

Facing Down the Global Village: The Media Impact

Samuel Feist

I believe television is going to be the test of the modern world, and that in this new opportunity to see beyond the range of our vision, we shall discover either a new and unbearable disturbance of the general peace or a saving radiance in the sky.
— E.B.White¹

Over the next few years, the media will take on a substantially new form. As the Internet, print media, and television converge, the traditional methods by which people learn about the world they live in will change forever. Near-universal access to the Internet may be a real possibility. Responding to new customers, the American media industry is already global in scope and owes no allegiance to any government.

Whether globalization in the media will promote peace cannot be known. (The telegraph brought countries closer together, but did not prevent war.) It is known, however, that live pictures from the battlefield and raw coverage of human suffering influence attitudes toward intervention—the so-called Cable News Network (CNN) effect. It is also known that the American public appears more willing to accept casualties than its leaders are. The U.S. Government must develop an Internet strategy to deal with the new global media in order to minimize potential dangers and take advantage of growing opportunities.

Key Phenomena

Digitalization and Convergence

Technology will be the driving force as the media evolve from print-based and broadcast-based methods of communication to become an integrated computer-based and computer-transmitted multimedia hybrid available to almost everyone who has a computer. Technological developments will change the very way mass communications are transmitted and received.

Samuel Feist is executive producer of public affairs programs for the Cable News Network in Washington. He previously was senior producer, producer, and associate producer in the CNN Washington bureau and also worked at CNN news headquarters in Atlanta.

On the transmission side, digitalization has already begun to dramatically shrink the size of broadcasting equipment. Just a few years ago, up-linking broadcast-quality television pictures to a satellite required a truckload of equipment. At the end of the Persian Gulf War, ABC and CBS showed live pictures of U.S. troops entering Kuwait. To get those pictures on the air, the networks used four trucks, a ton of equipment, and a portable satellite dish.² Today, such a transmission requires only a few suitcases of gear. In the next 10 years, the conversion from analog transmission of television signals to digital transmission will allow more pictures to be transmitted from smaller transmission devices—and at a lower cost. The size of cameras will shrink to the point that a high-quality camera will fit in a coat pocket. A television journalist will be able to broadcast a live picture around the world with a small camera, a laptop computer, and a satellite telephone. Broadcasters are already transmitting digitized, low-resolution grainy video over satellite phones. In January 2000, CNN broadcast low-resolution live pictures from Afghanistan of the release of hostages who had been held on an Indian Airlines airplane. A technical crew of one with only a small digital camera, a computer, and a hand-held satellite phone handled the entire broadcast. The day is near when a news organization will be able to send a single individual into a war zone and be able to collect and transmit broadcast-quality video live around the world.

Print media, too, have been touched by the technology. A reporter and a photographer can file their stories from anywhere. Like a television image, a digital photograph can be transmitted by wireless telephone or satellite phone from any point on the globe. That image can be published in a newspaper or magazine, or it can be published immediately on a Web site.

On the reception side, converging technology is rapidly increasing the number of people who can receive international broadcasts either via television or via the Internet. Around the world, the shrinking costs of small satellite receiving dishes and the rapid expansion of cable television have allowed hundreds of millions of people to see the broadcasts of CNN, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), and other Western television news organizations. The use of fiber optic and other broadband technologies is exploding. As bandwidth availability increases, consumers will be able to receive news over the Internet in the form of streaming television broadcasts, radio broadcasts, and electronic newspapers and information sites. Currently, more than a billion people have access to CNN and the BBC. Over the next decade, dramatic reductions in the cost of computer equipment will make the Internet and, therefore, the global media available to many more billions of people.

Certainly, universal access to the Internet is not coming any time soon—but the next decade will see a staggering increase in the number of connections. Just as there are still hundreds of millions of people without electricity today, there will always be people who are not connected to the Internet. For now, it is largely the elites who are connected; as time goes on, however, the masses will have access as well. In the developed nations, the masses may be almost entirely connected within the next decade. In the less developed nations, universal Internet access will take much longer, but it is possible that some of the underdeveloped regions that today do not even have telephone lines may become connected through wireless technology. In many developing

areas, it may simply be more cost-effective to use wireless transmission rather than invest in the enormous infrastructure required to connect every home with hard telephone lines. The impact of converging media technologies will be felt in all nations. Even if every citizen is not online, virtually every community will be. Individual communities, whether in the United States, in Europe, or in rural China, will be more closely connected than ever before.

As technologies continue to converge, programs that are now available on broadcast, cable, and satellite television will soon be available on the Internet. In fact, most American broadcasters already provide some low-resolution forms of their programs on the Internet. Eventually, everyone with an Internet connection will have almost universal access to the world's television programs. People around the globe will be able to watch the same newscast at the same time. National borders will be largely irrelevant as far as reception of news images and information are concerned. Within 15 years, it is possible, if not likely, that television and the Internet may be one and the same. Because of the nature of the Internet, it is virtually impossible for a government to successfully limit access to information via the Web.

