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MEDIA AS TERRAIN / MÉDIAS COMME TERRAIN

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Abstract

Western culture has long accepted the mass media as the public's bona fide watchdog in national and international events. An innate understanding of that role and purpose of the media may not be accurate given there are no formal rules that guide reporters. Many of the public overlay their expectation of honest and unbiased reporting on reporters who have created stories and reporting for a completely different location in the world. To this day, many of the public believe that government exerts some control over what the media reports on to ensure safety and standards. This paper will examine the mass media and question if the media can, or should, be controlled, and if not, how do we mitigate against its intentional and unintentional effects and impacts? This question bears examination as the effects of mass media have direct impact on strategic goals. Shaping the effects of the media will minimize damage that may occur and help to clarify the public's understanding of issues. This paper will demonstrate that in today's hypermedia operational environment, the mass media becomes analogous to terrain when considered in the context of traditional military planning. To achieve strategic security goals states and military actors are constrained to develop new ways to mitigate the impact of the media.

This paper explores the phenomena of mass media and how governments and their militaries must consider and shape its effects to achieve a strategic advantage. The evolution and role of the media, and its relevancy, are explored along with the inherent bias of the media. These concepts will be followed by looking at methods to influence and possibly control messages coming from the mass media, and by options and suggestions to help offset the impact of mass media.

Introduction

Western culture has long accepted the mass media as the public's bona fide watchdog in national and international events. We all have an innate understanding of the media's role and purpose, a role that has been established since the Crimean War. The media has dutifully reported on the actions and activities of their military – normally in far away lands – by explaining the objectives and heroics of their country's troops in the conflict or activity, and they still do that today. In the last few decades the media has changed, through a mass media revolution, that now has news and information delivered through the contemporary methods of newspapers, radio and television, but is no longer limited to 'western' style reporting. The revolution of media, fully enabled by global communications, now includes views, opinions and editorials from around the world that originate with friend and foe alike, and appear in western media sources as if the story or view originated domestically. This explosion of information sources and delivery has a direct impact on military action by influencing public opinion and government actions unlike any time in the past. That innate understanding of role and purpose of the media may be problematic as there are no formal rules for the global mass media reporters to operate under.

Interestingly, too many of the public are willing to overlay their expectation of honest and unbiased reporting on reporters that have created stories for a completely different culture. To this day, many believe that government has some control over what the media reports to ensure safety even if the story does not originate with Western media or is created on the Internet. *Can, or should, the media be controlled, and if not, how do we mitigate against its intentional and unintentional effects and impacts?* Vice Admiral

Nichols, second-in-command of USCENTCOM, identifies the media as another variable within the battlespace. When questioned on how to best deal with the effects of the media, Nichols responded that the *media must be treated as terrain*. It is no different than a river flowing through the area, a mountain range, or a desert. It is there, will always be there, and needs to be included in the strategic plan. Like a river, mountain, or desert it cannot be directly controlled, nor ignored, but it is integral to the overall operation and must be mitigated as any piece of terrain would be.[1] This is a critical aspect, and requires examination as the effects of mass media have a direct impact on strategic goals. Shaping the effects of the mass media assists in minimizing any damage that may occur and helps clarify the public's understanding of issues.

Overall, this paper will demonstrate that in today's hypermedia operational environment, the mass media is akin to terrain of the traditional battleground, but is no longer contained by geography. To achieve their strategic security goals, states and military actors must work to develop new and enduring ways to mitigate the effect of media on strategic operations. The phenomenon of mass media can, and must, be considered and shaped to strategic advantage in a military conflict beyond what is presently done within Information Operations. In other words, the media should be used strategically for success over, or defeat of, the enemy; and it cannot be removed from the operational planning process. It has a strategic impact, it will always exist, and it must be treated as terrain – no different from a river, mountain range, or desert.

Demonstration of this thesis will be articulated using two main parts that address critical aspects regarding the mass media. The first part will look at the role of the mass media, its evolution and ethics. This paper will then look at the impact of propaganda,

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[1] AMSP 9 Field Study Exercise to USCENTCOM, 2 Nov 2006

illustrating how it has deliberate and incidental effects on public opinion and governments. The second part will start to look at shaping the complex environment within the strategic realm. Public trust of institutions will be explored, as well as the motivating factors that influence the media directly. Further, an exploration of methods used to exert influence and control will be covered. Lastly, a recommendation will be made on how the effects of mass media may be mitigated within the strategic and geo-political realm.

Part I: Understanding the Mass Media

This section will address the evolution of the media from the simple news story to today's hypermedia environment. Within the evolution of media, the concept of ethics and professionalism will be explored, as well as their impact over time. This section will also examine the changing role of media, and its relevance to military actions.

Mass media, also referred to as the mediasphere, is the modern, international news medium of television, radio, wire services, major newspapers and the Internet – all of which report regularly on foreign and military affairs. This descriptor excludes fictional media, advertising and entertainment.[2] The media, in all of its forms, has been integral to the public's understanding of their government and their military and the roles they play in expeditionary operations. In Antwerp, in 1605, the world's first newspaper, the *Nieuwe Tijdenghen*, became available. This eventually led, about fifty years later, to what would be recognized as a modern newspaper.[3] The media age was now upon the

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[2] Stephen Badsey, *Modern Military Operations And The Media.* (Camberley, Eng.: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1994), 5

[3] Stephen Badsey, *The Media and International Security* (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), xxi

world. Military activity found its way into local newspapers; first in articles, and soon evolved to include pictures and photographs.

When the reporters received their 'story,' they would dutifully report on it to their audiences. Many newspapers would add editorial views and opinions too. In World War II, most of the public got their war information from newspapers, and many saw visual news in the form of newsreels for the first time. These action shots were by no means instant and took days to reach the home front and the respective audiences. Many, if not most, of these short films found their way onto cinema screens and were shown prior to the main feature so as to provide the viewing public a report from overseas with minimal outside interpretation. During that conflict many of the reporters wore the uniforms of the country their news agencies were from, albeit they had distinct press markings. They were fully reliant upon the military for support to their news reporting efforts. In many cases the news reporting of the day could be seen as national support to the war effort.

As technology improved, so too did the timeliness of the story and the quality of pictures shown in the tabloids. When the Korea War started, the standard newsreels now began to find their way onto the black and white televisions that were appearing in homes throughout North America. Years later, as the Vietnam War unfolded, it quickly became the first fully televised war. Graphic details and daily body counts were shown to anyone who had the desire to watch the evening news. The tragic detail caused tremendous concern amongst the viewing population, and public support for the war soon started to collapse. As Võ Nguyên Giáp stated, *"The war unfolded on many fronts, the most*

important being that of American public opinion."[4] This fact was reinforced by the amount of media coverage that war received and the mountains of discussion that followed. Pundits around the world attempted to gauge the impact that reporting had on public opinion of the day.

The first Gulf War was similar to the Vietnam War with respect to the media, except during that conflict reporters were fully embedded into operational units that were engaged in battle. This was different than Vietnam where reporters were left to their own devices and wandered the battlefield without assistance. The first Gulf War was again similar to Vietnam in that it had a new reporting twist. This war had the Internet – an unrestricted method of carrying reports and observations – as a delivery vehicle for news to homes throughout the world almost instantly. Many stories of the conflict were transmitted via satellite connections, direct from the battlefield, and onto a waiting public's television or computer monitor within minutes of the event happening. Frequently the public had information sooner than commanders on the ground leading the battle efforts.[5] Technology now allowed news reporting faster than ever before.

Technology now permits news of military operations to be broadcast in real-time. This technology assisted broadcast reaches the public, allies, adversaries, and our own troops, and does not always originate with the main-stream media. However, modern weapon technology is able to bypass media coverage. During the first Gulf War the videotape from missile cameras went directly to peoples home without using the media as an intermediary. This was a throwback to the initial broadcast era in that the footage filmed on the battlefield went direct to the public, bypassing the media decision and

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[4] Dr Pierre Pahlavi, Deputy Chair, Department of Military Planning & Operations, Canadian Forces College, email to Col Gludo 4 April 2007.
[5] Stephen Badsey, *The Media and International Security …*, 120

presentation cycle.[6] This has now been offset and the media continues to decide what to show and when in this increasingly complex world.

Editorialising the story is essential in modern reporting. Many journalists work hard to frame a story within their respective media agencies beliefs and biases based on what they had reported so as to confirm their own previous predictions.[7] This confirmation is then a natural follow-up to earlier events and gives a sense of completeness to the audiences.

Society's Watchdog

This segment will explore the initial understanding of the media, and the purpose of the free press as it applied to reporting on affairs. As well, the evolution of the role of mass media will be looked at, and the following paragraphs will examine how the media lets the public know what is happening, what is being undertaken, and how the media facilitates the voice of those who may be opposed to government and military actions.

In the Western world the media has consistently found, and defended, itself as being thought of in the role of honest 'watchdog' for society at large. This role has come about through decades of essentially unbiased and balanced reporting, based on a standardized Western moral philosophy that most people in the free world accept as ethical journalism or the "free press."[8] That being said, the concept of freedom of the press has yet to consider the implications of reduced ownership of mass media outlets and the business of news.

