MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?
Framing of the Iraq War in the Elite Newspapers in Sweden and the United States

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Abstract / This study investigates the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in the elite newspapers in Sweden and the US, *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times*. The content analysis revealed significant differences between the two papers: the military conflict frame was more common for the US war coverage while the responsibility and anti-war protest frames were more common for the Swedish war coverage. Both newspapers offered human interest stories and media self-references. The US newspaper, however, relied more heavily on official government and military sources. In addition, the tone of war coverage differed across the two nations, with Swedish reporting being more negative overall. Implications of the differences in war coverage as well as possible reasons rooted in the national media and political systems are discussed.

Keywords / cross-cultural framing of conflict / Iraq War coverage / news framing

Introduction

The 2003 Iraq War significantly impacted politicians, citizens and the media around the world. In contrast to the 1990–1 Gulf War, this time world opinion about the war was heavily divided (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2004). Even though the US managed to create a 'Coalition of the Willing', totaling 48 countries at the start, the UN Security Council was divided, and the only major countries from the European Union that joined the coalition were Great Britain, Italy and Spain (White House, 2003). Both France and Germany, as well as Russia and China, opposed the war. According to these and other countries, the weapons inspectors headed by Hans Blix should have been given more time to do their job and war should have been the last resort. Furthermore, since the 'Coalition of the Willing' could not base their actions on a resolution from the Security Council, going to war against Iraq violated international law according to the countries opposed to war. Even though most countries could agree on the goal of finding and destroying weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), they were divided as to the means of reaching that goal.

World opinion about the war was clearly divided. But even within most countries, there were sharp divisions between those in favor of and those opposing either the war itself or the position of their own country. These

divisions could be observed both among citizens in general and within the political elite.

Differences in public opinion presented the media in different countries with a special challenge. Of course, covering a war is always a challenge for journalists trying to present as truthful and impartial accounts of events as possible, due to, for example, lack of access to battle zones, propaganda efforts of all parties involved in a war and money and time pressures (Hallin, 1986; Knightley, 2001; Nord and Strömbäck, 2004; Tumber and Palmer, 2004). When opinion is divided – both within and among countries – the media also face challenges in deciding to what extent they should report about divisions in public opinion and let these divisions be reflected in the coverage of the war. Should they, following Bennett's (2003b, 2004) 'indexing' theory, index their coverage to the range of views expressed by world opinion, elite opinion within a country, or popular opinion among citizens in general within a country?

As the 2003 Iraq War was such an important international event, it is not surprising that several studies about media coverage of the war have been published (e.g. Dimitrova et al., 2005; Nord et al., 2003; Pfau et al., 2004; Tumber and Palmer, 2004). However, there is a noticeable lack of studies comparing how media in different countries covered the war. That is unfortunate because comparative studies more than single-nation studies have the potential to provide an antidote to naive universalism, to enhance the understanding of one's own country by placing its familiar characteristics against those of other systems, and to cast more light on questions concerning the way media coverage is affected by the positions of the political elite within countries (Esser and Pfetsch, 2004; Gurevitch and Blumler, 2004; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Rössler, 2004).

In an attempt to fill this gap in comparative media studies of the war in Iraq, and to enhance our understanding of how media coverage is influenced by semi-structural characteristics such as the positions of the political elite and the degree of involvement in the war, this study compares the coverage of the 2003 Iraq War in two different countries: Sweden and the USA. Using a systematic content analysis of the leading newspapers in both countries – *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times* – the study reveals some significant differences in the way the war was portrayed to the Swedish and American public. Possible reasons for the differences in coverage are discussed, including differences in the media system/journalistic norms and differences in the political system/foreign policy stances.

Theoretical Background

In doing comparative studies of different countries or other entities, there are basically two different approaches one can follow in choosing cases to compare (Pfetsch and Esser, 2004: 9; Wirth and Kolb, 2004: 97–8). One is the *most similar systems design* and the other is the *most different systems design*. Studies based on the former approach make it possible to study differences that exist in systems that otherwise are very similar; that is, the approach stresses cultural differences. Studies based on the latter approach try to unearth similarities in

the systems that differ the most; that is, the approach stresses intercultural similarities.

This study follows the most different systems design. The basic reason is that we are interested in the degree to which the media coverage reflects the positions of the political elite regarding the war in Iraq in 2003. A precondition for doing that is including countries with different positions regarding the war. Furthermore, this study should be viewed as an exploratory study within the framework of a larger research project concerning the 'Americanization' of media and politics.

