

# INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY AND THE PRELUDE TO THE 2003 INVASION OF IRAQ

African News Coverage and Assessment

**Emmanuel C. Alozie**

**Abstract** / Using framing as a theoretical and methodological framework, this study presents an analysis of the interpretation that the sub-Saharan African press put upon events prior to the 2003 American-led military invasion of Iraq. It was found that the press opposed policies and efforts intended to initiate military action. This opposition was based on the contention that a western-led attack on Iraq, without an international consensus, would produce great political, economic and social upheaval in the Middle East, which might destabilize and have a negative impact upon African states.

**Keywords** / communication / critical textual analysis / diplomacy / framing / globalization / hegemony / international news / Iraq / propaganda / social adaptation / United Nations / United States

## Introduction and Background

In the fall of 2002 when President George W. Bush launched his campaign to seek domestic and international support for action against Iraq, for its alleged failures to comply with several United Nations resolutions and to rid the country of weapons of mass destruction, the world community greeted his campaign with criticism and skepticism (Osamgbi, 2003). Despite this unease, the Bush administration was able to secure the unanimous vote of the United Nations Security Council to pass Resolution 1441 (Kelley, 2003a).

Passed in November 2002, UNSCR 1441 calls for the immediate and complete disarmament of Iraq of its prohibited weapons. The resolution also required Iraq to provide to UN monitoring agencies full access to its facilities, means of transportation, individuals and documents (*Business Day*, 2003e). Since 1990, when Iraq invaded and occupied Kuwait leading to the Gulf War of 1991, the UN has passed 17 resolutions aimed at ensuring that Iraq dismantled its weapons of mass destruction. Most of these resolutions required Iraq to cooperate fully with UN weapons inspectors and allow immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access to all relevant areas (*Business Day*, 2003e).

Diplomatic sources and reports indicated that the majority vote of the Security Council in favor of Resolution 1441 was intended to exert pressure on Iraq to cooperate fully with the weapons inspectors and to give them more time in which to do their work. They also supported the resolution in an attempt to forestall military action by the US and its allies. While the rest of the world regarded 1441 as a means of avoiding war, the Bush administration interpreted it as a license to take military action when, and if, they believed the Iraqi administration was not in compliance with it.

As diplomats worked feverishly to seek a peaceful resolution, the Bush administration and its allies began a military build-up in the Gulf. This build-up and US calls for immediate forceful action engendered disagreements in the UN and world capitals (*Business Day*, 2002f). This crisis brought to the forefront tensions within international diplomacy and global discourse. Protests against military action took place in cities all over the world, while in the US the policy enjoyed a degree of support.

Differing interpretations of Resolution 1441 clashed at the beginning of 2003 when it became obvious that the Bush administration and its allies were determined to use force to remove the Saddam Hussein administration as a result of its alleged 12-year failure to comply with UN resolutions (*Business Day*, 2003f). Led by the US, Britain, Spain and Australia supported the use of force, while France led the campaign against military intervention. Critics accused the Bush administration of using Iraq as a pretext to enact its doctrine of pre-emptive action (Stremlau, 2003b). If Iraq was attacked without obvious provocation, Bush would become the first American president to go to war as an aggressor (Bindra, 2003). Adopted shortly after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the pre-emptive war policy states that the US has the right to strike at any country or group it perceives as threatening its political, social and economic security, even if the alleged country has not taken any hostile action against the US (Stremlau, 2003b).

## Significance of the Study

This article explores sub-Saharan African mass media coverage of major events leading to the Anglo-American war with Iraq, from 12 September 2002 when President Bush launched his campaign to dislodge Saddam Hussein, to 20 March 2003 when he announced the onset of the war. It is often implied that the philosophical, moral and political perspectives prevailing within a country and a region color news media coverage of foreign affairs. For instance, as Morgenthau (1957) suggests, 'All the news that's fit to print' means one thing for *The New York Times*, another for *Pravda* and yet another for *The Hindustani Times*.

Drawing from literature on international news discourse with an emphasis on media framing, propaganda, globalization, hegemony and social adaptation, this study employs critical textual analysis to discern how the sub-Saharan African press interpreted events leading to the Anglo-American war against Iraq, the goal being to determine if there was a congruence between the position taken by African news organizations and the consensus among African leaders and the public to seek a peaceful solution. The following questions guide this study:

1. What were the dominant themes and framework in sub-Saharan African news discourse?
2. Did their coverage reinforce the call for a peaceful solution to the crisis?

This analysis focuses on four leading news outlets from three African countries: South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. South Africa and Nigeria were chosen because they are dominant in sub-Saharan Africa, while Kenya was selected because it has suffered from terrorism in recent years and publishes a regional weekly press. The three countries also contain significant Muslim and Christian populations, as well as other faiths. It has been argued that in countries where people profess different faiths (Christianity, Islamism and traditional beliefs), the mass media play a great role in promoting understanding on national and international issues, especially in cases where there may be religious connotations, as was the case with the Anglo-American Iraq War.

## **Role of Mass Media in Africa**

The establishment of national media outlets and telecommunications, coupled with cooperative efforts among African governments to develop communication links, attests that African governments realize the importance of effective communication media as modalities for promoting national development and international diplomacy (Pratt, 1996). In spite of this recognition, Africa lags woefully behind in the development of the mass media industry as well as information and communication technologies (de Beer, 2004). Hachten (2004) blames the underdeveloped status of African media and communication components on inadequate financial, technical and telecommunication resources and the lack of professional human resources. De Beer (2004) includes the legacy of slavery, apartheid, colonialism and imperialism as contributing factors. Wilcox (1975) blamed the false starts of mass media and communication components on African governments and political leaders who control and manipulate them to achieve their personal aims at the expense of the masses. Zaffiro (1993) identified the following characteristics of both democratic and autocratic African states:

1. Skewed, urban-based centralization of infrastructure, resources and audiences.
2. An emphasis in coverage and content upon words, comings and goings, and images of top national political leaders, particularly the president.
3. Heavy and often conflicting demands upon media institutions to serve national development, inform, educate and to entertain.
4. A general lack of diversity of information and focus between different national media organs.
5. Structures which ensure top-down communications flow with susceptibility to monopolization and political manipulation from the top.

