

# Clausewitz in the Age of Al-Jazeera: Rethinking the Military-Media Relationship

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## Abstract

The expansion of the number of news outlets over the past 20 years ensures that military action by Western countries is accompanied by massive continuous coverage and commentary. Most analysis of the relationship between war and the media focuses either on the contentious nature of the relationship between journalists and armed forces or on the disruptive impact of news coverage on military operations. This paper argues that the relationship between developments in the media and the military should be conceptualized in a more comprehensive way. Such an approach suggests that the impact of media developments on the conduct of military operations is more radical and than is normally suggested.

The theoretical core of the paper is drawn from Clausewitz's argument that war is the continuation of politics. His analysis suggested that war must be understood as a process where the political environment within which conflict takes place shapes the dynamics of military action and where the consequences of that action affect the political environment. In consequence political change reshapes the nature of conflict.

Evidence drawn from the Kosovo Campaign and the War on Terrorism is used to explore these relationships in action.

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## Introduction

This paper argues that if we are to make sense of the relationship between the media, government and the military we need place that relationship in its historical context. Long term processes of political and technological change are creating a tighter link between the military, politics and the media and changing the nature of conflict itself. Clausewitz famously made the comment that war is the continuation of politics but what difference does it make that we live in an era of mediated politics?

Over the past twenty five years the agenda for thinking about the relationship between the military, media and public opinion has been set by the perceived lessons of Vietnam. This agenda has shaped the approach of policy-makers and academics. From the perspective of the military it has been argued that the US war effort was undermined by critical reporting: a focus on casualties and lack of progress sustained an anti war movement. On the other side of the argument analysts such as Daniel Hallin have challenged this perception arguing that media coverage was in fact largely supportive of the war effort.<sup>1</sup>

In the mid 1990s the debate shifted to focus on the perceived impact of television coverage in influencing US policy towards Kurdistan, Bosnia, Somalia and so on. It was argued that the impact of television pictures 'forced' policy makers into taking action whether it was to intervene in humanitarian crises or to pull out once intervention had actually occurred.<sup>2</sup> As with the discourse about Vietnam the issue has been the extent to which a powerful media operating from outside the policy process has been able to shape that process through its impact on public opinion. As with the earlier conflict an academic literature has developed disputing the initial claims.<sup>3</sup>

It can be argued that the Vietnam-CNN effect literature defines the problem too narrowly. Partly as a consequence of the research methodologies the media are treated as something external to the political process that pushes in to disrupt it. This might be termed an external paradigm of government-media relations. In contrast there is a growing body of work on domestic politics that suggests the media should be seen as an integral part of contemporary governance.<sup>4</sup> This process of mediatization is not confined to the domestic realm. In the international sphere the media serves as a source of information about events, about the activities of other political agents and as way of achieving positive objectives. To demonstrate that the media rarely exerts a determining influence on policy is not to demonstrate that the media are unimportant but to misunderstand what policy makers do with the media. The media can be found deeply entrenched within the policy process. The evidence for this can be found in the development of the modern apparatus of media management, the memoirs of political practitioners and academic studies that draw on interviews almost uniformly give testimony (sometimes unintentionally) to the role of the media in the contemporary political process.<sup>5</sup>

This paper takes up the issue of the relationship between government and media in the context of the War on Terrorism from this 'internal' perspective. I argue that the relationship between government, military and the media are increasingly intertwined. I tackle these issues via the work of Carl Von Clausewitz and his discussion of the relationship between the military and the political. Although Clausewitz has nothing to say about the press he provides a way of placing the issue of government-military-media relations in war time in a broader and more historical perspective than the standard discussion of censorship versus a free press.

This paper falls into three main parts I begin by outlining Clausewitz's argument about the military political relationship. I then examine some of the ways in which the changing social and technological environment over the past two centuries has affected this relationship. The third part of the paper illustrates these themes with examples from the Kosovo Conflict and the War on Terrorism drawing in particular on the case of Task Force Jacana to illustrate the relationship between the press and the military

## Clausewitz on War

Clausewitz's central claim in *On War* (1831) is that to understand warfare one must see it as a social phenomenon. War emerges from concrete circumstances and it is this that makes it comprehensible. This position was directed against two popular beliefs at the time; that war was capable of a simple

linear solution, for instance that the angle between base and army was the key to victory and that war was essentially chaotic and not subject to rational analysis.<sup>6</sup>

This view gave rise to the oft quoted maxim that war is the continuation of politics with an admixture of other means, that is violence. This simple maxim concealed a considerable complexity.