Building upon the most different systems design, this study compares the media coverage of the war in Iraq in the US and Sweden. The reasons for including the US are rather obvious, since the US was leading the 'Coalition of the Willing' against Iraq. In searching for the most different country, we decided to include Sweden. As noted by Åsard and Bennett (1997: x):

> These countries are very different in terms of size, party and election systems, communication institutions, interest processes, and political cultures – particularly in traditional citizen expectations about the nature and responsibilities of government.

Differences between the US and Sweden can be found at almost every analytical level. These two countries differ when it comes to, for example, the political system, the media system, journalistic norms and values and the position toward the 2003 Iraq War. Furthermore, whereas the US is the prototypical example of what Hallin and Mancini (2004) characterize as the 'Liberal Model' of media and politics, Sweden is a prototypical example of what they characterize as the 'Democratic Corporatist Model'. Admittedly, it would be possible to find countries that are even more different from the US, for example Somalia, but it is important that both countries studied share basic characteristics such as being economically and democratically developed countries. That is, the most different systems design is applied within the framework of advanced (post)industrial democracies.

Differences between the US and Sweden

This section presents a brief comparison between the political and media systems in Sweden and the US. Regarding the political system, the US is a federal state with both a Senate – representing the states – and a House of Representatives – representing the citizens – whereas Sweden is a unitary state with only one chamber of parliament. The US has a presidential system whereas Sweden has a parliamentary system. The party system and the patterns of electoral competition also differ significantly. In the US, people choose between candidates rather than parties, and there are only two major parties with, comparatively speaking, weak party organizations (Graber, 1997). The media have to a large extent replaced the parties as vehicles of communication between the electorate and their representatives, both between and during election campaigns (Patterson, 1993). In contrast, Sweden has seven parties represented in parliament, and even though they have all lost members over the last 10–15 years, the parties as organizations are still considered strong (Bäck and Möller,

2001; Nord and Strömbäck, 2003a; Petersson et al., 2000). One reason is that the electorate votes for party lists, even though they can also express preference for a certain candidate. The party discipline within parliament is usually very strong, and no individual politician can survive politically without the support of the party in question. Voter turnout in the last national election in Sweden was 80 percent, whereas voter turnout in the US presidential election in 2000 was 51 percent (Federal Election Commission, 2000).

Regarding the media system, the US has a highly commercialized media system. The public service part of the media is limited, and commercial broadcast companies and newspapers dominate the media landscape (Bennett, 2003b; Croteau and Hoynes, 2001; Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Thus, the media in the US, according to McManus (1994), are 'market-driven', in the sense that the 'market model' dominates over the 'public sphere model' (Croteau and Hoynes, 2001). Sweden, in contrast, still has a strong public service broadcast sector, and its media system can be characterized as a 'dual system' of commercial and public service media (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2001; Jönsson, 2004; Nord and Strömbäck, 2003b). The television audience share of public service media in Sweden was 44 percent in 2000, whereas it was 2 percent in the US (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 42).

There are significant differences in media consumption as well. In Sweden, the newspaper sales per 1000 adult citizens are 541.1 compared with a more than 50 percent lower circulation in the US, or 263.6 per 1000 (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 23). According to 2002 Nielsen data, US citizens watch television 4.4 hours per day (Media InfoCenter, 2004) compared with the approximately two hours per day that Swedish citizens watch television (Mediebarometer, 2003).

Another important difference between the US and Sweden concerns the degree of what Hallin and Mancini call 'political parallelism': that is, the degree to which media content reflects distinct political orientations in their news and current affairs reporting (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 28–30). Historically speaking, Sweden has had a strong party press, and even though the party press has mostly disappeared when it comes to the news and current affairs reporting, it still exists on the editorial pages. Some newspapers are still owned by political parties or foundations close to political parties (Hadenius and Weibull, 2003; Nord, 2001). In the national press, external (diversity through different media presenting different viewpoints) and internal pluralism (diversity in viewpoints achieved within each individual medium) go hand in hand. That is, Sweden is characterized by a medium degree of political parallelism. The US, on the other hand, is characterized by a low degree of political parallelism, and by internal rather than external pluralism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 67–8, 299). At the same time, state intervention in the media system is more extensive in Sweden than in the US, as exemplified by the public service broadcast media and press subsidies to second-tier (mostly local) newspapers (Hadenius and Weibull, 2003; Nord, 2001).

