criticisms of the Administration's policy, those critiques were procedural rather than fundamental in nature.

Although Althaus (2003) has recently questioned these assumptions by showing various ways in which dissenting opinions appeared in the press during the Persian Gulf War period, the prevailing finding of scholars to date is that officials exercise a great deal of control over the content and framing of international news, even in the contemporary era of technological advances in news gathering that might theoretically allow for more media independence (Bennett and Livingston, 2003).

The tendency of modern war reportage, especially on television, to reflect establishment sentiment could be seen as extending to the hesitancy to show images of casualties. As mentioned above, broadcast coverage of the Persian Gulf War fit well with

the Administration's view that it was waging a moral and relatively painless war. Hallin's (1984) seminal study of coverage of the Vietnam War – a conflict conventionally perceived as bringing death and destruction into American living rooms on a nightly basis – showed that in fact casualties of any type were rarely shown before the Tet Offensive in 1968, after which reporters became skeptical as it became clear the war was going much worse for the United States than Washington would admit. But even after Tet, Hallin's analysis showed that there was virtually no quantifiable change in the coverage of Vietnamese civilian or military casualties (North or South). The implication of Hallin's research was echoed by Patterson's (1995) study of Persian Gulf War coverage and Livingston's (2000) analysis of the CNN effect on America's Balkan policy, both of which argued in different ways that the news media would not air challenging stories and images as long as a war remained short and relatively free of U.S. casualties.

At the same time, coverage of the Persian Gulf War in other countries, especially Arab ones, showed the gory results of American "smart" bombs, further suggesting that American coverage reflected the biases of its indigenous culture and official point of view in the same way foreign coverage did (Swanson and Smith, 1993). Although this paper reports the results of the first thorough examination of the scale and nature of casualty imagery in American broadcast coverage of the Iraq War, an earlier study looking just at the nightly news across five U.S. networks and two Arabian-based news channels (Al Jazeera and Egypt's Esc-1) also found cultural differences in the overall tone of coverage and in the depiction of casualties (Aday, Livingston, and Hebert, 2004). In addition, an exhaustive analysis of British Broadcasting Company coverage of the Iraq

War by Cardiff University (2003) found casualty coverage largely absent. In that case, researchers noted that British laws forbidding the airing of graphic imagery prevented the press from showing them, but they expressed apprehension that the resulting bloodless war shown on television might inure citizens from the grave consequences of military action.

American broadcast reporters often candidly admit that the norms of their medium prevent them from showing the same shots of bodily carnage aired in other parts of the world. Discussing his time covering the recent Iraq War as a reporter embedded with the Second Light Armored Recognizance Battalion, CBS' John Roberts said bluntly, "In terms of what kind of images we could air, there are certain pictures that you just can't show on television. *We saw plenty of those,* so you had to sanitize your coverage to some degree" (Katovsky and Carlson, 2003, p. 173, emphasis added).

Other reporters embedded in Iraq pointed out that most of the casualties were inflicted at long range, limiting their ability to capture them on film. But they also implied that even if they did shoot the gore, their superiors at the network back in America often edited the images out of the final story. For instance, CBS correspondent Jim Axelrod said,

> "There was never any opportunity, or attempt to limit the pictures we took and fed to New York or to London. If we found bodies we would photograph them….I saw a couple of burned bodies, just a rib cage. I wrote the script, and referenced bodies in it….(B)ut I never saw the final report. I don't know what was cut and what wasn't" (Katovsky and Carlson, 2003, p. 27).

CNN's Martin Savidge made a similar point, but unlike some of his brethren was not so accepting of the norm discouraging graphic visuals. His comments are worth citing at length:

> As someone who covers war, I believe you should show every single aspect of it, because otherwise you give people the misimpression that war is a very sanitary, very clearn, relatively painless type of campaign, and it's not. I mean, you see the smart bombs in the Pentagon video. What you never see is what happens after the nose camera goes to hash. What was the explosion like afterwards? What was the suffering of the people on the ground? Did they linger for hours, maybe days? You don't know any of that.

> We didn't allow human suffering to be seen in America. There is a tendency on the part of domestic networks not to show that, because they know that the American public is revolted by it, and they don't want to make the American public uncomfortable. It's censorship, and I've seen it many times before, so I'm not surprised by it.

> Let me give you an example….[Describes capturing the killing of an Iraqi soldier at close range on camera.] I called (CNN) ahead of time and said, 'Look, at the end of this feed, there's some pretty graphic stuff, and Iraqi being killed, and you have to make a determination.' I've heard talk that it will air someday, but it has not yet….(Katovsky and Carlson, 2003, p. 276).