Firstly war changed over time. As the form of social organization had changed so had the nature of war. The sources of conflict and the methods used reflected the nature of the entities waging it.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, in understanding what was going on in a conflict one needed to look at the military events in a political context. Thirdly, there was a normative aspect to the formula. Clausewitz believed that force was most effective when it was used as a conscious instrument of state policy. Given the suffering caused by war this was the only morally justifiable reason for the employment of violence. Of course a normative failure would not vitiate the analytical strategy.<sup>8</sup>

Analytically and practically the way to understand war was to examine the relationship between military events and the political context of those events. In general there was a linear relationship between the scale of the objective sought and the level of force required to achieve it. In a war that was fought to defeat an opponent that aimed to totally defeat a country and occupy it one would expect major efforts to defeat the attacker. On the other hand where a much more minor objective was sought the scale of effort would be less

Clausewitz understood that events on the battlefield and in the political sphere influenced each other. A decisive battlefield victory might deter other countries from becoming involved in a conflict or it might convince them that the victor was becoming a danger to them. A victory might persuade a country that its opponent was so weak that it should increase its objectives. The knowledge that another country had decided to intervene or withdraw from a conflict would affect the morale of those doing the fighting. Thus, the political-military interaction was not simply about setting the objective and deciding the means: the political environment of the conflict encompassed all the variables that might have an impact on the military situation. Because military activity was merely one aspect of a more complex whole it followed that the narrower (military) instrument must be subordinated to the broader (political) perspective.

Having made this connection Clausewitz is concerned to explain that war is not simply politics. As he puts it do `political relations between people and between their governments stop when diplomatic notes are no longer exchanged? Is war not just another expression of their thoughts, another form of speech or writing? Its grammar, indeed may be its own, but not its logic.<sup>9</sup> Military action has its own peculiar requirements. As he commented political `considerations do not determine the posting of guards or the employment of patrols. But they are the more influential in the planning of war, of the campaign and even of the battle.<sup>10</sup>

Clausewitz provides a metatheory of war - war is shaped by the political and social environment so this is always the most appropriate axis of analysis - and a specific theory of strategy for the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The times have changed since then and how have the relationships between war and politics changed?

## **Transformations**

Although there is an enormous literature on the transformation of war since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century I want to focus on two dimensions that have particular resonance for the relationship between war and politics; firstly the emergence of a democratic, mediated political space and secondly the way in which technology has affected the relationship between the political and military spheres.

Clausewitz was writing in an era strongly marked by the impact of the French Revolution. Powerful political forces demanded greater political involvement while others resisted it. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century European political elites sought to restrict the impact of democratization on political-military decision making. But even as the old elites resisted change they came to recognize that popular sentiment was an important source of military power. Without the active involvement of large sections of the population national military power would be limited. Thus the people came to be more involved

in war. This increasing involvement led to total war. Total war in the First and Second World Wars reflected the Clausewitzian point that the day to day impact of politics declines as the scale of the conflict expands. Where two opponents aim at the total defeat of the other the requirements of military operations, mobilization and logistics tends to push political influence into the background. Political debate shrank under the force of mass mobilization and a public sphere that was dominated a consensus that was actively encouraged by the machinery of the state.<sup>11</sup>

Because Cold War conflicts were designated as limited wars there was scope for a greater degree of political questioning of the conflicts and in a public sphere that was less constrained by censorship and governmental publicity than during the earlier conflicts.<sup>12</sup> In the 1980s the aftermath of Vietnam further loosened social and political pressures for consensus. The Gulf War - as the first post cold war military conflict combined the relatively low level of direct threat to the US and its allies - hence a reluctance to impose far reaching controls on the news and comment with a new media environment. There was a growing volume of media coverage through a variety of media channels and a degree of transnationalization of the media. Coverage could come from a broader range of locations, more quickly and be beamed back across the world.<sup>13</sup>

There are at least three sets of technologically driven transformations that affect the relationship between the military and the political sphere. Firstly, changes in the nature of the relationship between field commanders and national command authorities, secondly an expansion in the political context of military action and thirdly, changes in the nature of the public sphere itself.