These and other differences have consequences regarding the journalistic norms and values. In both countries, journalists are highly professionalized, and both countries have systems for self-regulation rather than being regulated by the state. However, the system of media self-regulation is institutionalized in

Sweden whereas it is non-institutionalized in the US (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). News journalists in both countries adhere to the norm of being objective, even though the term 'journalistic objectivity' is often replaced by terms such as 'impartial', 'fair' or 'non-partisan'. However, as shown by Donsbach and Patterson (2004), there are some correlations between the journalists' partisan beliefs and their organizational affiliation in the Swedish case, but none in the US case. There are also differences when it comes to the job motivations of journalists in the US and Sweden. Among Swedish journalists, 36 percent say that it is important for them to champion certain values and ideas, and 48 percent say that it is important to influence politics, whereas the corresponding figures for American journalists are 21 and 43 percent. On a neutral–active dimension, Swedish journalists (especially broadcast journalists) are more active than US journalists. On a neutral-advocate dimension, Swedish journalists (especially broadcast journalists) also tend to see themselves as advocates more so than their US colleagues (Donsbach and Patterson, 2004).

It is also important to note that Swedish and US journalists have different understandings of the term 'objectivity' (Patterson, 1998: 22). According to a majority – 58 percent – of Swedish journalists, objectivity means 'going beyond the statements of the contending sides to the hard facts of a political dispute'. That perception arguably fosters a rather activist view of their moral obligations as journalists, since it gives the journalists the right to decide what the 'hard facts' are. Among American journalists, 28 percent adhere to the same perception of journalistic objectivity. The understanding most favored among American journalists focuses on 'Expressing fairly the position of each side in a political dispute' (Patterson, 1998: 22). That understanding might lead to the consequence that US journalists become more dependent on their official sources, and that, when no dispute is perceived, they let the official sources set the media agenda.

In fact, this consequence has been documented by Hallin, for example, in his study of the coverage of the war in Vietnam (Hallin, 1986). It is also at the heart of Bennett's theory and research about 'indexing'. According to Bennett, US media tend to 'index' their reporting to the views of the political elite and other official sources (Bennett, 2003b, 2004). When there is consensus among the elite sources, the likelihood that journalists will investigate an issue and push for answers is rather low, with the result that the media agenda is set by government officials rather than by journalists or editors (Bennett, 2003b, 2004; Entman, 2004; Hallin, 1986; Schudson, 2003).

In the Swedish case, the rather limited previous research has not resulted in any consensus as to who sets the media agenda (e.g. Palm, 2002; Sahlstrand, 2000; Strömbäck, 2004). The most recent research, however, supports the view that whereas the political sources have some power over the media agenda, at least during an election campaign, it is the journalists who tend to have most power over the media framing of issues and actors (Nord and Strömbäck, 2003a).

Turning from the political and media systems in the US and Sweden to the war in Iraq, these two countries certainly took different foreign policy positions. The US was the country that pushed for war and led the so-called 'Coalition

of the Willing' with Great Britain as the most important ally. And even though
the war received some opposition within the US, a majority of the Congress
supported President Bush's decision to go to war. There was more vocal oppo-
sition against military action in Iraq prior to 2003 and before an alleged link
between Saddam Hussein and possession of WMDs was made (Entman, 2004).

In Sweden, five of the seven parties in parliament, representing more than
70 percent of the vote in the latest national election in 2002, were more or less
critical of the US decision to go to war, and they all claimed that it was a vio-
lation of international law. The support that the US received from the remain-
ing two parties (Folkpartiet and Moderaterna) was not particularly strong, but
these parties differed from the other parties in that they did not argue that the
war was a violation of international law. As for the public opinion, the first poll
taken after President Bush had declared that the US would attack Iraq if
Saddam Hussein did not step down from power showed that 81 percent of the
Swedish adult population was against or partly against the war, while only 17
percent were in favor or partly in favor of the war (*Dagens Nyheter*, 21 March
2003).

To sum up, within the realm of advanced (post)industrial democracies,
the US and Sweden can be considered *most different cases* when it comes to the
political system, the media system, journalistic norms and values, as well as
the positions taken regarding the war in Iraq. The essential differences are high-
lighted in Table 1. These differences can be expected to have produced differ-
ent framings of the 2003 Iraq War in the Swedish and US press.

Framing

While the concept of framing in mass communication research is not new, there
is no one universally accepted definition of framing (see, for example, D'Angelo,
2002; Reese et al., 2001). Part of the challenge with defining news frames is
their intangible nature; another challenge stems from the fact that frames have
been discussed not only as part of media coverage but also as part of people's
cognitive schemas (Entman, 2004). Broadly defined, framing refers to the ways
in which mass media organize and present issues and events. Scheufele (1999),
in one of the most comprehensive typologies of framing, explains that there are
four types of framing research: studying frames as either (1) dependent vari-
ables or (2) independent variables; and studying (3) individual frames as
opposed to (4) media frames. Individual frames are sometimes described as
mental schemas, heuristics or scripts (Entman, 2004). They help an individual
perceive, interpret and discuss public events. Media frames, on the other hand,
are contained in journalistic stories across different media (e.g. print, television
or Internet).