The Rise of the Global News Media Organizations

The days of the patriotic American news organization are over. In fact, the days of the purely American news organizations may be dwindling. News Corp, an Australian-U.S. multinational company, owns Fox News Channel, for example. CNN, while owned by U.S.-based Time Warner, will say that it is not an "American" news organization, but rather a "global" news organization. Even the BBC is on its way toward privatization and partial international ownership.

Perhaps even more important than ownership is audience. The majority of CNN viewers live outside the United States. The majority of BBC viewers live outside Great Britain. NBC has millions of viewers of its Superchannel outside the United States. If CNN presents itself as an American news channel, it cannot successfully compete with the BBC; to compete, CNN must present itself as an international channel. In fact, CNN has gone so far as to prohibit the use of the word *foreign* on and off the air. To CNN, no country, person, or language is foreign. Everything is global. CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC all broadcast internationally.

In the coming years, international markets for American broadcasters will become even more important. There is little audience growth potential in the United States. The real growth potential is overseas. This reality will cause American news organizations to be even more sensitive to the issue of any possible American bias in a news presentation.

The method by which U.S.-based news organizations collect their news and acquire their video will also change significantly over the next decade. In order to reduce costs, American broadcast networks have slashed the number of international bureaus that they operate. Similarly, newspapers have dramatically reduced the number of foreign correspondents that they maintain. Because the costs are much lower, news organizations have already begun to rely on other international news agencies or local stringers for both wire stories and raw video for much of their international coverage. They will come to rely more and more on relationships with non-American

broadcasters (often those employed by state-owned television stations) rather than on their own correspondents and crews.

All American networks are dependent on non-U.S. sources for their international news. Fox News Channel shares its international news-gathering operations with its sister organization, Europe's SKY television channel. CNN, while it maintains 37 bureaus around the world, still depends on agencies, other private international television networks and channels, and state-run media outlets. During the Kosovo conflict, state-run Yugoslav television provided U.S.-based networks with daily video feeds of deaths caused by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air strikes. Obviously, Yugoslav television tended to show only pictures that supported its war efforts and enhanced its public relations objectives. Nevertheless, all U.S.-based networks aired Yugoslav television feeds daily.

Even those correspondents who do report full-time for U.S.-based organizations are much less likely to be Americans in the future than in the past. There are two key reasons cited for the reduction in staffers overseas. The most obvious reason is cost. It simply costs more to send Americans, along with their families, to live overseas than it does to hire local journalists. Second, news executives are beginning to realize that local hires who understand the local history, language, and nuances may be better able to report on that country than an American who is less familiar with it. The significance of this development is that reporters will have even less of a patriotic and cultural connection to the United States.

The End of the News Cycle

Instant electronic communication in the form of 24-hour news networks and the Internet have virtually eliminated the news cycle. Because most news is now reported instantaneously, there is no longer time for governments or newsmakers to react and put the developments into context. During World War II, news footage traveled very slowly. The few current pictures seen of the war were flown across the ocean, distributed to movie houses, and projected on the silver screen. Those pictures were sometimes months old before the public saw them. Even in the Vietnam War era, film had to be flown out of combat zones, developed, and then either shipped to the United States or up-linked from Asia. Deadlines were largely driven either by the need to make it on the evening news or by the need to make the morning papers. This meant that policymakers generally had until 5 p.m. in the United States to craft a response to a question or a new issue. Today, everything has changed. Wars are broadcast live around the world. Officials often learn of events by viewing them live on television—sometimes long before they hear from their own government sources. The significance for policymakers is that there is little time to think, plan, and debate strategy between news events.

The rise of 24-hour news networks and the burgeoning number of regional news channels around the world have dramatically increased the competitive pressure between news organizations. Beyond the American networks (for example, CNN, MSNBC, the Fox News Channel), there are 24-hour news channels in Turkey, the Arab world, Latin America, Germany, and Russia, just to name a few. Journalism has always placed a premium on "being first." Reporters place great weight on breaking

stories. Today, news channels largely compete with wire services such as Reuters, Agence France-Presse, and the Associated Press to break stories. The competition is already fierce, and in the not too distant future, the competition will intensify. As more Internet-based news organizations develop and newspapers place greater emphasis on Web sites, stories will break even more frequently throughout the day; political and military leaders will have even less time to respond. The 24-hour news cycle has been replaced with a constant news cycle.

The So-Called CNN Effect

Sometimes called the CNN Factor, the CNN effect is a theory that compelling television images, such as images of a humanitarian crisis, cause U.S. policymakers to intervene in a situation when such an intervention might otherwise not be in the U.S. national interest. One description calls it “a loss of policy control on the part of the policymakers because of the power of the media.”³ The foreign editor of *USA Today* suggests that television’s pictures of a humanitarian crisis evoke an emotional outcry from the public to “do something.”⁴ If the CNN effect helps encourage U.S. leaders to intervene in a crisis, there is an opposite effect that may help encourage leaders to withdraw—and this occurs when images of U.S. casualties are broadcast. The example most often cited is the image of a U.S. Ranger dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in 1993. Even if the images of the Ranger did not cause President Clinton to withdraw U.S. forces, there is little doubt that the television picture forced the President to come up with a rapid response to existing calls for U.S. withdrawal.⁵

There is a fair amount of debate regarding the actual impact of images. Whether images have a “dramatic impact” as some say or a “minimal impact” as others say—images can make a difference and decisionmakers must certainly take them into account. The more images of an international crisis or conflict that are broadcast, the more likely it is that those images will influence the actions of policymakers.