Yet especially since the terrorist attacks on September 11th, many, including several prominent journalists, have argued that to show casualties, especially civilians, is unpatriotic. Indeed, everything from whether anchors should wear patriotic lapel pins to how much a network should show civilian casualties has been at issue (Carter and Barringer, 2001; Farhi, 2003; Kurtz, 2001), with some suggesting that there is no place for detachment in wartime (Graham, 2003; Kondracke, 2001; Rabinowitz, 2001). As FNC lead anchor Brit Hume said in defending his network's reluctance to show images of civilian casualties during the U.S.-Afghanistan war in 2001-2002: "Look, neutrality as a general principle is an appropriate concept for journalists who are covering institutions

of some comparable quality. This is a conflict between the United States and murdering

barbarians" (Rutenberg and Carter, 2001, p. B2).

This raises the question of what effect showing, or ignoring, casualty imagery

might have on shaping public opinion about a given war. Several scholars have explored

the role of media coverage in general on generating support or opposition to war. But

while these studies might reference trends in casualty coverage as an explanation for their

findings, they do not parse its specific effects or can only infer them imprecisely from

time series analyses (Mueller, 1973; Oliver, Mares, and Cantor, 1993; Larson, 1996;

Gartner and Segura, 1998). In an unpublished doctoral dissertation using student subjects,

Fuller (1996) performed an experiment manipulating visuals of casualties and found that

exposure to such imagery led to decreased support for war. That study, however, also

varied the narratives used in the experimental conditions and employed a documentary

rather than news format, making it difficult to extrapolate to the effects of broadcast news

images of dead and wounded.

If the central critique of recent war coverage has been that it sanitized conflicts

and reduced them visually and emotionally to the level of a video game, the war in Iraq

offered the press an opportunity to provide a more comprehensive portrait of battle. The

Pentagon's policy of embedding reporters with military units gave the media access to

the front lines they hadn't had during an American war since Vietnam. Granted, the

killing still occurred at long range, but the human aftereffects of that combat were seen in

the hours and days that followed as forces moved past the remnants of vanquished Iraqi

units and toward Baghdad. First person accounts of embedded reporters after the war

describing the carnage they saw make this clear. Second, unlike in the Persian Gulf War,

all American networks had correspondents based in Baghdad, where much of the civilian

casualties were inflicted. Finally, advances in technology theoretically made it possible

for reporters to show viewers exactly what they saw, even live. If a legitimate defense of

the press coverage of the first Gulf War was that they were preventing from seeing, much

less airing images of casualties, the war in Iraq rendered that excuse moot.

Method

  A team of three graduate students and two professors coded two hundred hours of

coverage on CNN, FNC and ABC aired from March 20th through April 9th. March 20th

was the first day of hostilities and April 9th was the day the government of Saddam

Hussein was deposed, as symbolized in the media by the fall of his statue in Baghdad's

Firdos Square. Prior research shows that coverage of the statue had a significant impact

on the news framing the war as being over (Aday, Cluverius, and Livingston, 2004).

  In order to capture both the highly rated morning news shows and the evening

newscasts, coders analyzed coverage broadcast from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., and from

1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Because the overall research question is whether the media were

more likely to show the reality or war or to depict it as a video game, all stories that

included an audio or visual illustration of battle or casualties (or both) were coded, with

the unit of analysis being individual shots within a story that included those images.

Hence, if a story did not have any shots of battle or casualties, it was not included in the

analysis. If it did, shots that did not depict these occurrences were not coded, but those

that did were. So, a battle story might have 10 shots but of those, five showed the reporter

doing a standup after the battle was fought and five showed the battle in progress. In that

case, only the latter five shots would be included, and would be numbered one through

five. A "Shot" can best be understood as beginning and ending with an edit. Finally, a

shot was counted every time it was aired, so the N in this case is not unique shots. In fact,

all channels, especially the 24 hour networks, replayed the same handful of images in a

loop throughout the day and even within an individual story. A total of 5, 087 shots are

included in the dataset.

Findings

Despite their presence at the front lines of the war and in the heart of Baghdad,

and despite a largely passive censorship of their stories by military officials, reporters at

the networks analyzed still presented a largely bloodless – but action-packed – view of

the Iraq War to American audiences. More than five times as many shots of firefights[4]

and battles were aired than images of casualties (Table 1).[5] ABC showed the highest ratio

of casualty to firefight images (22 percent to 77 percent), while FNC had the lowest (10

percent to 90 percent) (Table 2). As with the 1991 Persian Gulf conflict, visually-

speaking television reduced the war in Iraq to a fireworks display.

TABLES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

(All tables can be found in the appendix)

Interestingly, in the few instances where casualties were shown, at FNC and

CNN they were most likely to be civilians. Only at ABC were American (and a few

British) casualties shown more than Iraqis (Table 3). As seen in Table 4, however, the

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[4] A firefight was defined as any armed attack. Examples include soldiers firing their weapons, artillery firing, and bombs exploding in Baghdad.