In this study, we are interested in examining the media frames in the news-
paper coverage of the 2003 Iraq War while we position the framing of the war
in the context of the political and media environment in Sweden and the US.

According to Entman's popular definition of media framing, to frame means
'to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a
communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition,

TABLE 1

Differences between Sweden and the US

Characteristics	Sweden	USA
Political system	Unitary state with parliamentary system and proportional representation, seven political parties with strong organizations, high voter turnout.	Presidential, bi-cameral and federal system, two political parties with weak organizations, low voter turnout.
Media system	High circulation of newspaper readership, relatively low level of television viewing, dual public–private broadcasting system, private newspaper business, moderate competitive media, medium degree of political parallelism.	Relatively low circulation of newspaper readership, high level of television viewing, predominantly commercial media in both broadcasting and the newspaper business, highly competitive media, low degree of political parallelism.
Journalistic norms and values	Non-partisan, objectivity in the sense of getting the hard facts of a dispute.	Non-partisan, objectivity in the sense of being impartial, indexing theory.
Position on the war against Iraq	Anti-war; considered the war as violation of international law.	Pro-war, leading the 'Coalition of the Willing' against Iraq.

causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation'
(Entman, 1993: 52). The first part of Entman's definition concerns the salience
of issues – not only presence or absence, but also emphasis on one aspect at the
expense of others. Thus, framing resembles agenda-setting theory. However, the
second part of the definition distinguishes it from agenda-setting. The subtlety
of framing is in the way it can construct reality, impact interpretations and
influence audience responses and opinions toward a particular event after the
event enters the public agenda. In other words, framing affects the perceptions
of the event, not just its salience.

Framing is influenced by the national context in which journalists operate.
Research has shown that, in the coverage of international events, journalists
tend to 'localize' the same news story by targeting a specific national audience.
Clausen (2003), for example, studied the news communication strategies
regarding the coverage of the September 11 attacks around the world. She
found that journalists in different countries selected different elements in their
reporting in order to fit in the local cultural framework (Clausen, 2003).
Researchers have also found that media frames that are consistent with indi-
vidual schemas tend to have a stronger impact on the audience (Shen, 2004).

Multiple factors contribute to the selection of media frames, including journalistic norms and routines, individual schemas of reporters, and political ideology (Reese et al., 2001). Some scholars see framing as intentional while others argue that it is a subconscious process (D'Angelo, 2002). Regardless of the approach, framing researchers agree that the national political elite impacts media framing. In his most recent book, *Projections of Power*, Entman (2004) developed a 'cascading network activation' model, in which the administration, other elite, the media as well as the public contribute to the development of news frames. These four entities affect how the news media frame events, with the administration/president being more influential than Congress/other elite, for instance. Entman argues that 'what passes through the levels of the cascade is not comprehensive understanding but highlights packaged into selective, framed communications' (Entman, 2004: 12). He also posits that culturally congruent news frames are most influential on public opinion, and that they tend to employ 'words and images highly salient in the culture, which is to say *noticeable, understandable* and *emotionally charged*' (Entman, 2004: 6; emphasis in original). Following this argument, we can expect that journalists in Sweden and the US would employ frames congruent with the political environment in the respective country. We also expect that these 'selective, framed communications' about the Iraq war will vary significantly in tone, framing and use of sources across Swedish and US newspapers.

Media Coverage of War

In the age of globalization and advanced communication technologies, what happens in a remote part of the world can quickly reach the local media. Journalists, in theory, have access to more information resources than before to cover international stories and conflict events, such as wars. While in the past it would take five days for the film from Vietnam's war zone to reach the American public, today journalists have instantaneous access to war zones through satellite telephones and web cameras. But there seems to be continuity in the relationship between the media and the government/political elite during times of crisis, as reflected by the news coverage of international conflicts. During the Vietnam War, television brought the brutality of war into the living room of Americans for the first time. But the news media seemed to be tied closely to the official perspectives on the war (Hallin, 1986). Anecdotal beliefs contend that negative television coverage perhaps contributed to the increasing public sentiment against the Vietnam War. Research has shown, however, that this was hardly the case. Television reporting, especially during the early part of the war, was 'upbeat', focused on 'American boys in action' stories, rarely showed images of dead or wounded soldiers, and relied heavily on official government and military sources (Hallin, 1986). These types of stories lead to a 'sanitized' image of war. In the next living room war, the Gulf War of 1991, the images of war in the American media became even more sanitized and the lack of human cost of war was even more striking.

The fact that US media tend to follow closely government and military sources can lead to different framing of similar events. The coverage of two

similar air incidents in the US media – the 1983 Korean Airlines Flight 007 destruction by a Soviet fighter pilot and the 1988 Iran Air Flight 655 downing by a US ship – indicated differences in framing, which were closely related to the official line of the US administration (Entman, 2004).