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[6] Badsey, *Modern Military Operations And The Media*, 14
[7] Janne Tienari, Eero Vaara, and Marja-Liisa Kuronen, "Managing the Media." *European Business Forum* no. 25 (Summer, 2006), 49
[8] Elliot D. Cohen, *Journalism Ethics: A Reference Handbook.* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, c1997), 5

There has been a significant change in how the public receive their 'news.' In the 1960s there was a tremendous shift away from newspaper to television as the dominant news vehicle. This change created a completely different method of presenting the familiar news story along with film images. It was no longer an in-depth report; rather, television – with all of its limitations – now provided the majority of the public perception, or understanding, of most unfolding news stories.

The overarching need of mass media is to feed the machine of news to insatiable viewers, regardless of their ability to interact with the conflict as a whole or to understand the context of the activity. With the limited time to tell the detailed story on television, viewers are presented with a daily supply of suffering and victimization, of blood and death, all as a material to be consumed by the masses in short segments.[9] This modern method of reporting is not limited to Western media alone, and it is often reported similarly throughout the Arab region media as well. The Internet is not immune either, as its stories are usually limited to one single, short, snappy, and colourful page.

The mass media, ever-present today, has always been considered a weapon, and as T.E. Lawrence said, "[t]he printing press is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the modern commander. . . ."[10]; however, it is now seen to be relevant in a new dimension – that of the virtual battlespace. As Dr Pahlavi so succinctly explains, "This is even truer today than it was when Lawrence wrote it nearly a century ago—except that to be

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[9] Mohamed Zayani, *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives On New Arab Media*. (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 175

[10] T.E. Lawrence, "The Evolution of a Revolt," *Army Quarterly and Defense Journal* (October 1920). Reprinted by the Combat Studies Institute, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, with permission. On-line at http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/Lawrence/Lawrence.asp; Internet; accessed 24 April 2007.

effective today one requires not just a printing press, but radio and television programs and an Internet presence."[11]

Kenneth Payne believes that winning modern wars is as much dependent upon carrying domestic and international public opinion as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield, regardless of journalistic desire to provide impartial and balanced reporting.[12] In the Campaign against Terrorism, geography is now only one of the fronts of the conflict. This holds true for the media as well. While coalition troops fight insurgents, the mass media global cyberbattle is ongoing for the hearts and minds throughout the world.[13] Al Jazeera, an evolving powerhouse within Arabic media circles, is in the battle too and presents a different view of the news to its audience, but models their stories within a similar context of Western media. With Al Jazeera, viewers are presented with reporting, candid talk, debate and commentaries very different from its audiences' historical media reporting. Throughout the Arab world, Al Jazeera, valued for honesty and fairness in its reporting, is making headway beyond its initial borders and reaching out to the world.[14] Al Jazeera appears to be attracting viewers from the traditional Western media audiences as well, due to its depth of reporting and different spin on the same or similar story.[15]

A final aspect to consider in this new battlespace is the blogsphere. Anyone with access to a computer that is connected to the Internet can create a blog. In the simplest sense a blog, a shortened term for "Web Log," is a diary of events that is written by

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[11] Dr Pierre Pahlavi, Deputy Chair, Department of Military Planning & Operations, Canadian Forces College, email to Col Gludo 16 April 2007.
[12] Kenneth Payne, "The Media as an Instrument of War." *Parameters* 35, no. 1 (Spring, 2005): 81,
[13] Shaazka Beyerle, "The Middle East's e-War." *Foreign Policy* no. 131 (Jul/Aug, 2002): 90
[14] Zayani, *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon…*, 5
[15] Ibid, 8

regular citizens and transmitted through the World Wide Web. However, this simple

definition of a blog is not wholly accurate, nor commonly agreed to by viewers, as blogs

have a variety of goals, formats, frequency of updates and methods of presenting

information.[16] Blogs allow anyone to make their voice heard around the world (the

modern 'soapbox') and provide the ability to reach a huge audience. Blogs, as they

mature, are already having a decisive effect on public opinion. As Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan

in *The Emergence of Blogs As A Fifth Estate and Their Security Implications* states,

> "The potential and real influence of blogs on policy shaping, and the
> impact they have already had on numerous facets of international politics,
> including elections, media reporting from zones of conflict, and corporate
> and congressional policies, have led us to claim that blogs deserve the title
> of the "fifth estate."[17]

Thus, the true effect of blogs is just now being realized and their relevancy is starting to

be aligned to that of the standard media.

The mediasphere is a staple ingredient in today's society. The primary news

sources of television and radio are key for most adults; however, many more viewing

audiences are getting on-line to the Internet. This Internet access delivers a tremendously

varied world of news and opinion to anyone with the desire to 'click' on a link. Of those

adults who use the Internet, nearly two thirds use it as one of their information sources.[18]

With that, the modern information environment now originates everywhere and reaches

everyone across the world. Multiple stories, originating everywhere, and presented in a

multitude of ways, is the new environment.

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[16] Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan. *The Emergence of Blogs As A Fifth Estate and Their Security Implications*. (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 2007), 15
[17] Al-Rodhan. *The Emergence of Blogs…*, 13
[18] Brigitte Lebens Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role Of The Media In Terrorism And Counterterrorism*. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, c2002), 40

Misrepresentation

Mass media is big business. This section looks at how stories are frequently presented. The ethics of reporting ground-breaking news will be looked at, and some historical examples will be presented.

Reporters who get the big story and draw the largest audiences get the most money and opportunities. Without a code of ethics to control mainstream reporter's activities, the risk of manipulating the story to garner reward increases. Some unscrupulous reporters will 'stretch' the truth to ensure they have a story unlike anyone else. Some years ago, *Life* magazine had a photograph of a Spanish Civil War soldier. This photograph was exceptional in that it was taken the moment the soldier was dropped by a bullet through his head. Needless to say the reporter was not as fortunate to be in the right place at the right time as it appeared; rather, the picture was actually a soldier stumbling in training.[19] The image, if it had not been corrected, would have created rewards for the photographer, but may have created tremendous damage to public opinion and continued support.

Another example of this type of behaviour was when two CBS reporters filmed a soldier attempting to cut off the ear of a dead enemy soldier. When the story was first broadcast, the soldier was charged by the military. But at the unfortunate soldier's trial it was revealed that the reporters had persuaded the soldier to perform the act – even given him the knife to use – so that they would have a breaking story for the nightly news. The

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[19] Philip M. Taylor, "The Military and the Media Past, Present and Future," in *The Media and International Security*, ed. Stephen Badsey, 177-202 (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), 186

soldier was convicted and the two reporters were not charged.[20] The influence the media

creates, as these examples show, is a critical aspect of the modern strategic environment.

Given that there is no professional organization controlling a reporter's actions,

they are often left to their own judgement on what to report and how. The concept of

reporters being professional would mean they are part of a profession – the profession of

news reporters. As a guiding reference on what makes a professional, *Duty With Honour*,

A Canadian Forces doctrinal document, defines a profession as:

> "… an exclusive group of people who possess and apply a systematically
> acquired body of knowledge derived from extensive research, education,
> training and experience. Members of a profession have a special
> responsibility to fulfill their function competently and objectively for the
> benefit of society. Professionals are governed by a code of ethics that
> establishes standards of conduct while defining and regulating their work.
> This code of ethics is enforced by the members themselves and contains
> values that are widely accepted as legitimate by society at large."[21]

Accepting that all news reporters are professionals has risks, and many journalists

have cited ethical dilemmas. According to Michael Croft, there is no ethical dilemma in

the Campaign Against Terrorism. According to Croft, a journalist should not publish

something that helps the enemy. It is not a question of intent; rather, the fundamental

question is whether the reporter did help the enemy as a result of the reporting.[22]

Mass media has fallen into the trap of creating icons of the insurgents. Turning

the images of destruction from the initial 9/11 attacks, to the errors of Guantanamo Bay

and the problems of Abu Ghraib into readily identifiable emblems of the terrorist

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[20] William V. Kennedy, *The Military And The Media: Why The Press Cannot Be Trusted To Cover A War.* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, c1993), 103
[21] Canada. Department of National Defence. A-PA-005-000/AP-001, *Duty With Honour: The Profession of Arms in Canada*. Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2003, 4
[22] Michael Croft, *Information Warfare: Media-Military Relations In Canada: Workshop Report.* (Ottawa: Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, 1999), 10

movements, mass media has created ever-lasting symbols of the terrorists' cause.[23] Mass

media continues to indirectly support the media efforts of terrorism and hides it under the

auspices of breaking news. ABC's Nightline willingly granted Sheik Hassan Nasrallah

the television stage to speak to the American public even though his terrorist organization

was anti-Israel and anti-American.[24]

The mass media, due in large part to its reporting practices, has managed to

enshrine bin Laden. He has been made up as the terrorist icon and this is reinforced by

providing him access to the world's audiences whenever he so desires. Brigitte Lebens

Nacos performed a study comparing the frequency of news stories mentioning President

Bush and bin Laden in the USA during the military strikes against targets in Afghanistan

and found interesting results as shown in Table 2.[25]

Table 1 News Stories Mentioning President Bush and bin Laden following U.S. military Strikes against Targets in Afghanistan

	Pres. G. W. Bush	Osama bin Laden
	(N)	(N)
ABC News	303	497
CBS News	201	434
NBC News	170	345
CNN	425	571
NPR	202	198
N.Y. Times	1,259	1,211
Wash. Post	1,201	811
N = Number of segments/stories Source: Compiled from Lexis-Nexis data; TV and radio broadcasts for the period 10/07/01 to 12/07/01; newspaper articles for 10/08/01 to 12/08/01.		