Impact of Globalization and Media on International Affairs

The global village is coming, and international relations will never be the same. The global media will continue to have a greater and greater impact on diplomacy, democracy, and international commerce.

Universal Access to Information

Despite their best efforts, governments will not be able to maintain walls between their countries and the outside world. It is simply not possible to prevent cross-border information flows in the Internet Age. Access to the Internet includes access to the world’s news media. Even in China, where the government attempts to censor the Internet, a growing number of citizens have learned how to bypass the government controls and access the entire World Wide Web.⁶ Avoiding government censors can be as easy as making an international telephone call to an unrestricted Internet service provider. Users can now surf the Web anonymously and communicate with others anonymously—making it ever more difficult for a repressive government to limit

access. As people around the world become “connected,” they will also become informed. Citizens living under even the most repressive regimes will know the details of life in other countries. The days in which whole populations are limited to one or two state-run channels are almost over. Soon, because of technology convergence, dozens of channels in different languages will be available. Such availability leads to exposure to diverse cultures, movies, news, and languages.

The new Syrian leader, Bashar Assad, has long promoted Internet services for his people. He has called for “the Internet in every home” in Syria. Although the government has long controlled the flow of news and information to the Syrian people, Assad has never proposed censoring or blocking access to the Internet. Assad’s spokesman explained that because the Internet will soon be available by satellite, it would be impossible for the government to block or limit access, even if the government had such a goal.⁷ For the first time, Syrians will have access to unfiltered news and information from around the world. What has been a relatively closed society will instantly become more open and connected to the rest of the world.

Some believe that a world more interconnected through trade, culture, and communication is an inherently safer one. According to that theory, a country with extensive economic and cultural ties would not risk the economic harm and cultural upheaval that would result from hostile military actions. If it is true that this interconnectedness creates a safer world, then globalization of the media would contribute to that safety. The development of the global village, however, hardly eliminates conflict. There were those who theorized that greater international trade and international contact after the turn of the 20th century would reduce the likelihood of war or eliminate it altogether. Clearly, they were wrong. Others see globalization and expanded access to the media as a destabilizing force, at least temporarily. Whether it be Russia, Indonesia, or Yugoslavia—access to the global media and the Internet can contribute to the undermining of a government by empowering opposition groups and by fomenting unrest among the people.

Converging communications technologies can also provide a platform for internal dissent and for protest groups. The riots and demonstrations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle in late 1999 were largely organized over the Internet. Before that, in 1998, protesters successfully disrupted a meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which was working toward completion of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in Paris.⁸ That conference was suspended not only because of street protests largely organized on the Internet, but also because of a coordinated campaign by activists to overload the negotiators with critical information, complaints, and Internet-based protests from many directions.⁹ To respond to such challenges, governments and multilateral organizations must be even better prepared for protests and for a barrage of conflicting information—all designed to scuttle the work of these bodies. Because it allows people to organize and communicate in relative anonymity, the Internet is an excellent organizational tool, particularly when a regime stifles public dissent and opposition. This is a prime example of how globalization and technology can be destabilizing factors within a nation-state.

Nevertheless, a more interconnected world can be only good for the spread of democracy in the long run. A recent A.T. Kearney study noted that rapidly globalizing countries enjoyed significantly expanded political and civil liberties.¹⁰ A population that is informed about the value and benefits of democracy is more difficult to suppress. Pro-democracy leaders can use the technology of the Internet to communicate and connect with one another. They can access the global news media to gain reliable information about their country and about the outside world. Free and open media also benefit democracy by helping to expose corruption in a government or in an economic system. Furthermore, any nation that attempts to cut off its population from the Internet risks economic isolation, as the global economy is becoming more and more dependent on e-commerce. Even old-economy companies now rely on the Internet to do business. International markets react to world events on a minute-by-minute basis.

To survive economically, developing countries will be pressured to bridge the digital divide or risk falling further behind. Once media convergence is complete, anyone doing business in the global economy will also have access to global media, including the BBC, Voice of America, *The New York Times*, the Cartoon Network, and MTV. It is not possible to limit one without restricting access to the other.

As recently as the war in Kosovo, an opposition radio station in Belgrade, B-92, continued to operate—even after the Milosevic regime shut down its transmitters. B-92 received millions of hits per day on its Web site after the transmitter was turned off.¹¹ Serbs were not the only beneficiaries of B-92 resilience. The international media regularly relied on information gathered by its reporters and used its Web site as a source for what was happening inside Serbia.