In more recent military conflicts, scholars have found that national media differed significantly in the framing of the same event. For example, in a study of the NATO air strikes in former Yugoslavia, Yang (2003) found that the air strikes were framed as 'humanitarian aid' for the Kosovo Albanians in the mainstream US media while the top two Chinese newspapers framed the event as an 'intervention' against Yugoslavia's sovereignty. The study concluded that government policy and national political interest exerted considerable influence on media coverage (Yang, 2003). Similar findings were reported in studies of the 1991 Gulf War, also referred to as Gulf War I, Operation Desert Storm, and sometimes framed as the 'sterile war' of 'surgical strikes'. For example, Topoushian (2002) examined the news coverage of the 1991 Gulf War in two Arab and two North American newspapers and found that the realities of war were constructed differently for the Arab audience, in ways that seemed to reflect the country's political involvement in the Persian Gulf. Ryan (2004) analyzed editorials in the 10 largest US newspapers after the September 11 attacks and found that the authors had created a singular narrative of the 'war on terror', justifying the bombing of Afghanistan as the proper response to September 11 terrorist attacks. The framing in the editorials, again, reflected the official government line.

Lance Bennett (2003a) observed that the US press exhibited high levels of complicity with the government in regard to the 2003 Iraq War, discussing 10 factors that 'created a perfect propaganda storm' in US media. Notably, the US media ignored the world opposition to the war in a generally ethnocentric and patriotic storytelling (Bennett, 2003a). Dimitrova et al. (2005) offer one of the few comparative studies of the coverage of the 2003 Iraq War. They found significant differences in war framing between US and international news websites. Foreign sites were more likely to include the responsibility frame, for instance, while the American sites were more likely to focus on military conflict (Dimitrova et al., 2005). In addition, US news reporters included more media self-references than foreign journalists. This analysis, however, was limited to the immediate (first night) coverage of the war. The present study explores differences in war framing during the official war period in two countries, using the *most different cases* design.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

We formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The tone of war coverage will be more negative in Swedish newspapers than in US newspapers.

Hypothesis 2: The framing of the war will differ significantly between Swedish and US newspapers.

Hypothesis 3: There will be less reliance on official sources in Swedish newspapers than in US newspapers.

And we also ask the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Can the differences/similarities in news framing of the 2003 Iraq War be explained by factors related to the positions of the leading political actors in the US and Sweden?

Research Question 2: Can the differences/similarities in news framing of the 2003 Iraq War be explained by factors related to the journalistic norms and values in the US and Sweden?

Method and Data

This study utilizes quantitative content analysis, focusing on the elite newspapers in Sweden and the US – *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times*, respectively. The two newspapers were selected because they are considered the elite newspaper in each country, and often regarded as agenda-setters for other national media, particularly for international news.

On 19 March 2003, as the US ultimatum to Saddam Hussein expired, the American president addressed the nation with the announcement that Coalition forces had attacked Iraq in order to capture a 'target of opportunity'. This study focuses on the *official war period* – 20 March 2003–1 May 2003, when the end of major military operations in Iraq was announced by the US president. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine the news coverage after the official end of 'major combat operations'.

The unit of analysis was the individual news article. The selection of news stories was achieved using online databases that archive articles from the national media. The LexisNexis database was used to retrieve the American news articles from *The New York Times*. In Sweden, a similar database, Presstext, was utilized to collect the articles from *Dagens Nyheter*. The following key words were used in both databases: 'Iraq' and 'war' if both terms appear in the headline, abstract or lead paragraph of the article. These key terms ensured that the major focus of the story would be the war. Only news articles were selected for the analysis. Editorials, opinion pieces, correction notes, etc. were excluded, as were articles shorter than 160 words. Based on these criteria, we retrieved a total of 172 articles from *Dagens Nyheter* and 1417 articles from *The New York Times*.[1] In order to make the number of articles from both countries comparable, we sampled every sixth article from the elite American newspaper, which resulted in a sample of 236 news articles. Thus, a total of 408 articles from both newspapers were saved for further analysis.

Two coders were trained independently on the coding instrument. The initial training required revision of some of the variables and adding more categories to other variables. After careful revision of all definitions, one coder (native speaker) coded the Swedish sample while another coder was responsible for coding the US sample. Ten percent of the US articles were randomly selected to measure intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability was calculated using simple agreement (Holsti's formula)[2] and established at 0.88 for all categories. Special precautions were taken to ensure the validity of this cross-cultural content analysis, following Peter and Lauf's (2002) guidelines. Examination of the data did not show any unusual distribution of the variables.