*Transforming the chain of command:* The first of these is the development of an integrated global system of command and control that provides decision makers in national capitals with the ability to communicate directly and in real time with military units around the world.

In the American context the origins of such systems were partly technological and partly political. The fear of surprise nuclear attack and the risks of unauthorized use of nuclear weapons were major drivers in creating a global real time communications system. The development of such systems had political and organizational effects. They reinforced the sense of the world as a single space and encouraged a tendency to see isolated events as part of a single pattern. In the Cold War context the fear that isolated events might be part of a global threat along with the fear of horizontal escalation (the geographical spread of conflict) and vertical escalation (increasing levels of violence) encouraged a desire to keep military forces on a short leash facilitated by the new command and control systems.<sup>14</sup>

The emergence of these control systems affected the chain of command. The assumption is that for a military organization to function effectively lines of responsibility should be clearly defined and that patterns of communication should, in general, follow the chain of command. These conventions, in part, grew of the impossibility of doing anything else. The development of improved command and control systems created the temptation for the political leadership to exert direct control over subordinate units and for military commanders to breach the chain of command. It also, apparently, created the possibility for command to be exerted from greater distance (both literally and figuratively).<sup>15</sup>

Despite the benefits of these systems they have their own pathologies. The danger with these systems is that the local knowledge of those on the ground is over ridden by those further back who believe that they are in a better situation to exercise control. Two recent examples illustrate these concerns. At the Battle of Tora Bora the most senior American officer present was reported to be a Lieutenant Colonel. The next highest level of command was at Central Command in Tampa, FLA. Critics of the way that the operation was handled charge that the absence of more senior commanders meant that those on the ground did not have the clout to bring in additional Coalition ground troops and prevent the escape of senior al-Qaeda figures.<sup>16</sup> Similarly helmet or UAV mounted cameras allow senior officers to watch troops in combat from a safe distance with the result that 'you get too focussed on what you can see and neglect what you can't see'.<sup>17</sup>

The arrival of e-mail in military organizations encourages lateral and diagonal communication. While going over a commander's head is not undertaken lightly functional specialists can communicate across unit boundaries in ways that create surprises for their commanders.<sup>18</sup>

What these developments suggest is a compression of the distance between political leadership, senior military commanders and those at the ground. Information about events on the ground flows back more rapidly, in greater volume and through a multiplicity of channels. Those in the field will have a greater awareness of the political requirements and situation and those in the rear will have a greater awareness of ongoing military events and their potential impact.

*The expanding political context:* If technology has expanded the flow of information within official channels it has also changed the nature of unofficial channels. The flow of information from and to the war zone via news organizations, NGOs and individuals has also expanded. Although the literature tends to place weight on the ability of military and governmental actors to shape news media access to information it should be recognized that these efforts at management are happening in an environment where technology is working against that control. Although the US media has criticised the willingness of the government to provide access for journalists the extent to which global media were able to report on a conflict in the interior of Afghanistan was striking.<sup>19</sup> The widespread adoption of satellite phone technology allowed journalists to report back in real time with eye witness reports and the views of local actors. In the period before the fall of Kabul one striking feature of media coverage (in the UK at least) was running critique of Coalition strategy from the Northern Alliance.<sup>20</sup>

The result of these information flows is to, potentially at least, change the nature of the political context of the conflict. As Schattschneider argued to expand the scope of a conflict is to change who is involved and its outcome.<sup>21</sup> As information flows out of the battlespace more quickly it becomes more feasible for external groups to exert influence through their political response to events. These external groups may be the American public, governments allied or opposed to the cause, allied publics, the Arab 'street'. Reports are events in their own right. Comments are acts.<sup>22</sup> News about responses flows back to theatre commanders and troops as well as to national command authorities. As the degree of scrutiny increases the political consequences of minor activities have to be considered. Events that were so minor that they would not be known outside the immediate area may take great significance via the process of mediation. Isolated events come to stand as signifiers for a broader picture.