The Kosovo war also demonstrated how the Internet will be a critical source of information for actors on all sides of future wars. News organization Web sites such as CNN.com, MSNBC, WashingtonPost.com, and ABCNEWS.com offered extensive coverage of the war. They also provided links to nongovernmental organizations' Web sites, to B-92, and to official Yugoslav government and NATO sites. Citizens in Kosovo and Serbia became reporters themselves by posting letters and emails of first-person accounts of the war.¹² The U.S.-based media regularly transmitted those first-person accounts over broadcast and cable television networks. The United States and NATO regularly cited these accounts as evidence of atrocities by the Serb regime. The media's global village was clearly in full operation.

Impact on Diplomacy

Direct diplomacy, too, is being dramatically changed by the expansion of the global media. No longer does communication between governments rely on the filter of professional diplomats. On November 14, 1998, for example, President Clinton authorized an attack on Iraq because of its continued defiance of the United Nations (UN) resolutions. After U.S. planes had been dispatched to attack Iraq, an official told a CNN reporter in Baghdad that Iraq would comply with UN demands and that a fax to the UN Secretary General was forthcoming. U.S. officials monitoring CNN quickly briefed the President, and with literally minutes to go before missiles were launched, the attack was aborted. No diplomat-to-diplomat communications took

place. Iraq agreed to the U.S. terms essentially by informing CNN. ABC News anchor Peter Jennings says that “the idea of having calm and contemplation with diplomacy went out the window with globalization in the media.”¹³

Former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott tells of being on the telephone with Russia’s Deputy Foreign Minister during the 1993 attempted Russian coup. During their conversation, Talbott says, both men fell silent while watching pictures of Russian commandos storming the parliament building. Both diplomats then realized that they were watching the same television image on CNN. They discussed the significance of the event in real time.¹⁴ In this instance, the broadcast available around the world helped create a diplomatic opportunity, binding two officials during a political crisis. In coming years, as technology makes news gathering and satellite transmission easier, almost every crisis will be visible live around the world.

Impact of Globalization and the Media on U.S. Security

Don't tell (the press) a thing. After it's over, tell them who won.
— Ernest King¹⁵

Only a fool expects the authorities to tell him what the news is.
— Russell Baker¹⁶

Technology is changing the way that the media cover the world and the way that people all around the world are receiving the media. If pictures are already powerful today, then the power of pictures can only increase as more pictures become available to more people. Whether the CNN effect has a minimal impact or a dramatic impact on policy, one thing is certain: the more often images of human misery are broadcast, the more likely U.S. policymakers will have to decide whether to take action.

The CNN effect is controversial, but it is useful to examine how some in and out of government view the power of a heart-wrenching picture. Former President George Bush tells how the decision to commit U.S. troops to Somalia came after he and Mrs. Bush saw pictures of starving children on television; he says he telephoned his national security team and said, “Please come over to the White House. . . . We can’t watch this anymore. You’ve got to do something.”¹⁷ Why did Bush act? Whether officials take action because of actual demands by the public, because of perceived demands by the public, or because of a personal reaction to a television image, when the United States acts in part because of poignant images, the CNN effect is operating. Andrew Natsios, the Assistant Administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development during the Bush administration, claims to have deliberately used the news media to get the attention of policymakers in Washington.¹⁸ Here, a government official used the media to reach his own bosses in the government, attempting to generate an American response to the crisis in Somalia. Natsios was certainly successful at attracting additional media attention to Somalia. That media attention, he says, helped encourage civilian and military leaders to take action. President Bush’s statement mentioned earlier suggests that Natsios’s strategy may have been entirely effective.

By providing the media with powerful pictures of human despair, groups and governments can help encourage other governments to act. For example, when Saddam Hussein's army pushed the Kurds into the mountains of Southern Turkey in 1991, the Turkish government allowed television cameras and satellite dishes into those areas, which were not normally open to outsiders. The images were powerful; they showed the Kurds freezing, dying, and living in horrid conditions.¹⁹ The images certainly contributed to the international response, which included humanitarian aid and the military protection of Operation *Provide Comfort*.²⁰ Similarly, television images recorded by a freelance cameraman documenting the siege of the Bosnian town of Srebrenica in 1993 have been credited with pressuring the international community to respond. Even though the United States, Britain, and France were, at the time, opposed to safe havens for Bosnian Muslims, television pictures had such an impact on other UN members that the Security Council authorized safe areas.²¹ As collection and transmission of such images become easier and less expensive, the likelihood that the images will trigger a response increases.

Powerful pictures can also give policymakers much needed support for an existing policy. The troubling images of the 1994 Sarajevo market bombing caused international outrage and may have given the Clinton administration an important tool in its efforts to persuade NATO to act. Then White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers says, "Here the images helped the Clinton administration move the policy forward and it was successful."²² After the market bombing, the administration persuaded NATO to declare an area around Sarajevo a safe zone, free of Serb heavy weapons. Thus, a tragic picture was used to advance a particular policy.