The categories of this content analysis were designed to capture both objective characteristics of the articles (e.g. date of publication) and more subjective characteristics (e.g. presence of various frames). The coding categories included specific mentions of political leaders, groups or countries in the news coverage. In addition, type of sources cited (government official, military personnel, individual, journalist, terrorist group member) were also examined. A special category for the use of anonymous sources was added. We were also interested in the tone of the war coverage. Following Dimitrova et al.'s (2005) method, dominant story tone was defined as pro-war (positive toward US position on the war); anti-war (negative toward US position on the war); or neutral (neither clearly supportive of the war nor opposing the war). Finally, several war-specific frames were developed and coded on a presence/absence basis.

The specific frames included in the content analysis were: military conflict frame (emphasis is on the military conflict or military action, focusing on troops, equipment, etc.); human interest frame (emphasis on the human participants in the event, with more 'soft news' focus on the plight of involved parties); responsibility frame (emphasis is on the party/person responsible for the event); diagnostic frame (broader discussion of what caused the event); prognostic frame (broader discussion of the possible consequences of the event); violence of war frame (focus on the destruction caused by war, including statements about the aftermath of bombing and injury/casualty totals); anti-war protest (emphasis is on existing opposition to the war, with war protestors or demonstrations against the war either in the US or Sweden or abroad); and media self-referential frame (emphasis is on the media, the journalists themselves and their involvement in the war).

Each frame was coded on a presence/absence basis per news article. For the purposes of this study, a frame was defined as a central organizing theme in the news story and operationalized by the presence of certain syntactical structures (word choices), script structures (evaluation and interpretation of the unfolding event), thematic structures (multilayer subtopics), and rhetorical devices (metaphors and catchphrases) (Pan and Kosicki, 1993). For example, the prognostic frame involved broader discussion of the possible consequences of the event; it was expected that such discussion would be missing in the early coverage and emerge once the end of the war is close; the news story would emphasize the outcome of the event; this frame could be manifested by either political, economic or social consequences; discussion about future Iraqi government or economic rebuilding of Iraq after the war would be examples of this frame. It was possible to have more than one frame in the coverage of the Iraq War in the same article. The two coders were presented with specific examples of each frame.

Results

Following the procedures outlined in the preceding section, a total of 408 articles from the *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times* were included in this content analysis. To test Hypothesis 1, that the tone of coverage in *Dagens Nyheter* would be more negative than the tone of coverage in *The New York Times*, chi-square comparisons were conducted. The results show support for

this hypothesis (χ^2 = 34.99, p = .000, d.f. = 2). While both newspapers had predominantly neutral stories – 83 percent of the Swedish articles and 89 percent of the US articles were neutral – the US newspaper had more positive stories (9 percent) than the Swedish newspaper (1 percent). Also, *Dagens Nyheter* had more negative stories (16 percent) that included anti-war statements than *The New York Times* (2 percent). These notable differences were statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be differences in the framing of the war across the two newspapers. The results show some differences as well as some similarities. As shown in Table 2, significant differences were observed across the military conflict, responsibility, anti-war protest and prognostic frames. However, both *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times* reported on the war using the human interest frame in 17 percent of their articles. The two papers did not differ in their use of the violence of war, media self-referential and diagnostic frame either. The diagnostic frame was quite rare across both papers. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is partially supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that there would be less reliance on official sources in the elite Swedish newspaper compared with the US paper. Chi-square comparisons show that that was indeed the case. *The New York Times* relied more frequently on official government (44 percent) and military sources (48 percent) than the *Dagens Nyheter* – 28 percent and 12 percent, respectively. These differences were statistically significant at the .001 level. Both newspapers rarely used journalists as sources: in only 5 percent of the Swedish articles and 10 percent of the US articles. These differences approached statistical significance (p = .097). Finally, interesting differences emerged in the frequency of use of anonymous sources. *The New York Times* cited unidentified sources in 78 percent of the articles while the *Dagens Nyheter* did so less frequently – in 54 percent of the articles (χ^2 = 26.20, p = .000, d.f. = 1).

TABLE 2

War Frames in *Dagens Nyheter* and *The New York Times*

Frame	Swedish Articles $N = 172$	US Articles $N = 236$	All Articles $N = 408$
Military conflict***	39 (23%)	101 (43%)	140 (34%)
Human interest	29 (17%)	39 (17%)	68 (17%)
Violence of war	32 (19%)	50 (21%)	82 (20%)
Anti-war protest***	40 (23%)	11 (5%)	51 (13%)
Media self-reference	10 (6%)	16 (7%)	26 (6%)
Responsibility frame***	55 (32%)	5 (2%)	60 (15%)
Diagnostic frame	6 (4%)	5 (2%)	11 (3%)
Prognostic frame*	43 (25%)	86 (37%)	129 (32%)

Numbers represent actual count of articles that include the respective frames with percentages in parentheses.