[5] Although technically these categories are not mutually exclusive – the camera could capture a soldier getting shot, for instance – this was never the case in the period we studied.

dead were virtually never shown, especially on FNC where only about 2 percent of shots showed people killed in the war. Even more rare (only four shots in 200 hours of coverage) were pictures taken in close enough proximity or with an angle that allowed the audience to see the victim's face. Instead, the dead were seen at a distance, covered by a sheet, or through a surrogate (most commonly a coffin and very rarely anything as graphic as a pool of blood). Compare this, for example, to the haunting images of dead Confederate soldiers with their mouths agape and bodies bloated and stiff from rigamortis.

TABLES 3 AND 4 ABOUT HERE

Also of note: Although we did not code for it, a significant number of the civilian casualty visuals came from Arab-language media, as evidenced by the network logo or other signifying device in the screen. The vast majorities of these images were of people recovering from their wounds in Baghdad hospitals, but these did not approach the kind of lurid and lingering pictures one would have seen had they been watching the source network rather than the relatively sanitized images picked up by American broadcasters (Aday, Livingston and Hebert, 2004).

Embedded reporters might have been expected to show more visuals of Iraqi military and Coalition casualties than unilateral reporters (i.e., reporters independently trailing the American and British troops or reporting from Baghdad before the fall of Saddam Hussein) for the obvious reason that they were in closer proximity to them. In fact, however, they were about as likely to show shots of the dead, and unilaterals were more than three times as likely to show the wounded (Table 5). The latter is due primarily to the fact that stories about civilian casualties mostly originated in Baghdad. And again,

our impression is that most of these visuals were taken off Arabic-language media, not the result of independent newswork by the American networks.

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Finally, not only did embedding, access to Baghdad, and a more laissez-faire policy of military censorship not lead to a more realistic portrait of war, neither did the advanced technology of satellite videophones. Despite the greater mobility and, theoretically, independence that this technology offered reporters, the ratio of firefight to casualty shots using these cameras was 89-11 (Table 6). Although our coding scheme did not allow us to quantify it, our impression was that satellite videophones were used mainly for reporter stand-ups, interviews with military personnel in the field or airbase, and much less even for shots of artillery fire or combat. In addition to the impression given by reporters' comments (and confirmed in our data) that journalistic norms and cultural standards discourage the airing of casualty coverage, the image transmitted using this technology is not clear, especially when trying to capture motion. Hence, more stationary uses like interviews and stand-ups look better.

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Following the Persian Gulf War the press came under considerable attack both from outside and inside its ranks for presenting a sanitized version of events to American audiences. Many, again outside and inside the media, blamed the Pentagon for its heavy handed policy of pre-censorship, the implication being that freed from their kennels the press would be aggressive and reliable watchdogs.

In 2003, the Pentagon loosened censorship restrictions and embedded reporters with coalition units at the front lines of the Iraq War. Yet the resulting imagery broadcast by American networks did not differ discernibly from that 12 years earlier. Television transformed a war with hundreds of coalition and tens of thousands of Iraqi civilian and military casualties into something closer to a defense contractor's training video: a lot of action, but no consequences, as if shells simply disappeared into the air and an invisible enemy magically ceased to exist.

That those shells end up tearing apart people is clear to anyone who gives it some thought, and certainly to the soldiers embroiled in the fighting. But more to the point, it is obvious to the reporters covering the war because they see it right in front of them. As CBS' John Roberts described of his experience embedded in Iraq:

> It was pretty horrible to see all those guys lying around. There was this one guy whose feet were facing me; he's lying out of the back, his feet were facing me, he was sort of spread-eagled on the ground. As I walked up, his body was in perfect shape, but when I got right up on top of him, his head was missing, like it had been removed. Then there was another guy whose head was blown into three pieces and part of his body had been ripped off by a shell (Katovsky and Carlson, 2003, p. 173).

Reading the accounts of reporters in Iraq, this was not an uncommon sight. And yet, as this study shows, they rarely turned on their camera and showed even a relatively less gruesome angle to their audiences. The proportion of firefight to casualty images was overwhelmingly in favor of the former, and the dead were rarely shown at all, even by reporters embedded on the front lines who saw hundreds if not thousands of corpses. As Walt Whitman wrote of the Civil War, "The real war will never get in the books."

Indeed, a great irony can be found in comparing the defining images from the Persian Gulf and Iraq wars – the smart bomb hitting its target in the former and artillery

firing in the latter: The dominant image of war actually became *more* distanced in Iraq as reporters got closer to the front.