A reason for the lack of consensus on the CNN effect is that powerful television images of human tragedies have not consistently led to U.S. action. Media images certainly helped precipitate action in the cases of the Kurds in 1991, Somalia in 1992, Sarajevo in 1994, and Kosovo in 1999. But there are just as many examples of equally horrifying pictures with no U.S. military response: Bosnia in 1992, Rwanda in 1994, Burundi in 1996, Sierra Leone in 1998, Chechnya and East Timor in 1999. The bottom line is that pictures are powerful and can help justify action, but it is far from certain that powerful images *alone* will lead to U.S. action. There will always be other factors involved. For example, there is general consensus that despite horrifying pictures out of Chechnya in 1999, the United States would not and could not intervene militarily because it would not be in the U.S. interest to engage the Russian military. The CNN effect simply suggests that powerful images will put pressure on the United States to intervene, but will by no means guarantee U.S. intervention.

Power of Pictures: The Pressure to Withdraw

The other side of the CNN effect—a *reverse* CNN effect—occurs when television pictures of American casualties cause officials to withdraw from military action. The classic case of this reverse CNN effect, as discussed earlier, was the Clinton administration's decision to withdraw from Somalia soon after television broadcasts of an Army Ranger dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. After studying the CNN effect on U.S. policymakers, Duke University Professors Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi concluded that the images did precipitate the U.S. withdrawal. Feaver and

Gelpi postulate that the government officials did not act because of a public outcry—but rather they acted because of a *perceived* public outcry.²³ Feaver and Gelpi analyzed interviews with almost 5,000 Americans, including senior military officers, and found that the public's tolerance for American casualties far exceeded the expectations of policymakers. They suggest that the foreign policy community generally believes that U.S. citizens demand zero casualties, while in reality, the public demands no such thing.

Other scholars who have examined the CNN effect and the public's tolerance for casualties have also concluded that the public actually has a far higher tolerance than officials think it has.²⁴ Many in the media (and many high-level officials as well) are convinced that the public is entirely casualty-averse. BBC reporter Nik Gowing, who has examined this phenomenon for Harvard's Kennedy School and for the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, debunks the conventional wisdom and argues that a "political paranoia" exists with respect to the possibility of casualties. Gowing and others note that casualty-aversion can be significantly reduced by political preparation of the public in advance of military action and by general bipartisan approval of the mission.²⁵ This finding puts additional pressure on U.S. officials to more clearly articulate a sound policy rationale for military action before casualties appear in the newspapers or on television. An extreme aversion to casualties on the part of policymakers not only can pressure them to withdraw but also can pressure them to change their conduct of a war. Many believe that an aversion to casualties hindered NATO ability to prosecute the air war in Kosovo and ultimately put thousands of innocent civilians at risk. It was widely reported that bombing runs were almost always conducted from 15,000 feet or more in order to protect NATO pilots.²⁶ While pilots may have been protected, the accuracy of the bombing missions was reduced, and the potential for mistakes was greatly increased. The CNN effect helps to exaggerate the problem because officials fear that the media will report extensively on each casualty and will broadcast image after image of any captured or downed American pilot. At the same time, globalization has assisted the news media in rapidly broadcasting images of civilian casualties that were caused, in part, by the aversion of political and military leaders to incurring American casualties.

The Potential for Misplaced Priorities

Powerful pictures have the potential to put pressure on the United States to intervene in conflicts that might not involve vital U.S. interests. As technology makes it possible for more journalists to broadcast from more places, U.S. policymakers will be confronted with more television images of more tragedies and more requests to "do something." The Clinton administration began to articulate a rationale to describe the point at which the United States should act militarily to prevent human tragedies. President Clinton said just after the Kosovo conflict that "if the world community has the power to stop it, we ought to stop genocide and ethnic cleansing."²⁷ Although Clinton was inconsistent in his application of this "Clinton Doctrine," television images clearly help drive the policy. Whether the images become a tool for officials to persuade the American public of the need to act or whether the images themselves persuade the officials to act (for example, Bush in Somalia), the images remain a

critical component in the decision to take action. One way or another, the image has an impact.

There is a constant danger that the United States will utilize its military to address humanitarian concerns at the expense of other vital security concerns. Former Defense Secretary William Perry and former Assistant Secretary Ashton Carter have analyzed threats to U.S. security and have divided the threats into three categories. At the top of their hierarchy is their A list, which includes threats to national survival, such as the nuclear threat from the former Soviet Union. In the middle, the B list, are threats such as those mounted by North Korea and Iraq. At the bottom, the C-list threats are other potential conflicts that do not directly threaten U.S. vital interests, such as those in Kosovo, Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, and Haiti.²⁸ Perry and Carter's former DOD colleague Joseph Nye argues that their C list dominates the media attention in the Information Age and, therefore, diverts attention from A-list strategic issues. Nye suggests that the media's focus on the C list may cause the United States to overreach and be ill prepared for any major crisis that threatens vital interests.²⁹ This, of course, is one of the key potential dangers of the CNN effect.