Thus, misrepresentation by the media can have adverse and unanticipated effects. The

mistaken belief that the mediasphere educates the public so they are more capable of

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[23] John Mackinlay, *Defeating Complex Insurgency: Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan*. (London: Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 2005), 37
[24] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 94
[25] Ibid, 151

directing their leadership's action must be closely scrutinized. The reasons for selective

news stories must be taken into account at all times.

Media Bias

The following paragraphs will examine the aspect of bias in news stories

regardless of their origin. This section will explore some of the terminology frequently

used in reporting and how that may influence the presentation of a story. It will also

touch on the make-up of a person who seeks to play a role within the media, and

demonstrates a tendency for like-minded individuals to group together within that

institution.

Most, if not all, journalists are genuinely concerned about what is happening in

the world around them, and they look at their world through a somewhat liberal lens.[26]

Many journalists will self –identify as being ideologically on the left, which may be a

result of the idea that liberal views are better in tune with global issues. Further, it may be

that journalists have natural intellectual processes that lead them towards liberal

conclusions.[27]

The media is based upon people and people develop biases based upon several

factors. Those that work in the media tend to have similar bias. This collective bias,

despite any efforts to present a neutral view, creeps into the reporting of events. Stephen

Aubin demonstrates that bias slips through in many ways. His research shows that the

adjectives *liberal* and *left-wing* were avoided by the major western networks and

conservative, *right-wing*, and *hard-line* were used much more frequently. Oftentimes the

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[26] Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo, "A Social-Science Perspective on Media Bias." *Critical Review* 17, no. 3/4 (Summer, 2005), 310
[27] Ibid, 306

bad guys in a story were *conservatives* or *hard-liners* while the *liberals* were good guys.[28] It is illustrative to note that the bias of the media is a creation of the internal bias within the media environment and is not a pre-existing bias of the viewers that the media is reacting to.[29]

Quite often the media will focus on a situation of terrible human suffering. Unsettling images will be presented throughout the mediasphere demonstrating that something needs to be done to correct the situation as it exists. Stephen Badsey, in *Modern Military Operations And The Media* sums this type of activity best:

> "If images of terrible human suffering are presented to the world by television and newspapers and world leaders appear to be doing nothing to alleviate such human suffering, then a very strong morale message is being sent that 'something must be done.' This represents the moral imperative which confronts all democracies that have an interest in furthering the condition of humankind and in maintaining international peace."[30]

As can be seen, this represents a moral imperative to improve conditions for all. Not only do these items make good news stories, but they also comply with what journalists believe their audiences expect them to report on. This type of 'situation fix' gives journalists the ability to construct social reality and influence the interpretations of their audiences.[31] Thus, news is reported from a certain perspective that, in many cases, may be thought of as ideal.

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[28] Stephen P. Aubin, *Distorting Defense: Network News And National Security.* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1998), 109
[29] Groseclose, "A Social-Science Perspective on Media Bias. "…, 310
[30] Badsey, *The Media and International Security*, 4
[31] Tienari, "Managing the Media." …, 47

Terrorism and the Media

The following paragraphs will look at how statements made by terrorist organizations find their way into the main-stream media as a lead story, which results in the unedited transmission of the message to the world. It is understood that the mediasphere exists to provide information to the public. The information that the public seeks is normally about events that may impact on their personal lives, and usually takes the form of a news story. The news story may contain snippets of information designed to exert some control over the viewing public's opinion.

Mass media has not embraced the term terrorist and uses several variants such as freedom fighter, militant, insurgent, and radical depending in many cases where the story originates and may actually reinforce an unconscious bias. Regardless, non-state actors waging war against states has become the normal method of asymmetrical warfare in the early part of the twenty-first century. Terrorism is the news story of today, and it is unlike the battles of old where combatants were easily identified by their uniform and clearly defined by their country. The greatest change in this type of battle is that terrorists, or their advocates, confidently use the mass media as a weapon against their enemies. This may potentially be a conscious bias by the media to show support for the underdog.

Skilfully playing to the liberal views and ideals of western society, the terrorists set the agendas for the media, the public, and the government.[32] Granted, setting agendas does not appear to be a weapon in the contemporary sense, but shaping, or influencing, the attention and actions of your enemy goes a long way toward victory. As Donald Rumsfeld stated, "[o]ur enemies have skillfully adapted to fighting wars in today's media

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[32] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 44

age, but...our country has not…[w]e are losing the media war."[33] This admission

reinforces the concept that the mediasphere is a de facto instrument of war that is

delivered through the media.[34]

Figure 1 demonstrates the connectivity of terrorist and media interaction on a

global scale. This triangle attempts to demonstrate the interrelationship between terrorists

and agenda setting using the media. A key point is that the Internet is outside of the

normal realm of access to the communication triangle, yet is manages to be included

regularly, especially when initiated with a major act of violence.[35]
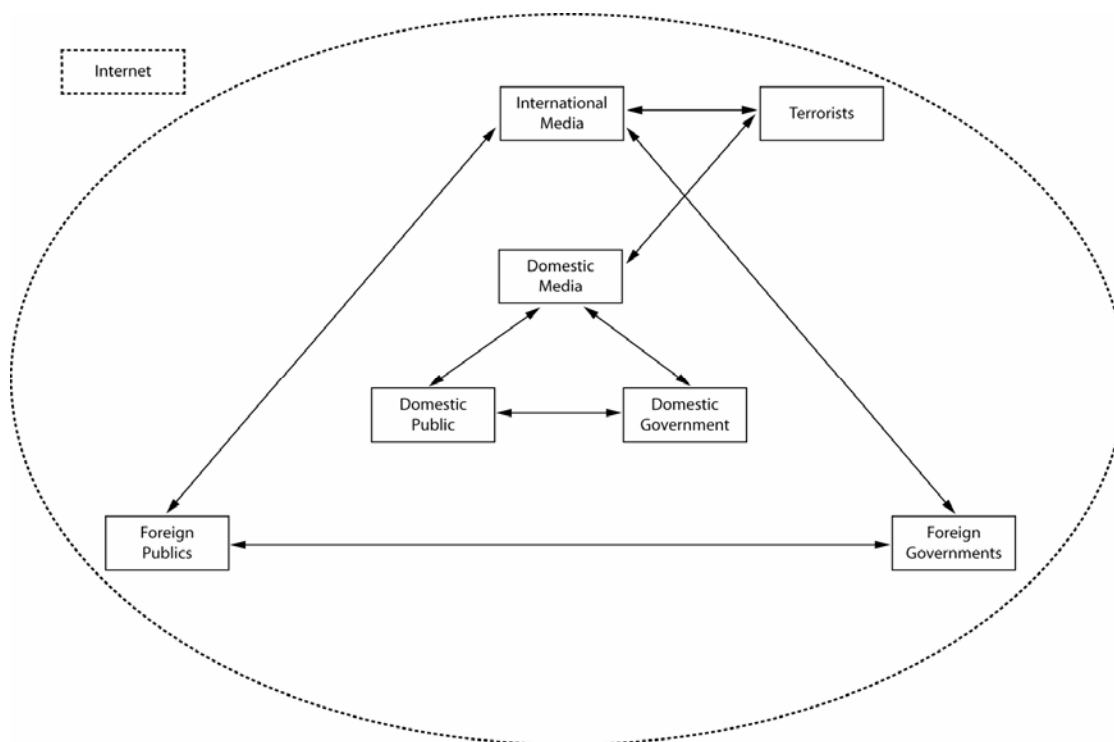
Figure 1 - Terrorism, the Triangles of Political Communication, and the Internet
Source: Hamilton, *Terrorism and International Relations*, 85

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[33] BBC News. "*US 'Losing media war to al Qaeda,'"*
    http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4725992.stm; Internet; accessed 21 April 2007.
[34] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 12
[35] Brigitte L. Nacos, "Terrorism and the Media in the Age of Global Communications," in
Terrorism and International Relations, ed. Daniel S. Hamilton 81-100 (Washington, DC. Center
for Transatlantic Relations, 2006), 85

As can be seen in the diagram, the terrorists reach all governments and publics through their direct interaction with the mass media.[36] Direct interaction equates to news – the type of news the mass media strives for. In this way the terrorists influence, even manipulate, the mass media. This control and influence is performed whenever and wherever the terrorist organizations choose. This methodology has been a mainstay of terrorist tactics for a long time. It is reported that Abane Ramdane, a resistance leader during the Algerian revolt against France, remarked, "[t]he murder of ten Frenchmen in the desert would go unnoticed, while the killing of a single Frenchman on a busy city street would be covered in the international media."[37] To this day, the media consistently carries the message of the terrorist to the viewing public. The message in turn will influence current public opinion. This ability to manipulate public opinion is well recognised by militaries as well, and is outlined in the US Army handbook on *Information Operations* which explains, "[a]dversaries can also attack the *public opinion center* [sic] *of gravity* and affect operations without ever engaging US forces."[38] Terrorist manipulation of the media is not new, but is difficult to prevent, especially if the message contains terrorist propaganda.