In this era of globalization, when information and communication technologies have become the mainstay of international economic and political activity, many

African governments are shifting their policies to enhance growth in the communications sector. Governments in the regions are increasing cooperative efforts to improve communications. As democratic and capitalistic impulses take hold, African media and communication sectors are beginning to react. Their revival can be attributed to greater press freedom and economic liberalization that have promoted private ownership, technical acquisition and enhanced professional assistance and development (Alozie, 2005; Onwudiwe and Ibelema, 2003), the rate of development of information and communication technologies is very slow (Eribo, 2004). However, the level of progress differs between nations. Few Africans, including Nigerians, Kenyans and Rwandans, are regular internet users, owing to cost and access problems.

Regarding press freedom, degrees of control and restriction differ between African countries. For example, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa have a tradition of liberal and independent press (BBC, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). The South African press was restricted during apartheid, but since the introduction of democratic rule in 1994, the mass media sector has gained increased freedom.

Kenya is one of the few African countries in which a large middle class is a source of substantial advertising revenue. In the past, the government dominated and owned the broadcast media. Following recent liberalization policies, the ownership of electronic and printed media is now in both public and private hands. Unlike in the past when only Nairobi and other major cities enjoyed adequate coverage, the reach of radio and television is expanding nationally. Self-censorship was also the norm under various administrations (BBC, 2006a). Like most Africans, Kenyans rely on the broadcast media, particularly radio, for news. The BBC World Service, the Voice of America and Radio France Internationale are relayed on full-time FM stations to various parts of the country (BBC, 2006a).

Ownership of Nigerian print media rests in both private and government hands. Currently, Nigeria has about 150 consumer publications including dailies, magazines, periodicals and industrial and professional journals. All 36 states run their own radio stations, and most of them operate television services. Broadcast services reach rural and urban areas in most regions, but television viewing tends to be concentrated more in urban areas, and among the affluent (BBC, 2006b). Nigeria has a handful of privately owned broadcasting outlets, but the television industry is subject to high costs and scarce advertising revenues (BBC, 2006b). International services are reaching Nigeria through the internet, cable and satellite services. Radio is also ubiquitous and serves as the main source of information for Nigerians of all socioeconomic and educational levels.

Of all of the countries in Africa, South Africa has been described as the 'continent's major media player' because it possesses the most sophisticated and diverse print and broadcast outlets, which reflect the nation's character (BBC, 2006c; Horwitz, 2001). The country has about 10 major national dailies (including *The Star*, *Daily Sun*, *Beeld* [Afrikaans daily], *Mail and Guardian*, *Business Day*, *Financial Mail* and *Sunday Times*), three major national and cable networks (South African Broadcasting Corporation, e.tv and M-Net) and five radio networks (including South African Broadcasting Corporation, Channel Africa and 702 Talk Radio) that

broadcast to the entire country (BBC, 2006c). The South African telecommunication industry plays a dominant role in the development of (African or world?) information and communication technologies (Horwitz, 2001). Regarded as the richest country in Africa, the South African government and commercial media rely on advertising for most of their income (BBC, 2006c; Horwitz, 2001). However, state-owned broadcasting outlets also receive a subsidy from government (Horwitz, 2001).

Prior to the introduction of majority rule, whites dominated the commercial media, and the apartheid regime's control of the mass media was strict and repressive. After the introduction of majority rule, the government deregulated the media sector and that produced a proliferation of mass media and gave rise to black and Asian media ownership. Democratic rule helped to introduce a culture in which 'laws, regulation and political control of media content are considered to be moderate and there is little evidence of repressive measures against journalists' (BBC, 2006c; Horwitz, 2001).

In spite of deregulation and increased private participation, the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) remains the dominant player in broadcasting with three national television networks, two pay-TV and 20 regional and national radio services in 11 languages as well as community stations targeting local neighborhoods or ethnic groups (BBC, 2006c; Horwitz, 2001).

In contrast to their output during the apartheid era, mass media outlets in South Africa publish reports and commentaries critical of the government and the state-owned SABC has ceased to be a government mouthpiece. It has demonstrated its independence through its investigative and critical reports on the government and society at large.

In order to carry out this study it is necessary to consider the impact and influence of elite national media upon governments, international relations and society at large, especially during times of crisis and to make an appropriate choice of media outlets upon which to base an analysis. In the case of the current study, which explores how the sub-Saharan African press interpreted events leading to the 2003 American-led military invasion of Iraq, several factors have been identified in the literature (Auerbach and Bloch-Elkon, 2005). These factors include:

- The influence of an outlet within a particular society.
- Its ability to influence and shape opinion of policy-makers and the public.
- The scope of coverage (regional, domestic and international).
- International reach and readership, and philosophical orientation.

In view of this the following outlets were chosen: Kenya's *Daily Nation on the Web* and *The East African [Standard] on the Web*; Nigeria's *ThisDayonline* and South Africa's *Business Day*. The *Daily Nation on the Web* is the dominant national daily of Kenya and *The East African on the Web* is an influential regional medium in East Africa. *ThisDayonline* is one of Nigeria's leading national dailies, and South Africa's *Business Day* is the country's most influential business-oriented daily.