*, **, *** indicate statistically significant differences between Swedish and US articles at the .05, .01, and .001 level respectively, using chi-square comparisons.

We also examined whether particular frames were related to dominant tone or sources used. Statistically significant differences were found between articles that contained the military conflict frame and those that did not; specifically, stories that focused on military developments were more likely to be positive in tone (χ^2 = 11.10, p = .004, d.f. = 2). Further, stories containing the human interest frame also tended to be more positive than those that did not in both newspapers (χ^2 = 11.65, p = .003, d.f. = 2). Perhaps not surprisingly, stories that included the diagnostic and anti-war protest frames were more negative in tone.

In terms of sources, articles that contained the human interest frame were less likely to cite government officials (χ^2 = 5.05, p = .025, d.f. = 1). In contrast, stories with the prognostic frame used government sources more frequently (χ^2 = 12.85, d.f. = 1). Military sources were significantly more common for articles with the military conflict frame (χ^2 = 117.87, p = .000, d.f. = 1) and less common in articles with the prognostic frame (χ^2 = 14.51, p = .000, d.f. = 1). Military sources were cited more frequently in articles containing the violence of war frame (χ^2 = 29.22, p = .000, d.f. = 1) and less frequently in articles containing the anti-war protest frame (χ^2 = 11.29, p = .001, d.f. = 1). Another interesting finding was that individuals were cited frequently in conjunction with the human interest frame (χ^2 =17.71, p = .000, d.f. = 1) and less often when the military conflict frame was present (χ^2 = 23.60, p = .000, d.f. = 1). Journalists were more frequently cited in stories with media self-references (χ^2 = 26.29, p = .000, d.f. = 1). Finally, 84 percent of the stories that contained the military conflict frame also used anonymous sources compared with 59 percent of those stories that did not. The same pattern was evident for the violence of war frame and it was also statistically significant.

The research questions were formulated in order to explain possible similarities or differences in the news coverage of the Iraq War between the two countries. The first research question asked if such differences could be explained by political environment factors in Sweden and the US. It is possible to see the differences in the tone of coverage as related to the dominant political discourse in the country. Swedish foreign policy was clearly opposed to the war. Both opinion polls and political parties in Sweden expressed more negative views toward the war. The elite newspaper in Sweden contained more negative coverage of the war compared with the elite newspaper in the US, perhaps reflecting political opposition and support of the war respectively in each country.

Another possible reason for the relatively rare coverage of anti-war protest and responsibility issues in the elite American newspaper could be found in the political and media system. Since the president is commander in chief, there is a tradition of rallying behind the president during times of war. To criticize the president or the war during the war is likely to be viewed as unpatriotic and unsupportive of the US troops. Thus, after a war has begun, the issue tends to move into the 'sphere of consensus' (Hallin, 1986), with the consequence that established official sources critical to the war are relatively difficult to find. In a similar vein, in the US debate leading to the war in Iraq, broad consensus emerged regarding the responsibility for the war. Since Iraq was part of what

George W. Bush called the 'axis of evil', and the administration successfully argued that Iraq possessed WMDs and that the war against Iraq was part of the 'war on terror', the responsibility for the war was perceived as a non-issue. That is, the president and the administration managed to make the war in Iraq appear congruent with the 'war on terror'. And, as Entman writes, 'When an event or issue is clearly congruent in this way, it becomes relatively easy for presidents to frame it so that most participants think alike' (Entman, 2004: 148).

This has relevance for the second research question, which asked whether the similarities or differences in the framing of the war in Iraq could be explained by the journalistic norms and values in Sweden and the US. It seems that the tradition of 'objectivity' and 'balanced viewpoints', which is more common for the American model, was reflected in the predominantly neutral reporting by *The New York Times*. In addition, and also in keeping with the journalistic tradition of the US, the American coverage exhibited heavier reliance on official sources, both from the government and the military. It seems that the war reporting in the elite American newspaper closely followed the official government agenda. Thus, the anti-war protest and responsibility frames were less frequent in the coverage of *The New York Times* than in *Dagens Nyheter*.

The similarities in framing – in particular the frequency of use of the human interest and media self-referential frames in both papers – may be a reflection of the general trend toward soft news and Americanization of journalism. While the 'American boys at war' themes were expected for the US media, it was somewhat surprising to find that human interest framing was so prevalent in the Swedish press. However, whereas the human interest frames in *The New York Times* mostly focused on American participants in the war, in *Dagens Nyheter* they mostly focused on Iraqi civilians and how they were affected by the war and its consequences, e.g. the lack of water or the lack of physical security. Perhaps this personalization of the war can be seen in the broader context of making news more personal and accessible for the audience.