*The changing public sphere:* This expansion of the political environment is connected to a change in the political discourse about war and the sphere within which this discourse takes place.

While commentary on the impact of 24 hour news has tended to focus on its significance in reporting and informational terms it has also had the effect of expanding the scope for comment, speculation, analysis and explanation.<sup>23</sup>

Even where the news outlet is faced with a developing story - like a war - it is faced with the paradox that the coverage is much faster than the action that it covers. It takes only a few moments to report that a bombing raid is taking place but the flight to the target, the return, the planning the evaluation all take hours or days. 24 hour news is confronted with the reality that war is boredom punctuated by fear and that much of what goes on is routine. The result is that the media sphere is filled not with reporting - after all there are limits to how many times a piece of information can be repeated - but with commentary and speculation.

From the point of view of policy makers this provides a running critique of the conduct of the conflict. It is a critique governed by the rules of the news cycle rather than by the reality of military and diplomatic activity.

When we bring these transformations together we see a picture where decision makers are more exposed to external criticism and debate. Direct experience combined with the political folk memory of Vietnam leads to great sensitivity to the political consequences of military action. At the same time the military command, even in theatre, are more tightly connected to the political context at home. As information flows out of the battlefield to the military-political connections with the rest of the world

become tighter. Because minor activities take on a greater visibility their political consequences have to be considered: politics may come to affect the posting of guards and the movements of patrols. The following hypotheses might apply.

- Field commanders will have declining autonomy: Because of the potential political significance of their actions their superiors will constantly monitor and seek to control these actions.
- As the diversity of media sources grow managing coverage of war will become more important: Leaders will need to shape coverage to attempt to maintain a consensus regarding the conflict even as the ability to do this declines.
- Rather than the military media relationship being simply a matter of how reporting affects public opinion the media discourse comes to have an impact on how the war is waged.

To put it crudely the separation between the political and the military as spheres of activity become blurred. The communicative elements of warfare grow into importance.

### **Evidence from Kosovo and the War on Terror**

The extent to which we can actually test these hypotheses in a systematic way will depend on further research and the availability of a much more developed set of data than can be assembled at present. However, available evidence gives a degree of plausibility to these suggestions.

#### **Kosovo**

While aspects of the Kosovo campaign remain obscure - in particular why Serbia finally conceded - it is clear that it was marked by high levels of concern over public perception of the war.<sup>24</sup>

In his study of American decision-making over Vietnam Leslie Gelb put forward the argument that the system worked perfectly - it produced a response that was the maximum politically feasible and the minimum militarily necessary.<sup>25</sup> The problem was that this was insufficient to produce the desired result. The story of the NATO assault on Yugoslavia seems to have a similar logic. There was a minimal political consensus to launch an air campaign against Milosevic but not on the military campaign that would defeat him. There was a distinctly improvised element to the campaign based on an assumption that Belgrade would cave in after two or three days of bombing.<sup>26</sup> When this did not happen the limits of the consensus became obvious. Some NATO members appear to have favoured a bombing pause and negotiations, the British appear to have been the most aggressive favouring a ground option while most of the members favoured a continuation of bombing with greater or lesser degrees of escalation. The key to being able to sustain the campaign was not military resources or casualties but the ability to sustain political support in the face of the uncertainties and contingencies of war: civilian casualties, targeting errors, the apparent ineffectiveness of air attacks in hitting Serbian units in Kosovo.<sup>27</sup>

The public face of the conflict was seen by those involved as being of extreme importance. Only by convincing Milosevic and his potential supporters of the inevitability of defeat could he be persuaded to back down. This could only happen by demonstrating allied resolve through the continuation of the campaign. Thus the presentation of the conflict became a key battlefield as NATO sought to maintain its minimal consensus. A striking illustration of Trevor Thrall's view that the pressures for constraints on the media tend to come from the political authorities is the way in which Tony Blair's chief spin doctor was instrumental in importing media management techniques from domestic politics into NATO. The representation of the conflict was seen as part of the conflict. Both sides attempted to define the dominant narrative of the conflict.<sup>28</sup>