## **International News Coverage and Sub-Saharan African: An Exploration**

International news discourse deals with information about other countries, events involving more than one nation and the relaying of stories across boundaries. This was the case in the Gulf crises of 1990–1 and 2002–3 (Hur, 1984). Studies of international news concentrate on the flow of stories from developed to developing nations, or from developing to developed nations, and upon the frequency of international news coverage (Hawk, 1992; Hester, 1971; Lent, 1977; Okigbo et al., 2002; Pate, 1992) and the content and portrayal of events and regions (Carroll and Tuggle, 1997; Golding and Elliot, 1974; Hawk, 1992; Larson, 1983). Others have examined how media perspectives influence world opinion and how this influence happens (Chrisco, 1994; Rusciano, 1993). For example, international news coverage is often influenced by the needs, cultural values and political orientation of a country (Chaudhary, 2001).

Since national interests influence news discourse, and in turn the discourse within a nation's media influences opinion in a society (Morgenthau, 1957), for comparison purposes it is therefore important to explore how the media in other countries covered major events such as the 2002–3 Gulf crisis. Studies have established that mass media coverage and analysis of subject are largely approached from the perspective, interest and position of that country (Chrisco, 1994; Rusciano, 1992).

However, some studies have been very critical of the American press for failing to reflect the complexity of perspectives extant within the US (Chomsky, 1992; Lee and Devitt, 1991). That failure has denied the American public the information to reach their own decisions on a crisis that led to a war in which thousands of people lost their lives and which caused extensive environmental and destruction of property (Chomsky, 1992; Lee and Devitt, 1991). However, an analysis of the news coverage of the Gulf crisis in nine prestigious American newspapers differed (Fico et al., 1994). That study found that the newspapers examined produced a higher number of stories favoring antiwar advocates in their inside pages, while their front pages tended to be more balanced (arguments both for and against the war were presented).

## **Framing, Propaganda, Globalization and Social Adaptation: A Nexus**

International discourse, such as that produced by the Gulf crisis, can be studied and understood through an integrated perspective, in which propaganda influences on the media are explored in connection with the role of news media in public opinion-building and the globalization of international relations (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2000). An important component of such a perspective concerns the exploration of the role hegemony plays in international crisis discourse in an era of globalization.

In most societies, the mass media operate as a public forum where the values and vision of a society are conveyed to its members as civic responsibilities and social realities. To portray and convey these values and realities to a community, the mass

media rely on news and related discourses (Park, 1955; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). As a product, news discourse allows consumers to receive, consume, perceive and think about issues and events. News assists the public in developing, understanding and establishing an opinion about international and domestic issues and events (Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson et al., 1992; Jensen, 1987).

However, several factors influence the processing and delivering of news discourse, including: sources of news, newsmakers, journalists functioning as gatekeepers and forms of delivery (Herman and Chomsky, 1988; Lorimer and Gasher, 2001). Sources refer to those officials that provide journalists with information (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1981). They also serve as newsmakers if the discourse involves framing them. Herman and Chomsky (1988) point out that sources and newsmakers provide journalists with slanted information to fit their own agenda. For example, when the Bush administration began its campaign to dislodge Hussein, the administration gave the news media information that would support its stance. Top officials of the administration served as newsmakers. Hussein also used the national and international media to defend his administration by attempting to demonstrate his cooperation with the UN by working towards disarmament.

As gatekeepers, journalists select and decide what the news is and what is published or broadcast (Gans, 1979). In this role, they are influenced by their professional conventions, training, societal values, political orientations, views on an issue and societal perceptions (Lorimer and Gasher, 2001). Studies on international news have found that the news media in a particular society tend to produce news discourse that reflects and reinforces the view of the establishment (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Media framing, personal experience and popular wisdom influence how people use information received from the media to make sense of a subject (global media event) such as the 2002–3 Gulf crisis (Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson et al., 1992; Jensen, 1987; Lepre et al., 2003). Thus (2000) describes global media events as any event that draws instantaneous worldwide coverage and consumption.

Form also influences the delivery and perception of news. Gatekeepers employ a variety of story-telling narrative structures to deliver their product. Narratives convey the notion that a recipient is seeing, witnessing, knowing and making sense of the world (Bird and Dardenne, 1988). Narrative structure leads people to believe they are seeing, feeling, learning and making sense of the world around them (Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Entman, 1991; Jensen, 1987). A variety of framing devices are also utilized including metaphor, plot, catchphrases, characters, rhetorical devices, a discussion of the root(s) of a subject, moral appeals, ideological vision and journalistic conventions and functions (Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson et al., 1992; Jensen, 1987; Lepre et al., 2003).

In the context of the 2002–3 Anglo–Iraq crisis, the aforementioned activities were played out globally as was the earlier 1990–1 Gulf crisis; this demonstrates the extent and the manner in which a nation's foreign and security policies are affected in a seamless world. Globalization entails ever increasingly complex social connections and interconnections among states worldwide in a manner that makes

events, issues and problems in one part of the world trigger major ramifications for individuals and communities thousand of miles apart (Giddens, 1990, 1991).

Proponents of globalization assumed that at its inception globalization would enhance homogeneity, unification and harmony between states and societies – leading to political and economic order (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2000; Uche, 1997). These predictions have not come true. The world has witnessed growing civilizational, societal, ethnic, regional and indeed individual self-consciousness, producing an era of disorder (Robertson, 1992). The divisions that occurred in the former Yugoslavia and disagreements on political and socioeconomic directions taken in the world during the past 15 years demonstrate the negative impact of globalization (CNN, 2001).

## Method

Qualitative studies including rhetorical and textual criticisms are concerned with the explorative description, analysis, interpretation and evaluation of persuasive techniques in human and mass communications (Brummett, 1994; Mohanty, 2000). The approach examines themes, values, topic categories, images and texture of stories to discern their direction. Critical textual analysis of newspaper stories is drawn from studies that suggest that news conveys social values, that is, that news takes on meaning and resonance beyond conveying 'facts' about 'events' (Weston, 2003). Weston (2003) adds that critical textual analysis draws on studies of journalistic practices dealing with selection, exclusion, emphasis and organization through reporters and editors who mold events or situations into 'stories' (Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson et al., 1992; Jensen, 1987; Lepre et al., 2003).