Critics of past war coverage, especially in the Gulf War, worry that such a sanitized portrait dehumanizes an enemy and its citizenry, helps perpetuate (or, if one is so inclined, manufacture) consent for war and any policies an administration might try and link to it, and risks numbing the moral revulsion that leads societies to see war as a last resort. When Roberts saw the broken bodies of the Iraqi soldiers described above, his reaction was compassion: "I said to myself, 'Gosh, this is tragic. These poor people,' regardless of the fact that they're enemy soldiers. You have to have some sort of human pity for them" (Katovsky and Carlson, 2003, p. 174). Pity does not, of course, have to lead a journalist to stop doing their job objectively, or even to change their personal opinion on the validity of the war. As Savidge commented,

> You have to realize that people die in war. I'm not saying all wars are bad.
> I am saying all wars are awful. There is no such thing as a pleasant war.
> I've been in enough of them to know that. War can be justified. There
> could be reasons why, as a last resort, you go to war. You must know that
> once it starts, it's a horrible, terrible thing. People die gruesome, terrible
> deaths. But in America we'll edit that down. Especially anything that deals
> with U.S. service personnel" (Katovsky and Carlson, p. 277).

What is remarkable given the data presented in this study is that war correspondents think this way precisely *because* they have seen the gruesome reality of war, and yet they, or at least their network superiors (themselves often veteran reporters), insist on shielding audiences from that same knowledge.

Reporters – and policymakers – have typically justified this self-censorship by arguing that viewers would be repelled by a more accurate portrait of war. Presumably, the fear here is at one level a commercial one: they might lose their audience to a network

presenting a more upbeat story. And indeed, there is research suggesting that they may be right (Oliver, Mares, and Cantor, 1993). There is also the perception that such imagery might damage public support for a just war, that Americans don't have the stomach for casualties. Although these are considered part of conventional wisdom, in fact they are testable hypotheses that scholars should spend more time exploring.

Also worth investigating further is the role of new technologies in press-government relations. Bennett and Livingston (2003) have shown that contrary to what one might expect, the dominance of news norms privileging official sources overwhelms the potential of these new technologies to create a more independent press in international coverage. Cameras may be mobile, but the news it seems is still tethered to bureaucrats and policymakers.

Finally, it is interesting to note that in the time since the birth of realistic visual media in the form of photography, American popular images of war have become less, not more, authentic. For all the posing and aesthetic manipulations of the dead in photographs of the Civil War, the fact remains that people were able to see contemporary pictures of the true cost of war. Historian John Keegan (1976) makes the point that the paradox of modern warfare is that as Western society has become more humane – mostly banning the death penalty, making remarkable advances in medicine and healing, and expressing great concern for the sick and dying – it has simultaneously become increasingly innovative in devising weaponry that destroys human beings in progressively more creative ways. He might have added that this societal cognitive dissonance – or hypocrisy, in his words – is amplified through the images of war we see on television.

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Tables

Table 1: Total Shots of Casualties and Firefights, All Networks

Shots Containing Imagery of Casualty (N=5087)	Shots Containing Imagery of Firefights (N=5087)
15% (N=763)	85% (N=4323)

Table 2: Ratio of Casualty/Firefight Shots by Network

	ABC (N=596)	CNN (N=2126)	FNC (N=2365)	Total (N=5087)
Casualty	22% (N=134)	18% (N=386)	10% (N=243)	15% (N=763)
Firefight	77% (N=459)	82% (N=1741)	90% (N=2123)	85% (N=4323)

Table 3: Percentage of Shots Showing Different Types of Casualty By Network

	ABC (N=596)	CNN (N=2126)	FNC (N=2365)	Total (N=5087)
Civilian	8.4% (N=50)	10% (N=212)	5.5% (N=131)	7.7% (N=393)
Iraqi	1.2% (N=7)	1.9% (N=41)	0.2% (N=5)	1% (N=53)
Coalition	12.6% (N=75)	6.1% (N=130)	4.4% (N=104)	6.1% (N=309

Table 4: Type of Gore Visual By Network

	ABC (N=596)	CNN (N=2126)	FNC (N=2365)	TOTAL (N=5087)
Dead Bodies, Faces Not Visible	4.9% (N=29)	5.2% (N=110)	1.9% (N=45)	3.6% (N=184)
Dead Bodies, Faces Shown			.2% (N=4)	.1% (N=4)
Wounded	17.6% (N=105)	13% (N=276)	8% (N=190)	11.2 % (N=571)

Table 5: Type of Gore Visual, Embed vs. Unilateral Reporter

	Embed (N=1250)	Unilateral (N=788)
Dead Bodies, Faces Not Visible	4.7% (N=59)	4.3% (N=34)
Dead Bodies, Faces Shown	.3% (N=4)	
Wounded	5.8% (N=72)	20.5% (N=161)

Table 6: Shots of Firefight and Casualties Using Satellite Videophones

	Videophone (N=838)
Firefight	89% (N=748)
Casualty	11% (N=90)