Manipulating the Story

This section will touch on how the presentation of a news story may be manipulated by the way it is presented. It will also explore how the mediasphere can influence public opinion, which in turn, will influence government actions domestically

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[36] Ibid, 84

[37] Norman Antokol and Mayer Nudell. *No One A Neutral: Political Hostage-Taking in the Modern World*. (Alpha Publications of Ohio, Medina: OH, 1990), 38

[38] United States. Department of the Army. *Information Operations.* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1996), 3-14

and internationally. Security is a primary concern of governments and their militaries. When looking at the concept of strategic security, the media is not secure and it is, in fact, a great risk to security. Even if it is a major risk, media reporting cannot be halted. Mass media is too widespread, inundated throughout the lives of the populace, to effectively constrain.

In the past few decades, mass media has worked very hard to try and respond to their audiences' demands. Audiences seem to have evolved in an era where hard and damning news is the order of the day. Mass media responded to this demand by tending to focus on failures with the government and the military, essentially "if it bleeds, it leads." Responding with bad news, versus good news stories, mass media has met the institutional business desire to increase ratings, improve profits and garner a larger audience share. It is interesting to note that the increased focus on failures rarely looks at the terrorists and their activities, thus this type of activity tends to go relatively unnoticed by the Western media.[39]

Stories are leaked, reporters are fed information and scandals are outlined to reporters all too ready to publish the story. Many people believe it is in their right to provide their information to the media even though they may not fully understand the ramifications of their action on the lives of others. Often these 'leaked' stories are driven by the media without any direct help from the public. Time and time again, the media will frequently try to uncover differences between policy and practice. They will consistently push to demonstrate to their audiences that something is fundamentally wrong. This is frequently evident with multinational and coalition operations, where

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[39] Frank P. Harvey, *The Homeland Security Dilemma: The Imaginations of Failure and the Escalating Costs of Perfecting Security.* (Calgary: Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, 2006), 14

governments of the respective militaries will try to display unity of effort, yet the media will attempt to show disparate interests and reinforce a view of fracture by exploiting small discrepancies between differing statements made by the respective organizations.[40] All this effort on behalf of the media demonstrates that strategic security goals, such as national cohesion and focus, can be jeopardized by intense media pressure.

This 'bad news' view is not a just wartime happenstance, but has become the common method of reporting about the military and any major expenditure it may undertake. If, for example, a weapon system has problems, the mass media will present the story, often from the critics' viewpoint, without providing a proper context for the audience so they may understand normal weapon development processes.[41] This type of reporting is not as balanced as one would expect from the mainstream media; however, journalists believe when researching the story that they are speaking with 'military' experts, and tend to take that expert's objectivity for granted.[42] The difficulty with this method of story telling is that military failures or sensationalism are often the only media coverage the public may receive about their military, unless there is a scandal or an actual military operation.

Western media are very sceptical of the actions and activities of government, and editorials frequently take an opposing view of the government line. Eastern media; however, tend to be tightly controlled by their governments and are limited in their interpretation of government messaging. The interesting conundrum is that audiences, regardless of where they are, tend to disbelieve positive stories about their governments actions and activities unless it addresses a personal view or interest.

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[40] Badsey, *Modern Military Operations And The Media*, 7
[41] Aubin, *Distorting Defense…*, 47
[42] Groseclose, "A Social-Science Perspective on Media Bias. "…, 312

Government actions are limited. They cannot, strategically, impose direct censorship on the mass media for fear of creating discontent within the domestic public. The mass media is an entity unto itself, and with a global reach, has status and power at its disposal.

Propaganda as news

This section will explore how propaganda is frequently contained within news stories, sometimes transparent to the media itself. It will also look at the ways incorporated propaganda may unknowingly be accepted as factual by other mass media, their viewing publics, and even governments.[43] The inclusion of propaganda may lead to a quantum shift of public opinion and loss of support for government initiatives.

Propaganda can be very subtle, and is an ideal weapon when it is used through the mass media. Terrorists advance their agenda through a willing mediasphere that is hungry for news. Even if the mass media attempted to filter all propaganda, it would become very difficult for the mediasphere to report on world events without somehow supporting the terrorists' propaganda campaign. Audiences, East and West, have a limited understanding that they are being fed propaganda by their news agencies, but believe they know when they are being manipulated. Due to the aggressive business of the media world, breaking news is what the audiences desire. This type of business works to please their respective audiences, thus propaganda finds its way into the news.[44]

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[43] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition, 1989, propaganda is the systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, especially in a tendentious way in order to encourage or instil a particular attitude or response.

[44] Emily Nelson, "Camera Angles: Battle for Viewers Colors TV Picture Coming from Iraq – Different Coverage by CNN, Al-Jazeera shows Influence of Ideology and Commerce – 'Invading' Vs. 'Coalition' Forces." *Wall Street Journal,* Apr 4, 2003, A.1

The mediasphere's ability to influence means that it can also be counted upon to assist in propaganda. The modern mass media version of propaganda has been making the press and the airwaves for decades. Unfortunately, viewers are finding it less obvious and harder to detect. Today's propaganda is not always driven by the enemy. The Allies during World War II used a new and improved scientific version of it to decisively bring about the German defeat. From World War II to this day it has become an integral part of modern politics.[45]

Modern propaganda cannot be avoided. Mass media cannot help but report on a major story regardless if it is filling a propaganda role. The bombing of the USS Cole created a flurry of news reporting that shocked many. The mass media then speculated, along with the public and government, about the motives that triggered the violence. Through exposure on air, and in the press, mass media enabled the terrorists' grievances to be discussed in an attentive public forum.[46] The mass media dutifully carried the terrorist message more effectively than could have ever been imagined. This continues today – whenever bin Laden wants to communicate to the world, the media personalities that the public have accepted as authorities, present his message as news.[47]

As stated earlier, the mediasphere has the propensity to report only on the failings of the military. This type of reporting not only feeds into the psychological aspect that the West is losing, but it also reinforces the belief for others that the terrorists are winning. With the media focussed on removing troops from Afghanistan, and the pressure placed upon the government to do so by politicians and the public alike, the Taliban gains an

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[45] Corey Ross, "Mass Politics and the Techniques of Leadership: The Promise and Perils of Propaganda in Weimar Germany." *German History* 24, no. 2 (May, 2006): 194
[46] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 8
[47] John Mackinlay, *Defeating Complex Insurgency …*, 38

advantage. They could use the discussion of withdrawal as effective propaganda by stating that they have beaten two super powers; first the USSR and then NATO.[48]

Some bloggers use their sites and audiences as a vehicle to spread pre-planned propaganda. Often a provocative message will appear on an extremist site, dedicated to a particular cause, and will soon be replicated on many other sites in very short order. Some unscrupulous computer types even plant the propaganda message on computer sites that do not support the cause. These propaganda messages jump from computer to computer, network to network, and are completely uncontrolled. Governments are left without the tools to stop it.[49]

Propaganda is rampant and extremely difficult to control. International government relations, through the renewed use of diplomacy, will help to achieve goals that will impede the terrorist message. This congruence of international beliefs can develop into a controlling factor.

Legal status and Political Power

This following section will look at the protection afforded to the mass media. It will examine the inherent power the media has to influence political decisions and how reporting may have an effect on shaping public opinion and emotions.

The credibility the mass media has on public opinion is compounded by the general belief that a free media is an unbiased media. The public tends to believe much of what they read in standard newspapers and most of what they see on national television. This general acceptance of 'news' as factual can have a direct impact on public opinion

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[48] Kennedy, *The Military And The Media …*, 22
[49] Al-Rodhan. *The Emergence of Blogs…*, 60

and leave little room for counter arguments by governments, even though the information being provided to the public by the media may not be wholly accurate.