Rhetorical and textual criticism helps to discern the omissions of potential problem definitions, explanations, evaluations and recommendations in news discourse because the omission of these frames is as important as their inclusion in guiding and influencing the target audience. When some points of view and arguments are omitted, those omitted become salient (Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Brummett, 1994; Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989; Gamson et al., 1992; Jensen, 1987; Lepre et al., 2003; Mohanty, 2000).

The application of critical textual analysis entails sequential and multiple reading of the source text(s), initially to gain an understanding of the stories, while taking descriptive notes on the content (Gavrilos, 2002). The articles were then read a second time, along with detailed note taking aimed at the identification of recurrent themes, values and topic categories. These were labeled to develop a framework for the third reading – the purpose of which is to provide an in-depth interpretation of the articles. With that in mind, the third reading process involves the application of critical analysis techniques to gain a deeper understanding of the messages (explicit and implicit) within the texts; to discern their implication, connection, stance and values in relation to the theoretical analytical framework in use and the research questions under consideration.



## Result and Analysis

When President Bush called upon on the world community to use force to disarm Iraq because the Hussein administration continued to flout successive UN resolutions requiring it to disarm, the world community at first wavered and then advocated a peaceful solution. A peaceful solution was sought because many argued that war would produce unintended consequences and that many questions had not been answered:

1. How would a war influence the relationship between nations and between peoples of different faiths?
2. How would a war affect the ability of the world community to work in concert in addressing common concerns in the future?
3. Would a war exacerbate terrorism and diminish international cooperation to fight it?

The results of this study demonstrate that these points did influence world opinion.

The analysis produced several themes and frames that went against the policies of the Bush administration. The antiwar themes and orientations that emerged included:

1. Give weapons inspectors more time to do their work. Inspection works.
2. Allow diplomatic negotiations to continue in order to resolve the crisis peacefully.
3. The UN remains relevant.
4. A war will scuttle international diplomacy.
5. The US lacks understanding of the world.
6. The Americans have not proven their case.
7. The US is arrogant and wants to dictate to the world.
8. The US and her western allies want to impose their ideologies and will in order to dominate the world.
9. The US is suffering diplomatic isolation.
10. The West has double standards.
11. Africans have a mission to stop war mongering through active political initiatives.
12. A war would create political instability both within and outside Africa.
13. Muslims within Africa would regard a war as a religious war (*ji*had).
14. A war would have adverse economic consequences for Africa and the developing world.
15. Africa would be neglected.

On the other hand, there were themes and frames that advocated the use of force to disarm Iraq:

1. Iraq must be forced to comply in an effort to avoid the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

2. Africans should cooperate, in order to avoid offending the US and her western allies.
3. Saddam is a bad apple.
4. The world must build and maintain a sense of cooperation and coalition.

The contribution to understanding made by textual analysis depends on the analytical approach of the analyst and the ability to discern any omissions from a discourse. Having applied inductive and deductive reasoning to the data gathered, the study concluded that African news coverage and assessment paid less attention to the crisis and diluted or omitted the rationales the US and her allies proffered as grounds for military action against the Hussein administration. These just causes include:

1. Maintaining the national security of the US and those of her allies at home and abroad.
2. Maintaining the economic stability of the US and the world.
3. Enhancing Israeli security.
4. Promoting peace negotiations between Israelis and the Palestinians.
5. Liberating the people of Iraq from the clutches of a brutal regime that had dominated their political existence for more than two decades, taken them to war(s), supported terrorism, used chemical weapons against them and destroyed their infrastructure.
6. Spreading democracy and economic liberalization in the Middle East.
7. Ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction by seizing those in the hands of a tyrant that had used them against his people and Iran.
8. Fighting terrorism by overthrowing a regime that supports terrorists morally and financially.
9. Finally, the fact should be stated that the president took an understandable exception to Hussein's unsuccessful attempt 'to kill my dad' during his visit to Kuwait after the first Gulf War in the mid-1990s (quite a personal motivation for his zealous pursuit of Hussein that cost hundreds of American and thousands of Iraqi dead and the possible disintegration of Iraq and destabilization of the region) ('Justifications for a War Against Iraq', 2004).

Based on preceding themes, orientations and omissions established in this study, the stance taken by the African mass media on the invasion of Iraq may be classified within seven main areas:

1. Diplomacy/negotiations and politics/politicking;
2. Economic;
3. Inspection works;
4. Sociocultural, political and religious domination;
5. Rising independence;
6. Pro-Bush policies and the use of force; and
7. Just cause (war).

Africa's triple heritage of a rich indigenous inheritance, Islamic culture and the impact of western imperialism has shaped the contemporary African experience, which in turn has influenced these propositions (Mazrui, 1986). A detailed exploration of these frames follows.

## *Diplomacy and Negotiations*

To avoid the suffering associated with war, the media of sub-Saharan Africa regarded diplomatic negotiations as the best method of peaceful crisis resolution (Stremlau, 2003a; *Business Day*, 2002c). The region's media gave extensive coverage to diplomatic activities both within and outside the UN (Hartley, 2003). The diplomatic, or lack of diplomatic activity of African countries received critical attention from the *Daily Nation* (2003c). When most African countries failed to declare their position on the crisis, the *Daily Nation* (2003a) questioned their silence and urged them to stop hiding behind the African Union's call that, 'there should be a second UN resolution before military action', which was considered a weak position by the paper on the imminent war.

Former South African president Nelson Mandela's pronouncement that: 'world peace could only be achieved only if all nations, including the most powerful, adhered to its [the UN] founding principles' and heeded calls for diplomatic resolution as a moral stance (*Business Day*, 2002j: 1) was described by Wanyeki (2003) as Mandela coming to the rescue of African leaders by indicating that the continent's stance for diplomatic negotiations must be allowed to take its course, at a time when they were cowed and reluctant to express their position.