Other Dangers and Opportunities

There are other dangers posed by constant coverage of a conflict, particularly once the United States begins military action. CNN learned during the Persian Gulf War that broadcasting a war in real time was not only informative but also profitable. Viewers flocked to CNN as live pictures of jets taking off, Scud missile attacks, and military briefings were shown around the clock. As the number of 24-hour news channels multiplies, wars can be seen live on television from many different angles.

As technology permits greater flexibility to broadcast from anywhere, there will be even more cameras, more live pictures, and more angles. There is an obvious danger, of course, that these news broadcasts will reveal sensitive military information that puts the lives of U.S. service personnel in danger. During the Kosovo war, for example, one of the new 24-hour news channels aired live video of U.S. planes taking off from Italy headed toward Yugoslavia, which could have given Serbia the critical information needed to help shoot down those planes.³⁰ Today, real-time pictures on CNN and the BBC are available on the television of every official and high-ranking military commander on all sides of a conflict. As communication technologies converge, those same officials and commanders will have an almost unlimited number of news sources available via computer. There will be no geographical limit to television broadcasts. Television images will go out over the Web and be available everywhere—to friend and foe alike. The constant presence of the media also puts additional pressure on the United States not to harm innocents. There is little doubt that a U.S. military action such as the bombing of Dresden in World War II, no matter how militarily valuable, would be subjected to considerable criticism under the lights of today's global media.

In the new global media environment, the Pentagon will have less ability to control the news media. This represents a significant break from the past. In World War II, journalists landed with the troops, wore uniforms, and reported the news in the most patriotic of fashions. Even as late as the Vietnam War, journalists traveled with

the troops and, for much of the war, reported a relatively sanitized view. The Johnson administration had a great deal of influence over the news bosses during the Vietnam conflict.³¹ Today, news organizations are unlikely to support a war effort in unscrutinizing ways. CNN Chairman Tom Johnson told *Brill's Content*, "We have to take off our hats as Americans when we are journalists. . . . I cannot be an extension of any government."³² Part of this results from post-Vietnam skepticism; part, from the development of the international marketplace for news. Networks with a clearly pro-American bias cannot compete as easily for viewers around the world. Johnson says that while CNN will not air reports of secret troop movements, the network would also not air reports of secret movements "by any government if it would jeopardize any combatants."³³ The point is that the media, even U.S.-based media, are not necessarily on the side of the United States.

The Kosovo conflict raised another issue that is potentially troubling. Many journalists and military analysts were extremely skeptical about the information that they received from the Pentagon and from NATO during the war. General Bernard Trainor, a highly decorated retired Marine and a regular analyst for television networks and *The New York Times*, said, "The media manipulation finally got so transparent that I didn't believe anything [NATO Spokesman] Jamie Shea and [Pentagon Spokesman] Ken Bacon had to say."³⁴ One Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist called the briefings "baloney-laden."³⁵ Journalists' fears about press briefings during the Kosovo war turned out to be well founded. While NATO briefers claimed during the war, for example, that 120 Serb tanks had been destroyed, a post-war Air Force study revealed only 14 tanks destroyed.³⁶ Episodes such as this can quickly erode the trust between the media and the Pentagon.

The danger for the U.S. military that occurs when the media lose faith in the official spokespeople is that the media will strike out on their own in search of the story. Most in the media already believe that journalists should be out digging up the facts on their own without depending on military spokespeople. Nevertheless, as long as the spokespeople have the trust of the journalists, the journalists are more likely to feel pressures to toe the party line. Again, because journalists, particularly television journalists, are newly enabled by technology to travel lightly, more of them will be behind the lines digging for a story and broadcasting video from places heretofore rarely seen in wartime. While such reporting probably benefits the public's right to know, it is likely to complicate the mission of the U.S. military. First, journalists are in danger of becoming casualties themselves. Second, journalists doing their own reporting will probably not be reporting the Pentagon message of the day. They will report what they see. Had there been many journalists in Kosovo during 1999, they would have reported that Serb positions were not damaged to the extent suggested by NATO. The media may have learned an important lesson during the Kosovo conflict, and it is likely that the next time, many news organizations will think twice about reporting a war from the comfort of a briefing room.

Television pictures during the time of conflict can be useful to the U.S. military as sources of immediate information. Certainly, CNN presence inside Iraq during the Persian Gulf War provided U.S. commanders with confirmation of their successful bombing operations. In later U.S. strikes on Iraq, CNN reporters were again able to

broadcast immediate information about the attacks. During the Kosovo conflict, there was no question that Serbs had found the downed U.S. Stealth fighter when Serb television pictures of the wreckage were broadcast on all American networks simultaneously only minutes after the story of a possible downed jet had leaked. For better or for worse, the White House first learned that Russian troops had taken control of the Pristina Airport in Kosovo by watching the Russians live on CNN and MSNBC. There are times when the media will provide faster and better information to civilian and military leaders than the military itself will provide. It is no accident that virtually every computer in the operations center of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has a window open showing CNN. But this valuable immediate information should not be confused with accurate intelligence and analysis. The media do an excellent job of reporting what is happening now. They do not do a particularly good job of predicting the future. The media failed to predict India and Pakistan's nuclear tests, and they failed to predict Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. In fact, most journalists would not consider predictions to be a proper role for news organizations. The media's strength is in reporting, not in analyzing events or in predicting the future.