Given that the mediasphere is seen as free and unbiased by the majority of western viewers, it is surprising to discover that the Western media does not have a nationally subscribed code of ethics or a professional governing body. Mass media, in its current form, is not accountable to anyone but its institutional shareholders. Judy Lynn Buller explains that this failure to standardize a code of ethics or conduct by the mass media is because they, as businesses, believe that it could create inflexibility in their environment, and potentially create legal problems for themselves. These concerns are based on running a profitable business and are consistent regardless of them being in a large or a small market.[50]

Much has been written about the influence the media may have on shaping public opinion, which in turn, can impact on the military in operations. The "instant access" from the battlespace has brought forth a viewpoint of the military by the public unlike that of any other time. Academic reviews had previously held that the media had very little influence on public opinion, and thus, no impact on the support for a war effort. Some thirty years after Vietnam, the academic view is that public opinion, fed by negative news reporting, has a tremendous impact. In turn, political leaders have become much more aware of their voting public's views, and attempt to follow a path that is believed to comply with the current public opinion.[51] This is best exemplified by

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[50] Judy Lynn Buller. "How the Field of Media Ethics Addresses the Influence of Economics on Journalism Values." (Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin, 2002), 4
[51] Stephen Badsey, *Modern Military Operations And The Media*, 16

President Clinton's refusal to request military action in the former Yugoslavia, as he believed the public did not support that activity.[52] Public opinion matters.

With the implicit power that the media wields one would expect it to be accurate with the reporting of any story. The ability of the mass media to influence will continue for years to come; however, Yariv Tsfati suggests that the media may not be quite as influential in telling us *what to think*, but they do have the ability to influence our perceptions of *what others think*.[53] There are multiple allegations that many news stories are erroneous and that the media should have all the facts correct prior to publishing the story. That demand for accuracy may be impractical given the twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week news cycle. A conundrum faced by many in the mediasphere is that the media may not always report the truth, but "the media always reports the news."[54] The news is what the audience wants delivered.

The media has a dynamic ability to influence the public agenda. This is a frequent occurrence in the free world, and many organizations have realised that exploitation of the media will ensure they have an impact on a government's actions. There are many examples of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) displaying grievous conditions or circumstances in a part of the world on television, and the public has subsequently pushed their government into action to 'fix' the situation. In the early part of the twenty-first century, interest groups have been pushing for government action on key issues such as global warming and climate change. With the mediasphere providing a platform for

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[52] William Stephen Barker, "Media Influence in the Shaping of Public Policy." (M.A., Excelsior College, 2005), 94

[53] Yariv Tsfati, "Media Skepticism and Climate of Opinion Perception." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 15, no. 1 (Mar 1, 2003): 66

[54] Ian Stewart, "Reporting Conflict: Who Calls the Shots?," in *The Media and International Security*, ed. Stephen Badsey, 64-76 (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), 68

the message transmission, many governments announced plans and policies to address the issues and concerns held by the voting public.[55]

The ability to gain exposure by interest groups through the vehicle of mass media appears to have accelerated since 9/11. During the horrific events of 11 September, there were several twenty-four hour news channels catering to a viewing public that was now addicted to constant updating of an unfolding situation. In response to this insatiable appetite for updates on the situation, the newscasters constantly replayed the heart-wrenching events.[56] Once the viewer ratings of these channels began to drop, twenty-four hour news stations realized they needed to keep feeding the appetite of fear and concern to retain their viewing audiences. To fill the time available within the reporting period all issues, regardless of magnitude, became breaking news benefiting from the same importance and editorialising found in the initial 9/11 reports. According to Stephan Badsey in his book *Modern Military Operations and the Media*,

> "… television itself is impressionistic, selective, superficial and sensationalist, very poor at conveying the complexity of any situation. This is not a criticism of television, but simply a description of the nature of a medium in which an 'in depth' item lasts 150 seconds, a problem openly acknowledged by the majority of television professionals."[57]

Despite all of its limitations, the mass media continues to be the provider of information to the public—the public in the West, the public of our potential enemies, and the public in cyberspace—and often sets or shapes the public's and government's agendas rightly or wrongly. This action, of itself, demonstrates that the mediasphere is

[55] Canadian Government, 39th Parliament, 1st Session, Edited Hansard, Number 101. Thursday, February 1, 2007. http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=2653902&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=39&Ses=1; Internet; accessed 5 May 2007
[56] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism …*, 54
[57] Badsey, *Modern Military Operations And The Media*, 18

not a citizen of a free society; rather, it is an agency that reacts to market pressures of profit and loss as a result of ratings and viewing audiences, even though many still believe the mediasphere provides unbiased news coverage.

This paper has so far addressed the evolution of the media and how it, and its relative influence, has expanded around the world. This section explored how mass media is central to public opinion, and how a bias can exist in a reported story. Further, this part has shown that the mass media has a distinct role in the public's daily dialogue of world events and that a story may be fundamental in public opinion.

Part II: Shaping the Environment

The mediasphere is a complex environment. It can, and does, have impact on strategic actions. This part will address the public's trust in institutions and how that may impact on any strategic messaging. It will then look at what some of the mass media motivating factors are, and how the environment may be influenced. Further, the concept of Psychological Operations will be explored and assessed.

To shape a complex environment, an understanding of first, second, and third order effects must be considered. Once those effects have been considered, and partially understood, the implications of any countering action can then be scrutinized. This is especially important within the modern battlespace, as information itself is a strategic resource that is becoming increasingly vital to national security.[58] National security is the responsibility of the nation state, thus it is fundamental to ensure full capability to work with the threat.

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[58] Department of National Defence. B-GG-005-004/AF-010 *CF Information Operations*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1998), 1-2.

Working to shape this complex environment an understanding of developing and garnering trust must be examined. Without trust the message will be ignored. Motivators must also be reviewed. Understanding what motivates actors is key to comprehending the environment. Lastly, direct control methods need to be fully understood. The effect and implication of directed control has to be looked at as well as the fall-out of such action.

Public Trust

This section will look at the public's trust of governments and agencies. The concept of trust, and the relationship to freedom of action by the government, will be explored at as well as how trust may impact upon public opinion.

Overall, public trust of institutions throughout the world is dropping, and not just for governments. Although governments have experienced the largest decline in public trust, a recent poll for the World Economic Forum shows that public trust in the national institutions has declined. This decline in trust is demonstrated in Figure 2.[59]

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[59] *'Global Survey ahead of World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos shows 'trust deficit' deepening'* World Economic Forum, http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/WEF_trust2005.html; Internet; accessed 22 April 2007 Fourteen countries were tracked: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the USA
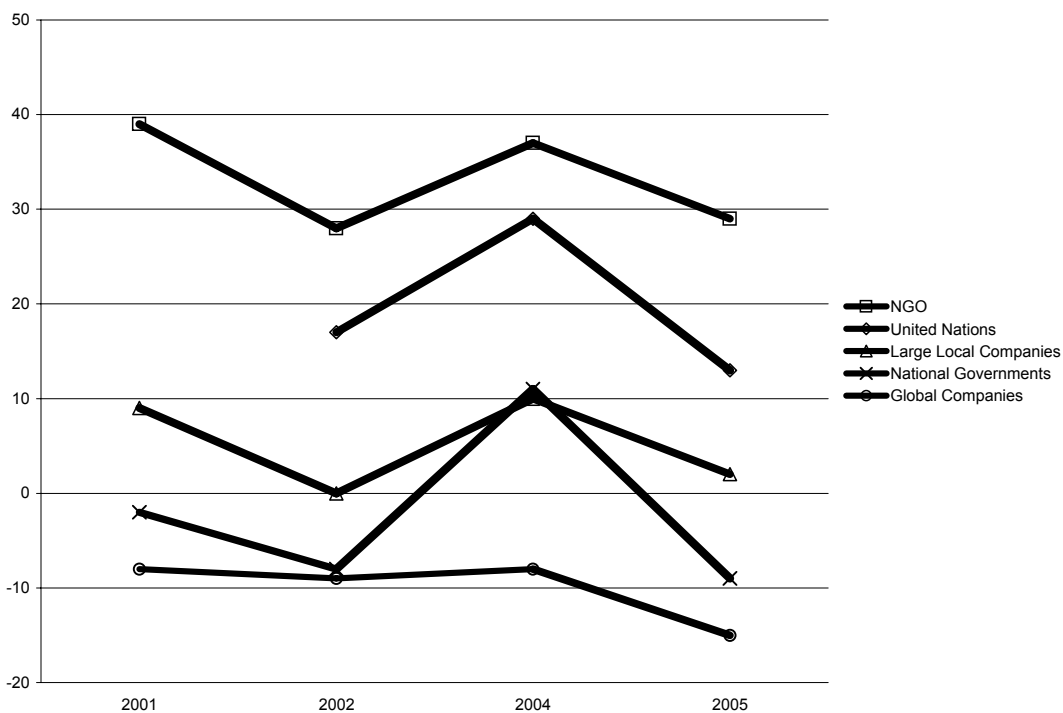
Figure 2 - Overall Changes in Trust since 2001

Source: 'Global Survey ahead of World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos shows 'trust deficit' deepening' World Economic Forum, http://www.globescan.com/news_archives/WEF_trust2005.html; Internet; accessed 22 April 2007

     Often the government seeks to gain support of the population for certain initiatives. With low public confidence getting the pulse of the public opinion will be necessary for support. This is frequently done by polling. Public opinion polls are a constant on evening news and provide the fuel for hours of editorialising while giving the government a window into the public's view. Many of the public who participate in these polls tend to base their responses on the information they already have – in many cases from the information provided in the news – which is the very same news provided by the agencies sponsoring the poll. Often the reason that public opinion polls are conducted is to create a reinforcement of an existing news story that the mass media has already

presented and is ultimately selling. This is an effective method to reinforce the media's

stance on an issue.