As the US and her allies sought a second resolution, the sub-Saharan African media commended Angola, Cameroon, the Guineas and the African members of the UN Security Council for their steadfast and courageous decision not to change their stance, despite intensive lobbying by the US (bullying) to vote in favor of the resolution authorizing force (Kelley, 2003a).

The media of sub-Saharan Africa regarded the failure of the US to gain the support of Turkey, the European Union, France, China, Germany and the Organization of the Islamic Conference as amounting to diplomatic isolation. Power (2002a) asked if the world was drifting away from the US. Describing the imminent war against Iraq as 'unjustified', *Saturday Nation on the Web* (2003) called the decision of these and other nations and organizations not to support the war or offer assistance, 'commendable'. The article reminded the US and her allies that they 'must remember that the Gulf War circumstances where America had many allies no longer obtains' and warned 'war against Iraq will not be a walk over'.

In addition to diplomacy and negotiations, the assessment of the African press involved politics and politicking. The political undertone of the African press advocated that African leaders and diplomats should engage the UN, international organizations, Iraq, the US and its allies to arrive at a consensus. They argued, that if the world in committee does not achieve an international consensus, international politics and diplomacy would be upset. The US and her allies would then be put under pressure to act alone as they have indicated or to join the consensus. This

sentiment was exemplified at a Nonaligned Movement Summit in Malaysia when the South African president quoted from a 1922 W.B. Yeats poem:

*Things fall apart;  
The centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (Cited in Stremmlau, 2003c)*

This quote, Stremmlau argues, demonstrated Mbeki's resolve to exploit his Northern and Southern political connections to advance the cause of peace as he had done earlier in producing a foreign policy that helped South Africans transform and transcend their legacy of separation. During the height of the crisis, Katzenellenbogen (2003b) described the South African leader as a 'peacemaker' in international politicking. South Africa organized a meeting of the Nonaligned Movement and persuaded the Security Council to hold an open debate in which UN members could participate. South Africa also played an influential role in persuading the African Union and members of the Nonaligned Movement to adopt the political posture of opposing military force.

The media of sub-Saharan Africa expressed the view that an attack on Iraq would visit dire political consequences on Africa and the Middle East (Bibala, 2002). Agreeing with this view, Stremmlau (2003c) quoted Mbeki, who said 'the danger of any military campaign to disarm Iraq not clearly UN-endorsed could spark domestic strife within SA along religious and racial lines'. This fear of the unforeseen consequences of military action was not limited to Africa. Citing the bombing in Bali, Indonesia, the Middle East crisis, nuclear proliferation and the fight against terrorism, the sub-Saharan African press argued that the US could not achieve its broader political goals on its own. To achieve these political goals, Stremmlau (2003b) argued, 'it will entail reconstructing Iraq, resolving the Israeli crisis, disarming North Korea, and countering an endless list of terrorist threats'.

Considering their staunch support of international consensus, the sub-Saharan African press tended to be ambivalent toward African countries that supported an attack on Iraq without a UN mandate. When the US identified Uganda, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Eritrea as supporters of the war on the day that the US-led attacks began, *The East African* (2003) reported that some Ugandan parliamentarians were in opposition to that support. Opponents of government policy in favor of force tabled a motion to urge British and American legislative bodies to compel their governments to avoid military action against Iraq. With a banner headline that stated: 'War: US Warming Up to "Willing" East African States', *The East African* acknowledged that the relationship between the US and the East African states who agreed with the use of force was on the upswing, while a cooler approach was being taken toward Kenya and Tanzania, both victims of terrorist attacks.

## ***Economic Consequences***

The economic impact of an attack gained a great deal of attention in the African press. Accounts and commentaries dealt with the short- and long-term economic impact of the war on Africa and on a global scale. In the short run, the sub-Saharan

African media argued that Africa would suffer immensely. Calling the prospect of a US attack on Iraq the hottest international issue, *Daily Nation* (2003b) stated, 'we cannot look at the likelihood of such a war without considering how it will impact our own economic, security and geopolitical interests'.

The press also argued that the prospects of an Anglo–Iraq war contributed to the higher price of transport services, as well as petrochemicals. For example, in January 2003 when the price of oil reportedly went up, this was attributed to apparent stockpiling by the US in preparation for war (*Daily Nation*, 2003d). The prospect of a war was blamed for the immediate decline in tourism (Bindra, 2003). Other short-term economic problems associated with the war included declining local and international stock prices, declining foreign investments and borrowing from foreign financial institutions (*ThisDayonline*, 2003a) and a growing number of weakened African and international currencies (*ThisDayonline*, 2003b). The sub-Saharan African media also argued that the war would have an adverse effect on the global economy by worsening the sluggish conditions the world economy had suffered in recent years (*Daily Nation*, 2003b; Stremmlau, 2003c; *ThisDayonline*, 2003a, 2003b).

In the long term, Africa argued that if Iraq is attacked and the war drags on, the US, Europe and other donor groups and organizations would neglect Africa. *Daily Nation* (2003e: 3) underscored the impact of the crisis on Africa, stating: 'as it is now, the Iraqi issue is eclipsing other world needs to focus on, such issues as the fight against AIDS, pervasive hunger in Africa'.

When Bush canceled a proposed visit to Africa, *Daily Nation* (2002a) reported that the fears of Africans have been realized. The paper cited *The Washington Post*, which condemned the cancellation and argued that: 'Africa is taking a back seat in policymaking' (*Daily Nation*, 2002a). The story stated that the cancellation of the visit would deter the World Bank and International Monetary Fund from releasing about US\$200 million in suspended aid that Kenya would have received if the president had visited after Kenya's successful election and the peaceful transition of power in 2002.

Press accounts stated that the African Union's antiwar stance created a rift between the continent, the US and her allies. That rift may lead to economic reprisals against those nations that opposed the US (*The East African*, 2003). However, the sub-Saharan African press also noted that the US was paying more attention to oil-producing countries in order to cultivate them as an alternative source of energy, rather than the Middle East (Kelley, 2002).