Shaping actions to minimize political risks led to arguments over what targets were legitimate and over the risks of collateral damage. Targets had to be approved at the highest political level. The arguments over bombing harked back to Lyndon Johnson's insistence on personal control over the bombing of North Vietnam and looked forward to George W. Bush's control over the air war against Afghanistan. Despite the critiques of the conduct of Rolling Thunder the fact that the same practice endures reflects the changing political and technological environment of war.<sup>29</sup>

Wesley Clark's availability at the end of a telephone or a videoconferencing link ensured that he was aware of practically every twist and turn of the policy debate in Washington and led to a kind of management by nuance that would not be feasible in a less wired age. His superiors judged his performance as much by his media appearances and reaction to them as by any military criteria.<sup>30</sup>

In looking at the Afghan element of the War on Terrorism one might expect that the political and presentation concerns that marked the campaign in Kosovo would have disappeared. Here is the greatest global power the victim of a direct attack seeking to deal with its foes. But what we see are many of the same characteristics as in Kosovo. We see a concern with the media consequences of actions and of the importance of foreign public opinion. As in Kosovo there is the creation of an international news management mechanism.<sup>31</sup> We see the same insistence on the approval of targets at the highest levels. However it might be suggested that Kosovo and the War on Terrorism differ in that while both demonstrate a high degree of sensitivity to media coverage the levels of vulnerability is different. Sensitivity can be treated as the degree to which coverage is a concern to be monitored, managed and responded to. Vulnerability can be thought of as the potential for coverage to bring about a change in policy either directly or through its impact on the members of a coalition or those who can exert pressure on them. Because Kosovo depended on a coalition whose leader was only marginally committed to the war the degree of vulnerability was high. In the second case the relatively high level commitment serves to reduce the degree of vulnerability if not sensitivity.<sup>32</sup>

By way of illustration I offer a case study of the interplay between politics, military and the media that suggests that this linkage is not just an American phenomenon.<sup>33</sup>

### **Task Force Jacana**

In the aftermath of September 11 Britain has been the US's most vocal supporter in the War on Terror. Once operations in Afghanistan began it was widely assumed by the media, encouraged by government, that British ground forces were would be deployed in combat operations. After the liberation of Kabul Britain was quick to insert troops into Bagram air base and as part of the International Security Assistance Force. But the lack of combat operations seems to have led to a degree of frustration both in the government and the media. Thus the announcement in March that a force of Royal Marine Commandos was to be deployed on combat operations in southern Afghanistan was a cause for some excitement. The developments that followed certainly provide prima facie evidence that to support that view that between the political and military spheres are becoming ever closer, linked in large part by the news media.

The context for the deployment of Task Force Jacana was the aftermath of the Battle of Tora Bora in early December. It was widely believed that Osama Bin Laden had been able to escape because of the unreliability of allied Afghan forces.<sup>34</sup> This triggered a decision to commit coalition ground forces to similar operations. The most significant of these was Operation Anaconda in early March.<sup>35</sup> In the wake of this operation the US command requested the deployment of a British force. Largely composed of Royal Marine Commandos Task Force Jacana was trained in mountain warfare and it seemed to be a logical reinforcement for the effort on the ground.<sup>36</sup>

The deployment of the task force was accompanied by extensive media coverage assisted by the Ministry of Defence. The commander of the force, Brigadier Roger Lane, rapidly became a familiar face on television. The rhetoric around the force emphasized their capabilities, the dangers of the terrain and the prospects of fighting and casualties.<sup>37</sup> This rhetoric had a priming effect creating expectations for the media.

This expectation was not met. The force was initially deployed on Operation Ptarmigan. This was a sweep through the mountains south of Tora Bora. The media filled with commentary emphasizing the dangers of the job and the inevitability of casualties. A sceptical voice was a Conservative spokesman who pointed out that valley had already been swept by allied forces.<sup>38</sup> After days of patrolling the operation was terminated without contact with the enemy.