The media tends to be the primary source of published public opinion and has

held that role since the early nineteenth century.[60] Public opinion is normally paraphrased

in the mass media as a reaction to political actions and initiatives. The term 'public

opinion' appears to capture the opinion of the public, but according to Stephen Badsey, it

is not quite that simple. He states,

> "Public opinion in its common-sense meaning, that is to say the opinion of
> the public, is virtually impossible to measure in the short term except by
> the very haphazard method of the opinion poll (called rather appropriately
> by the Germans a Blitzumfragen). But there is considerable evidence that
> in most democracies this form of public opinion is largely indifferent to
> foreign affairs, although public interest will increase if military operations
> are involved."[61]

This, according to Dr Pahlavi, demonstrates the challenge to governments because public

opinion, which is frequently indifferent, can change over time and be a constraining force

at a critical moment.[62] For example, Ohio State University Professor John Mueller found

that support for the wars among the general public followed a pattern for decline that was

remarkably similar to the mass media support for the war effort.[63] Public opinion is

powerful, but is also very hard to predict.

Exerting influence through the mass media can be a double-edged sword with

wholesale public support not being a guarantee. It is wise to note that journalists of the

mediasphere are able to contribute to the construct of social reality. The journalists

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[60] Barker, "Media Influence in the Shaping of Public Policy.", 1
[61] Badsey, *Modern Military Operations And The Media*, 16
[62] Dr Pierre Pahlavi, Deputy Chair, Department of Military Planning & Operations, Canadian Forces College, email to Col Gludo 3 May 2007.
[63] William M. Darley, "War Policy, Public Support, and the Media." *Parameters* 35, no. 2 (Summer, 2005): 122

influence the audience's interpretations of events through skilful use of words and

pictures and the story is always done persuasively.[64] The results of the reaction to the

story are not always intentional; regardless, the consequences of these presentations and

views often create unintended consequences.

When military action or activity takes place and is covered by the mediasphere it

is normally scrutinized by the media agencies' 'experts,' such as retired generals,

academics, authors or military affairs advisors, on the news, live. Their opinions,

comments and critiques have the potential to impact directly on current operations. Often

these learned reviews will create debates in the public forum. Often this will happen

before the military leadership has even had time to fully evaluate the situation being

broadcast and discussed. This limits the leadership's ability to provide a proper and

contextual response. The debates may then be adopted by assorted media types,

politicians, pundits, critics, academics and some armchair generals which can often result

in shaping and changing public opinion.[65] This reporting, review and debate activity can

cause a change, or threaten the strategic goals, operational actions and tactical operations

of the force in place. The debates may even impact directly on the morale and

effectiveness of the public, and their support for the action. Even more so, they may have

direct consequences on the fighting force involved in the action undergoing scrutiny.[66]

This activity has created a concern by many as to whether final decisions on strategic

[64] Tienari, "Managing the Media." ..., 47
[65] United States. Department of the Army. Office of the Chief of Public Affairs. *Vision 2000: Public Affairs Into The 21st Century.* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, 1994), 3
[66] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-005/FP-000 *Land Force Information Operations.* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 1999), 88

military action are based on political desire or the influence of the mass media.[67]

Interestingly, it is both, as political desire is to retain the public's support – a public that

is influenced directly by the mass media.

Motivational Factors

Mass media provides information to a varied audience. The audience share is

what motivates the mediasphere. This section will show that the mass media is a business

that sells the "news" and forwards an agenda. Mass media is no longer an innocent or

unbiased bystander reporting on what is unfolding. The main-stream news reporter

should no longer be considered a civilian when "engaged in dangerous missions in areas

of armed conflict."[68] Mass media is a business that works to capture a larger viewing

audience, which in turn leads to greater profits and increased political influence. All this

is to demonstrate that the altruistic view of an independent media may not actually exist,

and if it does, it is becoming less so.

The true driving force behind mass media could be as varied as there are members

of the mediasphere. The Western media finds itself now responding to limited ownership

more so than ever before. This ownership is profit focussed, as any business would be,

and appears to be blurring the line between information and entertainment, frequently

referred to as 'infotainment.' The boundary between the two has deliberately been

blurred and has resulted in typically stodgy politics becoming much more entertaining.[69]

The mass media business empires need advertising dollars and profits that the advertising

creates. Profits are facilitated by larger audiences, so the business empires ensure special

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[67] Kennedy, *The Military And The Media …*, 47
[68] Payne, "The Media as an Instrument of War." …, 83
[69] Ross, "Mass Politics and the Techniques of Leadership …", 209

focus is maintained on events that fit into the infotainment scope as they believe it draws

a larger audience share and the resultant profits.[70]

A truism of "what interests my boss fascinates me"[71] exists in all businesses.

Corporate desires tend to drive reporters' attention. During the war in Bosnia, reports of

death camps in Omarska were in the media. Editorial offices pushed reporters in the field

to find more of these so-called death camps without ever validating their existence.[72] The

idea of death camps was hard news and the media had to report on it; although, there was

an implicit responsibility to confirm the validity later.[73] This "flash-to-bang" rush is

created by cut-throat business competition and the multi-channel, twenty-four hour news

environment. This is a fine line that mass media must deal with. Media, like all profit-

driven business, is constantly seeking new developments to stay ahead of their

competitors. In the mass media world, the CNN effect has been replaced by the "breaking

news syndrome." [74]

This transition to business is not a new phenomenon. Some critics are arguing for

a process that will discern the impact of economics on news.[75] Unfortunately the

economic driver of news creates an environment that may not tell a complete story to the

audiences. Stephen Aubin, in his book *Distorting Defense* [sic] shows a comparison of

problems between three major television networks. Table 1 shows problems based on

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[70] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 99
[71] Major General S. Beare to Colonel J. Gludo November 2005
[72] Barker, "Media Influence in the Shaping of Public Policy.", 13
[73] John Leo, "Kitty Out to 'Lunch'?" *U.S. News & World Report* 123, no. 12 (Sep 29, 1997): 16
[74] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 154
[75] Buller. "How the Field of Media Ethics Addresses the Influence …", 126

number of news reports for the dates January to April 1983, January to April 1985,

January to April 1990, January to February 1991 and January to April 1994.[76]

Table 2 Problems Broken Down by Network and Number of Reports

Types of Problems	Total Reports	ABC	CBS	NBC
1) Lack of Balance or Context	248	80	88	80
2) Overemphasis on Drama and Bad News	185	50	70	65
3) Loaded Labeling or Advocacy	98	29	25	44
4) Lack of Context as a Result of Brevity	180	45	72	63
5) Lack of Knowledge	112	34	31	47
6) Bad News Judgement	63	19	24	20
Total	886	257	310	319

This table demonstrates that many of the viewing public should be concerned about the

stories they are receiving. The audience awareness and concern should translate directly

to scepticism of the media. Many of the viewing audiences who already have concerns

feel that despite accepted bias, journalists are not being objective in their reporting of

events.[77]

The Eastern media is not much different. Despite the success of the primary

Arabic news source Al Jazeera, it too has critics. Many of Al Jazeera's audience see the

channel, and its Internet news site, as a creation of the American Administration. Some of

Al Jazeera's viewers believe the Americans have created it to help contain the hostility of

people in the Middle East against American hegemony.[78] Western audiences first took

notice of Al Jazeera when bin Laden fed his videotaped messages through them to the

world. In the eyes of Western viewers, Al Jazeera soon moved from a Western style

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[76] Aubin, *Distorting Defense…*, 125
[77] Tsfati, "Media Skepticism and Climate of Opinion Perception." ..., 67
[78] Mohamed El Oifi, "Influence Without Power: Al Jazeera and the Arab Public Sphere," in *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*, ed Mohamed Zayani, 66-79 (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 68

media in the Middle East to a "mouthpiece of bin Laden."[79] In very short order, Al

Jazeera was no longer seen as being neutral and soon became suspect of having other

motives.[80]

The third component of the mediasphere, the blogsphere, is still fairly new but its

impact is growing at a tremendous rate. One of the primary concerns by mass media and

governments alike, is that blogs give regular citizens, with no journalistic background,

the ability to reach large audiences, unconstrained by borders, and can make their voices

heard. This has the potential for an increasingly real effect on public opinion and policy

making.[81]

The power of the modern-day blog as an influencer can be demonstrated in a

simple example. In September 2004, Dan Rather of CBS provided memos on his show

60 Minutes that appeared to offer proof that George W. Bush had derelicted his duty

while he was in the Texas National Guard. Within a half hour of the broadcast, bloggers

around the world started to question the validity of the memos. Many other bloggers

joined in and provided more evaluations, thoughts and their own interpretations. Shortly

after the increasing attention paid by the blogsphere, CBS retracted the memos and

announced that it could no longer vouch for their authenticity.[82] Thus, the blogsphere's

motivation for larger audience share is facilitated by positioning themselves as a true,

more reasonable alternative, to the main-stream media.