## *Weapons Inspections Work*

In an address to the UN in September 2002, Bush stated that if Iraq does not comply with the 'just demands of peace and security' to disarm 'action will be taken' (CNN/US, 2002). The US would act with or without UN sanction. He added that his administration was prepared to take military action to disarm Hussein of his weapons of mass destruction – calling the UN efforts to disarm Iraq and Iraqi compliance 'a decade of deception and defiance' (CNN/US, 2002).

The world perceived Bush's push for military action and willingness to act unilaterally as the reckless, dangerous and obnoxious act of a superpower that required immediate attention and amicable resolution. Bush's drive generated a flurry of activities on weapons inspections at the UN and world capitals. The Security Council met and passed Resolution 1441; Iraq agreed to comply, enhanced its cooperation with inspectors and offered a new report about its weapons program as 1441 demanded. The UN inspectors continued their inspections and offered periodic reports to the council. Despite these positive movements, the US, Britain and Spain insisted weapons inspections were not working and demanded a second resolution permitting the use of force.

Like most people and leaders in other parts of the world, African leaders and people shared the opinion that inspections *were* working and inspectors should be given time to get on with their task. The sub-Saharan African press agreed and adopted a similar tone, arguing that inspections remained the only viable means of resolving the crisis to avoid bloodshed. They called on Iraq to offer full cooperation to UN inspectors, pointing out that inspectors needed time to ascertain the status of Iraq's weapons programs. The following headlines reflect how the African press framed the issue of weapons inspections:

*UN sees progress in talks with Iraq. (Business Day, 2002a)*

*Iraq accepts new round of inspection – party expected in Baghdad in two weeks. (Business Day, 2002b)*

*UN inspectors get ready to begin search – strategy involves paying unexpected visit. (Business Day, 2002g)*

*UN arms inspectors ready to re-evaluate Iraq. (Business Day, 2002e)*

*Inspectors check idle Iraqi airfield. (Business Day, 2002k)*

*Arms inspectors spring a surprise. (Business Day, 2002l)*

*Iraq document tells of secret nuclear efforts. (Business Day, 2002h)*

*US team to speed through Iraq's weapons declaration. (Business Day, 2002i)*

*UN weapons inspections continue amid a rapid US-led military buildup. (Business Day, 2003b)*

*Iraq signs declaration to cooperate with UN. (Business Day, 2003a)*

*Inspectors find banned weapons in Iraq. (ThisDayonline, 2003c)*

*Iraq has no weapon of mass destruction – UN inspectors. (ThisDayonline, 2003d)*

*UN inspectors find empty warheads in Iraq. (ThisDayonline, 2003h)*

*Iraq cranks up its concession to UN. (Business Day, 2003d)*

*UN inspectors submit report, finds nothing on Iraq, Annan pleads for more time. (ThisDayonline, 2003e)*

Despite their resistance to military action, the sub-Saharan African press believed Iraq's enhanced cooperation with UN inspectors, the agreement to provide access to presidential sites and the destruction of proscribed long-range missiles must be credited to the passage of Resolution 1441 and the Anglo-American military build-up in Iraq (*Business Day*, 2003b). With a headline that read, 'Iraq's

capitulation a victory for Bush', Giraudo (2002) stated that Bush had scored a diplomatic win for the UN and restored credibility to the world body.

However, before the invasion, when the US and Britain disagreed with the positive assessment of Iraq's cooperation, bombed Iraqi facilities and continued to threaten unilateral military intervention (*ThisDayonline*, 2003f; *Business Day*, 2003d), the sub-Saharan African press described the position and action as ironical, ominous, irrational, defiant and akin to playing double standards (*Sunday Nation on the Web*, 2003). The US and her allies were accused of trampling on international conventions and failing, as usual, to meet their obligation to international agreements by acting as rogue nations, threatening the stability of the world (Mnyanda, 2002). Critics argued an attack without UN sanction would jeopardize the institution and destabilize Africa and the Middle East (Mathiu, 2003).

### ***New World Order as an Instrument of Neo-Imperialism and Sociopolitical Discord***

It has been alleged that American and western policies in the developing world motivated the perpetrators in the September 11 attack on America (*Sunday Nation on the Web*, 2003). These policies include American support for the corrupt and dictatorial leaders in the Middle East and other parts of the world (*Saturday Nation on the Web*, 2003). Others point at economic domination of the West (*Business Day*, 2002d) and the growing gap between the rich and poor nations – a gulf the pope called a scandalous situation of injustice and oppression (Isu, 2003: 2; Annan, 2003). Critics allege that America's unwavering support for Israel against the Palestinians remains a contributing factor (*Business Day*, 2002d; Ngwiri, 2002; Power, 2002b; *Saturday Nation on the Web*, 2003). Critics claim that efforts at converting people from their faith (Isu, 2003) and the imposition of western sociocultural values through modern communication media contributed to the perpetrators' motivation (Power, 2002a). Although Americans tend to refute these charges, critics in other parts of the world are quick to agree (Prestowitz, 2003).

Speaking from a continent that has historically suffered from colonialism and imperialism, the sub-Saharan African press remained concerned that those who oppose America and the western role in Africa and Middle East would view an attack on Iraq as an instrument of new imperialism and domination (*Business Day*, 2002d). The regional media argued that the attack would enable the West to enhance its influence on the Middle East and subjugate the area by controlling its natural resources (*Business Day*, 2002d) thereby imposing western social and religious values (Isu, 2003; Power, 2002a).