In early May the task force was again sent to sweep mountainous territory in Operation Snipe. This failed to come into contact with enemy forces but it did discover a large quantity of ammunition which was found and blown up (literally and figuratively) with suitable publicity. The media described the

explosion in hyperbolic terms. Almost immediately local leaders were disputing whether the munitions destroyed belonged to Al-Qaeda at all.<sup>39</sup>

After two operations without a contact Brigadier Lane felt it necessary to downplay the situation commenting that 'the need for offensive operations is beginning to dwindle and they will be completed in a matter of weeks rather than months' a view that was rebutted by Donald Rumsfeld within hours of Lane making it after it was put to him by a reporter.<sup>40</sup> As the troops returned to their base at Bagram members of the personnel of a British Army field hospital were diagnosed with a serious infection. In some quarters this was attributed to a possible biological weapons attack only for the UK media to wheel out public health specialists who attributed the probable cause to poor hygiene. There were comments about the poor living conditions of British forces versus those of the US and German troops in the area.<sup>41</sup>

Rather than the force becoming evidence of British military prowess it was becoming a joke. The British media were becoming frustrated with the lack of stories.

On Friday 17 of May Britain awoke to hear the voice of Brigadier Roger Lane announcing that 'I can confirm that the coalition has made contact with the enemy and that some have been killed'.<sup>42</sup> The Marines were once again aboard their Chinooks and moving to rescue a patrol of the Australian SAS who had been ambushed. The previous afternoon an ASAS patrol had come under fire. A second patrol had moved to its aid under fire but with the support of US AC-130 gunships. Now it was clear that 'our boys' were going in as a quick reaction force to cover the extraction of the Australians and engage the enemy force. It was later reported that within a matter of minutes the Ministry of Defence in London had to deny Brig. Lane's comments. The impression given that British troops were engaging the enemy was wrong.<sup>43</sup>

Across the Friday and the following day the initial reports were being undermined. It was reported that the men killed and injured by the American planes were locals engaged in a feud over access to woodlands (according to one source) or were firing into the air at a wedding (according to another).<sup>44</sup> For the third time the Commandos failed to make contact with the enemy.

*The Sunday Telegraph* carried a story citing an anonymous source in the MoD claiming that Brig Lane had lost the confidence of both the MoD and his subordinates and arguing for his replacement. The story further suggested that Lane had pressed his American commander to allow his exhausted men to be sent to rescue the Australians rather than an American force.<sup>45</sup> In response the Minister of Defence, Geoff Hoon, rushed onto David Frost's Sunday morning talk show to support Lane.<sup>46</sup> General Julian Thompson who had commanded 3 Commando Brigade in the Falklands Conflict popped up on Radio 4's Broadcasting House programme to support Brig. Lane. His support actually threw an unwanted sidelight on the narrative of the conflict. The failure of the enemy to engage was normal in this kind of 'counter insurgency operation'. Factually correct but nobody in the coalition was using the language of counter insurgency.<sup>47</sup>

Hoon's support for Lane was immediately undercut by the emergence of fact that the MoD had already decided to cut short Lane's tour of duty as commander of 3 Commando Brigade. The MoD then claimed that this decision had been made to free Lane for an important staff job. It then became clear that Lane in fact had no job to go to. The consequence was political criticism of Hoon and the government in general for hyping up expectations of the operations, for damaging the morale of the troops, and for incompetence in not knowing the facts. The Chief of the Defence Staff appeared in public to take responsibility for the confusion.<sup>48</sup>

In the following days stories about difficult relations between the Coalition forces at Bagram and the British Media emerged.<sup>49</sup> These helped to explain the critical tone of some of the press coverage. 'Humiliated' was the headline in the *Daily Mirror*. By Tuesday the men of 3 Bde were reported to be hurt and angered by their coverage. As one Marine was reported as saying 'How can we be humiliated when we are out on patrol and al-Qaeda won't dare to take us on?'<sup>50</sup> Subsequent reports claimed that the arguments over Brigadier Lane had damaged the morale of the forces and that criticisms had emerged from a struggle between the Navy and the Army.<sup>51</sup>

There is nothing new in the saga of Brigadier Lane. Tensions between field commanders and their superiors, between the military and political leadership, between military and media, between allies are not unusual. What is striking here though is the relative seamlessness of the whole field. British and American figures commented on each others statements, the distance between London and Bagram becomes insignificant, journalists ask marines for responses to the day's press coverage, sources in London brief against commanders in the field, local voices emerge to challenge the official account. Journalists were able to challenge the narrative of policy effectively in real time. People on the ground find that their performance is subject to media commentary and interpretation.