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[79] Ehab Y. Bessaiso, "Al Jazeera and the War in Afghanistan: A Delivery System or a Mouthpiece?," in *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon: Critical Perspectives on New Arab Media*, ed Mohamed Zayani, 153-170 (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 153
[80] Ali Abbas Jamal, "The Political Influence of Al-Jazeera Network on Kuwaitis: A Uses and Gratifications Study." (Ph.D., The University of Southern Mississippi, 2004), 7
[81] Al-Rodhan. *The Emergence of Blogs…*, 13
[82] Ibid, 45

The ability to influence and manipulate public opinion through the use of the mediasphere shows the expansion of the battlespace into the cyber realm. This newly enhanced weapon, with its ability to impact on centres of gravity, needs to be considered throughout all phases of planning, and within all levels of warfare from tactical to strategic. Thus, the overall motivation of the mediasphere in its presentation of news to the public is suspect. That, in turn, brings to question the validity of the media's benefit to society at large. This paper will now look at some methods used for influence with the mass media.

Influence and Control

Influence differs from propaganda in that propaganda seeks to control activity or thought through misinformation, while influence shapes behaviour through methods that are normally rewards based. This section will examine some of the common methods used by the media to exert influence and control, and how this influence may lead to a change, or failure, of government and military objectives. Although the focus of this paper is at the strategic level, some examples taken from the operational level will be used for illustrative purposes. A few years ago, General Krulak, USMC, identified the "strategic corporal" and used that concept to demonstrate how low-level tactical decision may drive strategic actions.[83] It has now become a well-accepted notion that tactical actions have strategic impacts, and that adage applies to the media as well. Thus, a 'tactical' news story can influence strategic decisions.

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[83] Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War", in *Air War College – Lessons Learned, Marines Magazine*, January 1999, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awcgate/usmc/strategic_corporal.htm; Internet; accessed 4 May 07

Influence, with regard to the mass media, can mean different things to different people. The Government and its agents can, and occasionally do, influence the media while the media, as previously described, is very good at influencing government actions and policy. Both the Government and the media may influence the public. That being said, the public, the most powerful influencer – through public opinion – does not just influence both, but is able to dictate their views, beliefs and preferences for action to the mediasphere and the governments. This type of public influence has a tremendous impact at the strategic level, which in turn, directly impacts strategic military activities.

The powerful news organizations, such as CNN, also have influence over policy makers. This is due, in a large part, to the credibility that these companies have. Much of the credibility is news organizations' ability to contain mistakes, and make public corrections if caught making a mistake as it unfolds.[84] The worst-case scenario a media organization could possibly face is when a different mass media outlet is reporting on it for a public mistake that was erroneously broadcast. If a government attempts to point out mistakes made by mass media, the result is normally quite different than if another media purveyor had identified the mistake. Previously, the US Government attempted to have some controls placed upon Al Jazeera as it believed they were allowing bin Laden to use the channel as a platform to incite Jihad on the West, and in particular, the US. The result of the US attempt ended up reinforcing the overall credibility of the fledging news agency despite the errors they had made.[85]

Militaries, as large as they are, normally have specialists who work with the media on a regular basis in an attempt to tell their story. This role is known as Public

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[84] Beyerle, "The Middle East's e-War." ..., 91
[85] Zayani, *The Al Jazeera Phenomenon…*, 26

Affairs (PA) and normally fits into a larger realm known as Information Operations (IO).

Very little is understood by the public about IO, and most of the mass media are quick to

point out that IO is psychological operations (PSYOPS). The media fails to identify that

PSYOPS, like Public Affairs, is just a component of Information Operations and is not

the same thing, nor is it used for the same purpose. PSYOPS according to the Department

of National Defence in *CF Information Operations* is defined as:

> "PSYOP are actions to convey selected information and indicators to
> foreign audiences. They are designed to influence emotions, motives,
> reasoning, and ultimately, the behaviour of foreign governments,
> organizations, groups, and individuals. PSYOP have strategic, operational,
> and tactical applications, including support to deception operations."[86]

Military Public Affairs' primary role is to inform the public about the military and what

the military is doing. PA, unlike mass media, does not exist to influence the public.[87]

That is the role of PSYOPS which will be addressed more fully later.

Fortunately, most Western militaries do not suffer from the same factors that

drive mass media even though they have media personnel. Militaries are normally funded

by their governments and they are at the whim of the taxpayer for continued funding. PA

provides a method of speaking, and explaining, directly to the public. In an operational

context, most of the IO organization has been designed for operations against the enemy

and there are strict rules about its use within a state's own borders on their own people

which, in turn, limits the government's options to exert controls over the mediasphere.

Mass media reports the news. The problem arises when the Western media reports

on stories that originated elsewhere, as if the story had been theirs, and then fails to

inform the audiences of that fact. The use of PSYOP can be very successful, but is also

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[86] Department of National Defence, B-GG-005-004/AF-010 ..., 2-3
[87] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-005/FP-000 ..., 90

subject to failure. During the Gulf War leaflets, a common PSYOP method, were dropped

on the Iraqi positions to encourage them to surrender. When the Iraqi soldiers saw the

leaflets, they believed that their positions were no longer secure and that US forces knew

exactly where they were, so they surrendered. The same type of leaflets was then used in

Afghanistan on the Taliban forces, but the Taliban decided to flee to a more secure area.

Ultimately they ended up creating an easier target for US airpower.[88]

PSYOPS is one of the most controlled weapon systems in the military's arsenal.

In Canada this weapon system is not allowed in "peace, crisis or war unless approved" by

the Minister of National Defence or the Chief of Defence Staff.[89] Unfortunately, the

insurgents are not under the same Canadian restrictions. Terrorists have become quite

proficient at PSYOPS and the mass media has become very good, even willing, to

provide the vehicle to transmit their efforts.

This paper is not out to prove that mass media is a puppet of terrorism. The

relationship is much more one of convenience – where the terrorists and their propaganda

need a way to send their messages, and the media gets a breaking news story. Further,

this symbiotic relationship mass media has with terrorism fits more closely with the

modern infotainment requirement.[90]

This section has shown that the entire realm of the mediasphere is a complex

interaction of misrepresentation and propaganda. The global spread of information,

originating elsewhere, can have a direct impact in locations never anticipated at the

strategic level. Further, once the strategic level has been impacted, this then trickles down

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[88] Christopher Lamb, *Review of Psychological Operations: Lessons Learned From Recent Operational Experience.* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2005), 59
[89] Department of National Defence, B-GJ-005-313/FP-001 *Joint Doctrine Manual: Psychological Operations.* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004), 1-1
[90] Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism…*, 99

and potentially changes the operational and tactical objectives, possibly neutralizing the initial strategic objective.

A concentrated effort, at the geo-political and diplomatic level, must be aligned to curb the seemingly uncontrollable influence of the mediasphere. All strategic interests at the international level are at risk. Thus, the following part will explore avenues to align strategic concerns with actions to mitigate the effects of the media.

Part III: Recommendations

It is the role of governments to protect their citizens. This must include protection from the mediasphere. First and foremost, the public needs to be educated on the media, and to be shown that it is not a professional organization in a commonly understood sense. The Western cultural belief that the news is unbiased, balanced and fair needs to be adjusted, not just for strategic reasons, but to better assist the public in dealing with the onslaught of messaging they receive in their daily lives.

Mass media exists and it will always endure. A common belief by many is that more and more people are tuning out the messages emanating from newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet Blogsphere, but history has shown that public views and opinions are altered through the mediasphere. Lives are too valuable to allow the mass media unchallenged access to the minds of the public. In the following paragraphs, several recommendations will be made. They should be implemented to assist in challenging the mediasphere and to mitigate against its effects because in today's context, the mediasphere is a de facto instrument of war.

The first recommendation is an internationally coordinated campaign plan. As with any campaign plan, there needs to be an all-of-government approach to enable

effective mitigation.[91] This government-wide strategy is not the purview of one or two governments, but needs to have and maintain an international focus. Ownership of the campaign plan should reside at the United Nations, the very same organization that empowered the media as individuals in 1977.[92] The more nations that support the campaign plan, the greater the mitigating effect will be. The overarching campaign plan would include at least three lines of operation: Professionalism, Propaganda, and Penalties. Each of these lines would be mutually supporting of the other, and though intertwined, effective in their own right.