In view of the socioeconomic development, the cultural, religious and political diversity and the tension that exists in the region, together with the ties that exist between sub-Saharan African and the Middle East, the regional media questioned the impact an Anglo-American attack on Iraq would have (*Daily Nation*, 2003b). Opponents argued that an attack without UN approval would engender religious conflict, cause social upheaval and destabilize the emergent political pluralism in the region (Stremlau, 2003c). Critics also claimed it would divert resources and

attention from dealing with the world's vexing and omnipresent problems of poverty, disease and arms proliferation (Annan, 2003).

The West was also accused of using double standards by turning a blind eye to Israel's nuclear program, not doing much with regard to the disarmament of Pakistan and India and pursuing the diplomatic route to deal with the issue of North Korea (Isu, 2003; Power, 2003).

## *Africa Rising*

The profile of sub-Saharan Africa does not loom large in global economic and diplomatic activities. The region's absence from international affairs could be attributed to the economic, political and social tribulations that plague the region. Despite its plight, Africa is rising. The last 10–15 years have witnessed positive political and socioeconomic movements in the region. As a way of demonstrating sub-Saharan Africa's emergence in global politics, including its efforts to shed the yoke of imperialism, the region's media called on their leaders to use the Anglo-American crisis to keep exerting pressure from the region's high moral ground. They argued that the region must assert its ascendancy if it was to be taken seriously in global affairs (*Daily Nation*, 2003a, 2003c).

For example, when African leaders remained silent during the early stages of the crisis (Kuhenga, 2003), their silence was questioned (*Daily Nation*, 2003a). The regional media viewed that silence as a vestige of colonialism and dependence on the rich nations (Kuhenga, 2003). Kuhenga urged African leaders to assert themselves as post-independence leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sékou Touré of Guinea, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania would have been obliged to do. That assertion came when former South African president Nelson Mandela criticized Bush administration policies as arrogant, tantamount to ignorant, and war mongering, without regard for the consequences of war (Mnyanda, 2002; *ThisDayonline*, 2003i). The sub-Saharan African press welcomed the Mandela criticism, calling it a moral assertion from a sage (Wanyeki, 2003).

When Mbeki became actively engaged in seeking a peaceful resolution by sending his foreign minister to Iraq, promising to help Iraq disarm and organizing meetings of the Nonalignment Movement at the UN, the sub-Saharan African press applauded his efforts. It should be noted that some articles in *Business Day* criticized Mandela's attack on Bush (*Business Day*, 2003c), and warned Mbeki against his high-profile diplomacy and active opposition of the US at the expense of national interest (Hartley, 2002). The regional media agreed with the decision of Angola, Cameroon and Guinea not to declare their leaning in the Security Council as the council dealt with a second resolution that called for prompt use of force against Iraq despite pressures from the US, Britain and Spain (Kelley, 2003b).

Throughout his engagement, Mbeki worked with other leaders toward a resolution in which the African Union called for amicable resolution of the Iraq crisis (Katzenellenbogen, 2003a). While welcoming the resolution, *Daily Nation* (2003a, 2003c) and Kelley (2003a) described the call as a weak one. Instead of keeping



silent, in order to extend their hands for future western aid and assistance, Kuhenga (2003) called on African leaders to stand up and mobilize their youth to discourage America's drive to attack a sovereign state without provocation. If asked why by their western benefactors, he advised them to answer: 'Please bear with us, as in your own country, we have these hotheads' (Kuhenga, 2003).

### *Pro-Bush Policies and Use of Force*

Despite the preponderance of articles in the sub-Saharan African press calling for a peaceful resolution of the crisis, some accounts supported the use of force to get rid of Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction. Articles that support the Bush administration's drive to employ military action against Iraq did so because of their dislike for Hussein, whom they called untrustworthy, an abuser of human rights and a dangerous aggressor who had attacked other nations (Daka, 2002) and who had used weapons of mass destruction (Butler, 2002). They also claimed Iraq had to be disarmed to promote regional stability and peace (Giraudo, 2002). This is in keeping with the dominant view of American supporters of the invasion who claimed that overthrowing the Hussein administration and ridding Iraq of her weapons of mass destruction would help resolve the Israeli–Palestinian crisis, thereby reducing tension in the Near East. Many articles in the sub-Saharan media argued that the removal of Hussein would protect the world economy, restore international order and the credibility of the UN as a forum to deal with world affairs (Giraudo, 2002). They also argued that containment is expensive and had not worked (Tatom, 2003), furthermore claiming that an attack that helped overthrow Saddam would make African dictators sleep uneasily in their beds and discourage weapons proliferation (*Business Day*, 2003c). Some supporters of the use of force asserted that overthrowing Hussein would reduce terrorism. Others argued that Arabs had never supported black Africans, rather they committed genocide against them and devastated the region to advance their interests (Akiwu, 2002) Thus, sub-Saharan Africans should not isolate themselves or pursue policies that would harm their future interests (*Business Day*, 2003c).

### *Just Cause (War)*

St Augustine is credited with conceiving the 'just war' principle. The concept states that a war is just if it is fought in self-defense against an armed attack, undertaken to redress a wrong suffered, or fought with the right intentions. The just war principle states that the only permissible objective for engaging in a just war is to redress an injury and it must be conducted humanely. When the Bush administration began its campaign to oust the Hussein administration through force, the administration based its justification of the invasion on the morality of a just war ('Justifications for a War Against Iraq', 2004). Justifications the administration offered include protecting the US, its allies and the world from a dangerous administration, liberating Iraqis from the clutches of a maniacal tyrant, spreading democracy, promoting peace in the Middle East and maintaining world economic stability, among others.