The government found the credibility of their policy challenged as a result of these events. By the end of Operation Condor the media were treating the activities of Task Force Jacana as somewhere between a joke and of marginal significance.<sup>52</sup> While there were undoubtedly difficulties in the media-military relationship most of the problems stemmed from the actions of the government and military. It was the government that created the expectations of combat that were not met. It was they who seemed to lack a clear view of what they wanted the journalists to do. The negative stories emerged from conflicts with the military command. Figures within the government were using the techniques of media politics to advance their own positions and attack their opponents. It was the military and political leadership that was unclear about both about the situation on the ground in Afghanistan and the overall policy context. It was the military and political leadership that effectively failed to develop an effective system to coordinate its message.

The activities of Task Force Jacana provide example of what might be termed Gould's Law `a modern media environment, competence and good communications are inseparable: you cannot have one without the other.<sup>53</sup> There is no point at being good at your job if you cannot communicate it effectively. The media will define you as a failure anyway. This was coined in the context of British domestic politics but it is increasingly true of international politics.

## Conclusions

The growing interpenetration of media and government is recognized in the emergence of Information Operations Doctrine. It has been suggested that although many in the military blamed the media for defeat in Vietnam actually managing the media remained a low priority.<sup>54</sup> Over the past decade as the military have sought to come to terms with the impact of new information and communications technologies it has come to be recognized that information is not just about computers but provides a way to link a number of military activities including psychological operations, deception, truth projection and public affairs. The remit of the Office of Strategic Influence as it was described in the media reflected precisely the logical appreciation that briefing the media and black propaganda can potentially influence an opponent. The furore that erupted around the OSI followed precisely from a feeling that it broke the rules that govern the relations between government and media. This is true but the emergence of Information Operations doctrine and initiatives like the OSI are recognition that the information revolution is changing the extent to which communication can reach audiences and perhaps modify their information, attitudes and behaviour.<sup>55</sup>

This changing environment has implications for the media, for citizens and governments. Perhaps most importantly it reduces the ability of national governments to define events for their citizens. The ability of the global communications system to gather and disseminate information has vastly increased. This has the potential to change the scope of conflict and of course change its outcomes. In such an environment is no surprise that the sensitivity of governments to the media increases. The consequence of a more transparent and public environment is to force governments to engage with the media and publics to tell their story. What the effects of this will be will vary from case to case (and from country to country) but it can only increase the interpenetration of war, politics and the media.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Of the critics see for instance William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), p. 420, For academic views Daniel C. Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War': The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1986), A. Trevor Thrall, *War in the Media Age* (Cresskill, NJ.: Hampton, 2000).
- <sup>2</sup> For instance James F. Hoge, Jr., 'Media Pervasiveness', *Foreign Affairs*, 73, 4 (July/August 1994), pp. 136-44.
- <sup>3</sup> Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, 'Humanitarian Crises and US Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered', *Political Communication*, 12 (1995), pp. 411-29, Steven Livingston, *Clarifying the CNN Effect*, Research Paper R-18 (Cambridge, MA.: Joan Shorenstein Center, June 1997), Piers Robinson, 'The CNN Effect: Can the News Media Drive Foreign Policy', *Review of international Studies*, 25, 2 (April 1999), pp. 301-9.
- <sup>4</sup> For instance Timothy E. Cook, *Governing With the News: The News Media as a Political Institution* (Chicago, IL.: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, third edition. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1997),).
- <sup>5</sup> For interview based studies see Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), W. Philips Davison, 'News Media and International Negotiation', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 38, 2 (Summer 1974), pp. 174-91, Yoel Cohen, Media Diplomacy, Yoel Cohen, *Media Diplomacy: The Foreign Office in the Mass Communications Age* (London: Frank Cass, 1986), the memoirs of press secretaries will of course emphasize the importance of the media but recent diplomatic memoirs contain much of interest about the way in the media is used. For press officers see Larry Speakes, *Speaking Out: The Reagan Presidency From Inside the White House* (New York: Avon, 1988), Marlin Fitzwater, *Call the Briefing* (New York: Times Books, 1995), For diplomats see George P. Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), Carl Bildt, *Peace Journey* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1998), Richard Holbrooke: *To End a War*, revised edition (New York: Modern Library, 1999)
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- <sup>7</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 586-93.
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