Line of Operation 1

The first line of operation is Professionalism. Within this line the mediasphere is to be pressured to create codes and standards incorporating ethics and behaviour when faced with any news story. The intense pressure to promulgate and formulate their ethics and standards will be brought by their own viewers once the UN starts to educate the world audiences about the lack of any standards or protocols. The UN must pass a resolution in the General Assembly to put the weight of the world behind the demand to incorporate ethics. All mass media is profit driven, and if faced with global public outrage and criticism, will respond to ensure minimal audience loss.[93]

Line of Operation 2

The second line of operation is Propaganda. The focus of this line is the identification and elimination as a news story. As previously mentioned, it is becoming

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[91] Department of National Defence, B-GG-005-004/AF-010 ..., 1-3
[92] Payne, "The Media as an Instrument of War." ..., 83
[93] Daniel L. Shaver, "The Relationship between audience/media Ethical Value Congruency and Trust." Ph.D., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2001, 10

increasingly more difficult to identify what is, and what is not, propaganda. An entire

industry, known as advertising, has been built that uses varying degrees of propaganda on

a daily basis. The all-of-international-government approach will be to identify any

propaganda that is discovered within a state's mediasphere area of responsibility. This

would then be publicized to the other governments and to the UN oversight body.

Coupled to the passive control of propaganda would be an active method of continued

education of the public. Like the first line of operation, this "heat and light" on purveyors

of propaganda will induce behavioural change for fear of losing audience share.

Line of Operation 3

The third line of operation is probably the most difficult. This line of operation is

Penalties. The penalty would be of a sliding scale that would be based on the extent of

potential and actual damage. Penalties would be levied for the failure of any one

organization to comply with either the first or second line of operation. The UN, with

support of all the government member states, would identify standards that the

mediasphere would have to achieve. These standards would also contain associated

penalties. In the global marketplace many of the mass media businesses are funded

through shareholders. The penalties would hurt the shareholders directly, who in turn

would reduce funding, resulting in effective control over the media business that fails to

comply.

Throughout all three lines of operation within the campaign plan, public

awareness is the primary key. The global public, informed directly by the UN and their

member governments, will need to receive facts about all companies that do not meet the

UN-sanctioned rules. Further, the public needs to be informed of any propaganda, and its

objective, that is appearing anywhere within the mediasphere. This campaign plan will not only mitigate against the effects of the media, but will also empower the public to control and understand the messaging they are being fed. With enough pressure and attention from the public, assisted by agencies such as the United Nations and the financial impact of revenue loss, the mediasphere will respond as it should.

Public Education

PSYOPS is already being played against the Western public by enemy factions, and in many cases this is facilitated by the mass media. To facilitate the campaign plan, the use of Counter PSYOPS would be used. Current Counter PSYOPS doctrine is not designed for use within a home nation; however, it would be the natural solution for dealing with erroneous messages and misunderstanding permeating the mediashpere. Mass media does not exist to educate; rather, it exists to report the news, whereas education is in the realm of government responsibility. Education of the public will help counter erroneous reports presented by the mediasphere, and with that education the PSYOPS being used by the insurgents may be countered as well.[94]

This is not to suggest Western governments or the UN institute a comprehensive Counter PSYOPS action plan; rather, public education should be the focus as it helps eliminate the misunderstanding that is prevalent in many media reports. The current model of Counter PSYOPS must include education and pursue the role to shield audiences from the enemy's message. Further, it will lessen the impact of any antagonistic beliefs, attitudes and behaviours presented or included in the media.[95] The

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[94] Department of National Defence, B-GG-005-004/AF-010 ..., 36
[95] Department of National Defence, B-GL-300-005/FP-000 ..., 77

Counter PSYOPS method of silence, used when the effect of counteraction is uncertain,

is impossible given that the mediasphere reaches globally.[96] Having a strategic plan to

educate the public on how to interpret the message and the messenger would alleviate the

need for a continuing Counter PSYOPS campaign.

     This comprehensive plan would provide immediate benefit and give citizens the

tools to fully understand and resist many sales pitches so frequently found within the

mediasphere. An already proven method of education could be similar to the anti-

smoking or anti-drinking and driving campaigns that currently exist. The success of

educating the public through intensive "anti" programs is well documented. One study

performed on the European Union anti-tobacco television advertisements found,

> "…over half of young people (under 25 years) surveyed had seen the
> advertisements and the vast majority (83%) of them liked the campaign.
> The post-test results showed a good understanding (88%) of the messages
> behind the adverts and two thirds of young non-smokers declared that the
> adverts could deter them from starting to smoke. The results also provide
> feedback on the impact that the adverts had on smokers, of whom 61%
> said that the adverts made them think about their smoking, and 64%
> responded that it made them think about the impact of their smoking
> around non-smokers."[97]

     This education model would have the government sponsor 20, 30 and 60 second

commercial spots explaining exactly what the media does. It would explain the media's

own view on ethics and governing bodies, and the differences between foreign reports,

such as Al Jazeera, as compared to Western media. These commercials would also

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[96] Department of National Defence, B-GJ-005-313/FP-001 *Joint Doctrine Manual: Psychological Operations*. (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2004), A-11

[97] European Union, Health and Consumer Voice – December – 2005 Edition. *"Survey shows success of EU anti smoking advertisements."* http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/health_consumer/dyna/consumervoice/create_cv.cfm?cv_id=151; Internet; accessed 5 May 2007. See also http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/Tobacco/help/docs/post_test_help_en.pdf

identify that mainstream media is not driven as much by unbiased and neutral news as it is profit based – the same as any large company.

A controlled Counter PSYOPS campaign, based on education, will help to mitigate the effects of media and will help to offset the effects of propaganda. The overall result of these recommendations will be an increased awareness of the message and the messenger, and better empower the public at large to digest the information that they are being fed. This action is not to be interpreted as controlling the freedom of the press; rather, educating the public such that media becomes more accountable.

Part IV: Conclusion

The mediasphere plays a tremendously important role in all of our lives. Mass media entertains, informs and raises awareness of all the people it reaches. It has become a staple in the public's daily consumption and has created wealth and opportunity for many. The daily input of massaged stories has become so commonplace that we now 'snack' on news and stories from the multiple selections offered. [98] This varied sampling of stories satiates our appetites for information through headlines, and many viewers have given up getting more information on the complete story. Like all good things there is a bad side. Few members of the public, especially children, are unable to understand all the messages being transmitted through the mass media. Many of the public are now no longer able to properly interpret the information being provided to them.[99]

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[98] Kate Adie, "The Media Portrayal of the Military," in *The Media and International Security*, ed. Stephen Badsey, 51-63 (London; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), 52

[99] John E. Steinbrink and Jeremy W. Cook, "Media Literacy Skills and the "War on Terrorism"." *The Clearing House* 76, no. 6 (Jul/Aug, 2003): 284,

Most people (and all businesses are run by people) would operate ethically if given a choice. In the words of Michael Croft, "The good people – those who decide to live ethically, to bind themselves by honour instead of being tempted by gain – need to be educated to see this fact about the real world: only the honourable will be bound by honour."[100] All that being said, the mediasphere media is here to stay. It has a role to play in informing the public and presenting varied ideological viewpoints regardless of their respective agendas. Society would not be able to function effectively if the government was seen to control the media – yet it is essential that the public be made aware of the truth about reporters and educated on the reality of the media in existence today.

Some segments of society have already started to recognise the damage such as violence against others resulting from messaging transmitted by the media. Recently, the International Court of Rwanda believed that Rwandan news media executives and a news editor were responsible for inciting the killing of 800,000 Tutsis in 1993. They were charged by the International Court.[101] Granted the Rwandan genocide is not the same as modern day terrorism, but parallels can be made.

It may be worthwhile to note that in the decades prior to 9/11, fewer Americans had been killed in terrorist incidents than were killed in traffic accidents, hit by lightning bolts or drowned in the bathtub; however, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, more Americans died as a result of international terrorist activities than in all the US military deployments abroad during the same time frame.[102] The concept here is that the mediasphere, as it is currently structured, may be assisting the terrorists without the

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[100] Michael Croft, *Information Warfare …*, 12
[101] Barker, "Media Influence in the Shaping of Public Policy.", 116
[102] Michael Croft, *Information Warfare …*, 12

public fully understanding what is taking place. Terrorism is a growing and real threat, and is becoming much more dangerous due to the enabling action of the mediasphere.

This paper explored the phenomena of mass media and how it must be considered and shaped to strategic advantage in a similar way that terrain is considered and shaped in an operational environment. The evolution and role of the media and its relevancy was explored by examining the mass media's legal status and political influence. Further, the bias inherent in the media was examined, as well as the linkage of this bias to terrorist messages. The concept of manipulation of the reported story was then presented, prefaced on the concept of the public's trust of the media and governments, and the motivational factors driving mass media today. This was followed by looking at methods used to exert influence and control over the messages emanating from the mass media. That segment looked closely at how a story may be misrepresented, including propaganda being offered as news, and the use of Psychological Operations. These sections formed the basis for a recommendation on how to best mitigate against the actions and activities of the mass media through a high-level campaign plan with three lines of operation, coupled with an public education framework, to help offset the impact of mass media.

All mass media actions that potentially aid terrorism require mitigating actions. The threat and the security impact of mass media is the one security sphere in which governments and militaries cannot currently intervene directly. The mitigation of the effect of the mediasphere is not a tactical nor an operational action; rather, the plan for mitigation must be developed at the strategic level. The primary tools for mitigating the effect of mass media are found at the strategic level and must be exploited quickly.

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