When the African press reported on the Bush administration's contentions for invading Iraq, it tended to present a counter-viewpoint on whether military action or diplomacy was the preferred vehicle to resolve the crisis of ridding Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. It also included reports of Iraqi cooperation with UN arms inspectors. These articles also pointed out that America's self-interest was driving her insistence upon immediate military action. They argued that the US was using the invasion as a pretext for spreading its economic and political hegemony. They also argued that the US would do so by establishing and maintaining military bases in Iraq in order to control the world's second largest oil reserves (*Business Day*, 2002d; Isu, 2003; Power, 2002a; Stremlau, 2003c; *Sunday Nation on the Web*, 2003). These and other articles barely addressed the just causes or virtuous motives the Bush administration offered for its commitment to engage Iraq militarily. Rather, they tended to point out America's leading Arab allies as despotic and that the invasion of Iraq would breed violence instead of promoting peace and was unjust, accusing the administration of double standards (Akinterinwa, 2003; *Business Day*, 2002f; *Daily Nation*, 2002b, 2003e; Osamgbi, 2003; Stremlau, 2003c; *ThisDayonline*, 2003f, 2003g, 2003i).

Both the African press and critics disagreed with the Bush administration's justification of the push to invade and the eventual invasion of Iraq on the just war concept. They also both condemned the Bush administration for invading a nation that did not pose a threat, or had attacked the US (Akinterinwa, 2003; *Daily Nation*, 2003e; Osamgbi, 2003; *ThisDayonline*, 2003g).

## Conclusion and Discussion

This article explores how the sub-Saharan African mass media covered the major events leading to the Anglo-American Iraq War, from 12 September 2002 when President George Bush launched his campaign to dislodge Saddam Hussein, to 20 March 2003 when he announced the onset of war. The study is aimed at assessing how sub-Saharan news media related news on the crisis to their public and to the international community, in order to provide a better understanding of the reasons for their positions, their perceptions of the US and the role of the press in shaping government and public opinion in international affairs and diplomacy. To achieve this goal the positions and dominant frames used by the *Daily Nation on the Web* and *The East African on the Web* of Kenya, *ThisDayonline* of Nigeria and South Africa's *Business Day* in relation to the events leading Anglo-Iraq crisis were analyzed.

The study found that seven themes dominated the coverage in the four sub-Saharan newspapers. Five of these frames: (1) diplomacy/negotiations and politics/politicking, (2) economic, (3) inspection work, (4) sociocultural, political and religious domination and (5) rising independence, were largely critical of invading Iraq and emphasized the need to avoid the use of force and violence. On the other hand, two of the frames (1) pro-Bush policies and use of force and (2) just cause (war) expressed support for the use of force to dislodge the Hussein administration on humanitarian, economic and security grounds.

Considering the implication of the five themes that were critical of the use of force, it could be argued, by discerning and highlighting these views, that the overall coverage of the events leading to the 2003 Anglo-Iraq War suggests that sub-Saharan Africa opposed unilateral use of force because it would create political, social, economic and religious upheaval in the Middle East, Africa and the world at large. This finding supports the concept that the media's analysis of issues is colored by the prevailing conditions in their country of origin. It should be noted that Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa have a significant Muslim populations and Africans realized that the crisis could create a rise in oil prices that would hamper their already cash-strapped economies. Whether they adopted their positions in support of the policies of government (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) remains a subject that another study might explore. Research suggests that the South African and Kenyan media tend to drive and influence government policy, instead of being driven by it.

Turning to the distinct socioeconomic and political orientation and media culture in each of the three countries sampled, the data revealed how those distinctions affected their coverage, thus producing subtle differences in their assessment. *ThisDayonline* of Nigeria tended to provide more straight news than commentaries. Its coverage dealt with the economic impact of the crisis, along with reports of the world financial markets (*ThisDayonline*, 2003a, 2003b). This could be attributed to Nigeria's relationship to the US as one of the latter's leading suppliers of oil. With the introduction of democratic rule in 1999, western investments are growing, influencing the business-oriented coverage of the Nigerian media. It was difficult to ascertain what the Nigerian government did at the height of the crisis except for the president's call for peaceful resolution (*ThisDayonline*, 2003d).

*Business Day* of South Africa provided the most extensive staff coverage and commentaries. A business-oriented daily, it also employed national and international experts. The paper followed diplomatic negotiations at the UN, as well as the diplomatic activities of the Mbeki administration (*Business Day*, 2002f). The intense attention *Business Day* paid to the crisis could be attributed to the country's 40 years of apartheid, which wrought emotional, physical and economic violence on the national psyche. Although most of us expected that the overthrow of apartheid and introduction of majority rule would bring violence, the racist system ended without major conflict. Internal diplomacy and negotiations have helped South Africa to enjoy relative peace for several years. This could account for *Business Day's* emphasis on the diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis. Since the end of apartheid, South Africans are willing to believe that diplomacy and negotiations are the best way to resolve a crisis.

The Kenyan media provided a large amount of news coverage and analysis, considering that it is a relatively small country and has the weakest economy of the three states in the study. Kenya's extensive coverage relates to its transition to democratic pluralism and its efforts to attract investment by underscoring its stability (Bindra, 2003; Makali, 2003). It should also be noted that *The East African* enjoys an international circulation in Eastern Africa. Thus, its coverage is influenced by the need to address domestic concerns and those of other East African countries, including Tanzania, a victim of terrorism. These findings support the Chaudhary

(2001) hypothesis that the coverage, orientation and framing of news by the mass media of a specific state, when dealing with international subject material, are pre-disposed by the prevailing circumstances that exist within that state.

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**Emmanuel C. Alozie** is Professor of Media Communications at Governors State University. His professional experiences include advertising, public relations and journalism. A former assistant editor with *Democratic Communiqué*, he serves on the editorial boards of *Global Media Journal-African Edition* and *Scientific Journals International*. Alozie has published *Cultural Reflections and the Role of Advertising in the Socioeconomic and National Development of Nigeria* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2005) and co-edited, *Toward the Common Good: Perspectives in International Public Relations* (Allyn and Bacon, 2004). He has published several refereed articles.

**Address** Governors State University, Media Communications, DLA-CAS, 1 University Parkway, University Park, Illinois 60466, USA. [email: [alozieemmanuel@hotmail.com](mailto:alozieemmanuel@hotmail.com)]