The globalization of the media creates another strategic opportunity for the United States—the projection of “soft power.” Soft power has been explained as the ability to attract citizens of other countries through cultural and ideological appeal in order to connect with and influence them.³⁷ Joseph Nye argues that massive flows of cheap information have expanded the number of contacts across national borders, and the United States is in the best position to make use of such power.³⁸ American television networks and Web sites can be powerful instruments of democracy. The Internet has the potential to penetrate a repressive or closed society far more effectively than, for example, Radio Liberty or the Voice of America does today. During times of conflict and times of peace, the United States will benefit if the citizens of its adversaries have access to international media broadcasts, Web sites, and newspapers.

The same technological changes that make it difficult for repressive regimes to stop the information flow into their countries will also make it difficult for the United States to stop those regimes from broadcasting propaganda to its people. During the Kosovo war, NATO Commander Wesley Clark ordered the bombing of Serb television transmitters to prevent the enemy from broadcasting its propaganda to its people. The bombing largely knocked Serb television off the air and made it more difficult for Slobodan Milosevic to communicate with his people. In the new media world, however, blowing up a television transmitter will not stop the information flow. Even during the Kosovo conflict, Serb Web sites sprang up with official and quasi-official information. In order to stop the information flow, at the current time, the United States would have to destroy the telephone system because it is through the telephone system that people get their Internet connections today. However, in the very near future, satellite-based Internet connections and wireless Internet connections will be common, so it is likely to become very difficult for any single military actor to successfully disconnect a country's population from the Internet. The United States will not be able to disconnect a population from the Internet with a surgical strike. The Internet, in fact, was designed to survive a nuclear attack. From the perspective of the United States, the advantage of propaganda in the Internet Age is that if a repressed

population can receive “official” propaganda from their government, then they will also have access to thousands of other information sources. On the Internet, all propaganda must compete equally with other sources for the hearts of the people.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The global village is coming. It will arrive sooner than many people think. The process of globalization in the media began some time ago and now continues at a rapid pace. The media in the United States are no longer the “American media”; they are now becoming global, with no allegiance to any country. They are global in scope, global in audience, global in ownership, global in capabilities, and global in political loyalties. We have only just begun to imagine a world where everyone can watch the same newscasts at the same time. We have only just begun to imagine a world where news cameras will be everywhere, showing every humanitarian disaster and every casualty of war in everyone’s living rooms. Although CNN and the BBC are widely available outside the United States, they are not yet available to the masses around the globe. The convergence of technologies will change this. As the Internet’s rapid expansion continues, as broadband capability increases, and as television broadcasts turn into broadcasts across the Internet, the global village will become much closer to reality. The U.S. Government must prepare now for its arrival.

The U.S. Government must recognize that these technological changes will change the way “soft power” is projected. Traditional broadcasts of pro-American propaganda will soon be an anachronism. The future will be all about the Internet and about the competition among ideas in people’s minds. Just as every successful American company must have an “Internet strategy,” so too must the U.S. Government have an Internet strategy to reach out to citizens around the world. The communication revolution will change the way that people get their information. Repressed peoples will suddenly have access to more sources of information and ideas than ever before. The United States must have a strategy to deal with, and take advantage of, this technological revolution so that the global and local competition for ideas includes the very ideas that the United States is willing to defend with its Armed Forces.

The United States should make it a priority to strongly encourage the expansion of Internet connections around the world, particularly in developing and unstable regions. Using the U.S. Agency for International Development program, the United States should offer technology and Internet access as a major component of its foreign aid program. The declining cost of computers and Internet connections makes it possible for the United States alone to have a powerful impact. Bridging the digital divide not only puts the global media into the hands of people everywhere, but also it enables previously unconnected populations to more fully participate in the global economy. The proliferation of such technology could have an enormous impact on the underdeveloped populations of Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America. It could also have a significant impact on democracy if citizens of authoritarian nations such as Syria embrace the Internet. Access to the Internet brings access to the global media and a free exchange of ideas. Authoritarian regimes simply cannot shut off the flow of information when their populations have access to the Internet.

The technology advances that will connect remote peoples to the Internet are the same advances that will help television journalists beam more and more pictures of humanitarian crises from the most remote locations. Pictures of human misery alone, however, should not be enough to precipitate a U.S. response. As discussed earlier, civilian and military leaders appear to be influenced by such images far more so than the American public. With a global media, there will be more such pictures. It is simply not possible for the United States to respond each time as the Clinton Doctrine in its purest form might require. The global media will continue to fill the airwaves with images that demand action to resolve Perry and Carter's C-list crises (minor threats with only indirect impact on security). This is the essence of the CNN effect. The media are not likely to heavily cover the A-list stories until a major conflict is virtually under way. Policymakers must remember that the news media do not necessarily reflect national interests. The news media today have a global audience with global interests. U.S. officials must be careful to make certain that the images put forth by the global media do not cause the C-list crises to take priority over the A-list threats simply because the former are in the news.