Conclusions

'The first casualty, when war comes, is truth', said US Senator Hiram Johnson about the First World War (Berrigan, 2001). While 'truth' is an abstract concept subject to much debate by academics all over the world, it is important to examine how war reality was constructed for different national audiences. Our results show that *The New York Times* focused more on military conflict issues, 'scoreboard' developments and war strategies designed to ensure 'victory' in Iraq. Put another way, 'the coverage was dominated by episodic battle coverage, which, while certainly being the most important daily story, ended up crowding out other important aspects of the war' (Aday et al., 2005: 18). The *Dagens Nyheter*, in contrast, was more likely to report on anti-war protests around the world and discuss responsibility issues, which were quite rare in the US coverage. Only a fraction of the articles from *The New York Times* addressed the broader issues of responsibility for the war. Responsibility as well as the anti-war protest frame was addressed more frequently in the Swedish paper.

Framing theory examines the ways in which news media organize reality. By selecting some aspects of war reality – such as military success – and ignoring other aspects – such as anti-war protest – the media text constrains audience interpretations. This is especially important in the case of international conflict where national media may engender different interpretations for the national audience. As a result, the public in one country may acquire quite different beliefs and attitudes toward the event compared with the public in another country exposed to different media coverage. Perhaps it is feasible that readers who do not see much reporting about war protests and war victims may become more inclined to support war efforts. Those who perceive war as a military success may be more supportive of it in the end.

The media thus seem to 'blind' the audience to alternative interpretations of events and imply national consensus on issues by not offering opposing views. In theoretical terms, this means that one-sided coverage might function as 'consensus heuristic', which means that information regarding a certain issue may function as a clue to which viewpoints are valid or acceptable. As explained by Mutz (1998: 210): 'When media emphasize who or which side of an issue or controversy is ahead or behind, they may inadvertently cue the consensus heuristic, thus altering attitudes toward a candidate or issue.' By doing this, the media might also trigger a 'spiral of silence' (Noelle-Neumann, 1984), deliberately or not.

Our study shows empirical evidence that there were differences in tone, war framing and use of sources in the 2003 Iraq War coverage between Sweden and the US. The possible consequences of such differences are that media coverage may reinforce or even increase divisions among world opinion about the war and the parties involved in the war. We also found some similarities in how the war was framed for the Swedish and American readers, particularly in the human interest and media self-reference frames. These similarities indicate consistency in news reporting patterns on an international scale. They may also suggest a trend toward Americanization of the journalism process.

D'Angelo (2002) pledges that it is necessary to use a multiparadigmatic approach to the study of frames and framing effects. While he criticizes that some framing studies remain mostly descriptive, focusing on the media text only, he also recognizes the 'complicated reality of news framing and the deeply practical research endeavor, characterized by different yet interconnected paradigmatic approaches, by which this reality has been gradually exposed' (D'Angelo, 2002: 880). This study is one albeit imperfect analysis presenting differences in how the reality of war was constructed for the Swedish and American audience.

The differences found here fit with the media systems framework developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) and support the Liberal Model represented by the US media and the Democratic Corporatist Model represented by Swedish media. In order to better understand the two different media models, future research comparing the framing of the 2003 Iraq War should include other media outlets. Future research should also compare the media coverage of other issues or events in Sweden and the US. Comparative research has the potential to improve our understanding of different media and political systems.

Ultimately, framing analysis helps scholars understand how public opinion is shaped by the news media. This study is one of the first attempts to explore the news coverage of the 2003 Iraq War in a cross-cultural context, using the most different cases approach to compare Sweden and the US. We showed that the elite newspapers in each country framed the war in different ways, favoring some aspects of the war and disregarding other aspects. Future studies should continue in this vein, exploring whether and how the war coverage changed after the 'mission accomplished' announcement by President Bush. As the war in Iraq still unfolds, alternative frames may be introduced by the national media.

Notes

1. In the Swedish case, the number of articles was far less than expected, compared to studies based on a manual selection of articles from *Dagens Nyheter* (Nord et al., 2003; Nord and Strömbäck, 2004). The reasons are probably rooted in limitations of the search function of the database in question. Nevertheless, the number of articles should ensure a representative sample of the coverage of the war in Iraq in *Dagens Nyheter*.
2. Holsti's intercoder reliability (IR) formula was used as follows: $IR = 2M/(N_1 + N_2)$, where M equals the number of agreements between the coders, N_1 is the total number of coding decisions made by Coder 1 and N_2 is the total number of coding decisions made by Coder 2.

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