The other lesson to be drawn from a discussion of the CNN effect is that the public appears far more willing to accept casualties than are the leaders. If the public has been psychologically prepared for a conflict—if the goal, mission, and risks have been adequately explained—then the public will likely be willing to accept casualties, even if the images of the casualties appear on television. The disconnect between the public's perceived aversion to casualties and the public's actual aversion to casualties is worthy of additional exploration and study.

The media do an excellent job of reporting what is happening now. The media do not do such a good job of predicting the future. One reason that the C-list crises attract so many headlines is that the journalists can grasp onto something. The media can show pictures of starving children and report on the tragedy befalling them. Journalists have a much more difficult time predicting an imminent nuclear arms race on the Subcontinent, for example. Officials should not fall into the trap of relying on the media to predict the future as well as it reports on the present. Some who advocate a reduction in funds for U.S. intelligence gathering have suggested that with CNN, why does the United States need a CIA? The media are only an effective intelligence tool to provide information on what happened yesterday and what happened today—not what is likely to happen tomorrow. This makes the media relatively unreliable partners in intelligence gathering.

The media will, however, remain critical partners in the spread of ideas and information. As the print and broadcast media transform themselves over the next few years, the impact will be felt by everyone, in all areas of society, in all parts of the globe. Globalization is changing the media, and the Internet is where these changes will manifest themselves. The Internet is a powerful weapon for those seeking to advance U.S. interests. That weapon can benefit and harm U.S. security interests. Effective U.S. leadership in the future will require an understanding of the consequences of globalization plus a bold media and Internet strategy that will put these new tools to their most productive use. 🌐

Notes

- ¹ E.B. White, "Removal," *Harper's Magazine*, 1938.
- ² Daniel Schorr, "The Media and the World Around Us," *The Christian Science Monitor*, July 17, 1998, 15.
- ³ Steven Livingston, as cited by Warren Strobel, "The CNN Effect," *American Journalism Review*, May 1996, 32.
- ⁴ Johanna Neuman, "The Media's Impact on International Affairs, Then and Now," *SAIS Review* (Winter/Spring 1996), 109.
- ⁵ Strobel, "The CNN Effect," 36.
- ⁶ Steve Bell, "Impact of the Global Media Revolution," *USA Today Magazine*, March 1, 1999, 31.
- ⁷ Jennifer Ludden, "Democratic Change Taking Place in Syria," *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, May 18, 2000.
- ⁸ Jeffrey Ayers, "From the Streets to the Internet: The Cyber-Diffusion of Contention," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November 1, 1999), 132.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ *Globalization Ledger*, published by A.T. Kearney, Inc., April 2000, 9, citing data published by Freedom House.
- ¹¹ J.D. Lasica, "Conveying the War in Human Terms," *American Journalism Review* (June 1, 1999).
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ Peter Jennings, interviewed by CNN's Larry King on "Larry King Live," June 1, 2000.
- ¹⁴ Strobe Talbott, "Globalization and Diplomacy: A Practitioner's Perspective," *Foreign Policy* (September 22, 1997), 68.
- ¹⁵ Quoted by Christopher Buckley, "Newtie's Greatest Hits," *The New York Times Book Review* (March 12, 1995), 1.
- ¹⁶ Russell Baker, *The Good Times* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1989).
- ¹⁷ Peter Feaver and Christopher Gelpi, "Casualty Aversion: How Many Deaths Are Acceptable? A Surprising Answer," *The Washington Post*, November 7, 1999, Outlook section, B3.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Nik Gowing, *Media Coverage—Help or Hindrance in Conflict Prevention: A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict*, September 1997, 16.
- ²⁰ Gowing, *Media Coverage*, citing abstract from Steering Committee for Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience* (Danish Foreign Ministry, 1996).
- ²¹ Ibid., 17.
- ²² Strobel, "The CNN Effect," 32.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Gowing, *Media Coverage*, 12.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Dana Priest, "Soldiering On in a War of Constraints; NATO's Top General Works Around Politics," *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1999, A1.
- ²⁷ William J. Clinton, interviewed by Wolf Blitzer on "CNN Late Edition," July 20, 1999.

²⁸ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Redefining the National Interest," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1, 1999), 24.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ James Kitfield, "Command and Control the Messenger," *National Journal* (September 11, 1999), 2457.

³¹ Stephen Brill, "War Gets the Monica Treatment," *Brill's Content* (July/August 1999), 136.

³² *Ibid.*, 107.

³³ *Ibid.*, 136.

³⁴ Kitfield, "Command and Control the Messenger," 2457.

³⁵ Patrick Sloyan, "The Fog of War," *American Journalism Review* (June 1999), 33.

³⁶ John Barry and Evan Thomas, "The Kosovo Cover-Up," *Newsweek*, May 15, 2000, 23–26.

³⁷ Nye, "Redefining the National Interest," 24.

³⁸ *Ibid.*