Terrorism, Global Journalism, and the Myth of the Nation State

Deni Elliott

Version of record first published: 17 Nov 2009.

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Terrorism, Global Journalism, and the Myth of the Nation State

Deni Elliott

University of South Florida St. Petersburg

❏ *Citizens require independent reporting more than ever in the news coverage of conflict in the 21st century. The traditional role of national governments has been compromised both by terrorism and by technology that makes hard borders porous. It is unlikely that citizens or policymakers will cope with those changes unless they are reminded how the world has changed. That is an essential role for journalism, and provides a distinction between the terms nationalistic press and patriotic press. A nationalistic press simply repeats governmental messages; a patriotic press reports independently and keeps fundamental interests of citizens in mind.*

Two days after the attacks on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush said, "We have just seen the first war of the 21st century."

Although indicative of the shock felt by the world at that time, the term *war* did not quite capture what we had seen. On September 11, the world had seen not a war, but rather a far more massive suicide bombing than had been happening on the streets of Jerusalem for almost 1 year. What we had seen was an attack that has resulted in far fewer intentional civilian deaths than those caused by calculated actions during World War II or armed conflicts throughout the latter 20th century. However, that such a massive attack had been carried out in the premiere city of the world's superpower underscored a new reality. Armed conflict had changed, the nature of combatants had changed, and governments and news media were going to have to change as well. This article is focused on documenting those changes.

As a social institution, journalism has the responsibility to create and maintain a voice separate from government and separate from outraged citizens. This is not a new responsibility, but one that is needed more than ever. That separate journalistic voice, or Greek chorus of voices, includes the following essentials:

1. News reporting that is independent of governmental agendas and public sentiments.

2. Investigative skills and a keen ability to look where others are not pointing.
3. Reliance on "old news" to give day-to-day stories context.
4. Patriotic rather than nationalistic reporting.

Patriotic journalism is journalism that keeps in mind what citizens need to know to make educated decisions for self-governance. Nationalistic journalism, on the other hand, is journalism that echoes what authorities want to say or what citizens want to hear. The difference between patriotic journalism and nationalistic journalism is the difference between "reporting" and "repeating."

The difference between patriotic journalism and nationalistic journalism is the difference between "reporting" and "repeating."

Although there is understandable motivation for the U.S. government, as well as other nations' governments, to adopt nationalistic arguments and descriptors, particularly in times of conflict, I argue that news media are ethically prohibited from doing so: If news media repeat the government's message, journalism is failing to do its special job. The job of government is to protect and promote national interests; the job of journalism is to provide citizens with a contextual understanding of their nation's interest, as that is what is necessary for educated self-governance.

National governments have the unique job of protecting citizens from suffering some harm at the hands of citizens and alien others. Governments have the unique job of keeping the peace and of supporting the overall good by promoting moral and utilitarian ideals such as educational systems and medical research. Governments, because of their unique relations with their citizens, may act in ways different from how individuals are morally permitted to act toward one another. For example, governments can, and should, deprive individuals of freedom through incarceration under certain circumstances and require citizens to pay taxes to support the government and its work (Gert, 1998).

The job of news media, on the other hand, is to provide citizens with information that can be used to make educated decisions about self-governance, which includes being able to contribute to the decisions made on their behalf by their leaders (Elliott, 1986). Although the primary audience for a particular news organization may be a local audience (such as one in

Missoula, Montana; Sydney, New South Wales; Tehran, Iran; or the United States as a whole), the job of journalists, regardless of their national reporting base, is to provide their particular citizen audiences with the global perspective needed to understand the political world of today.

I begin my argument by providing some examples of how, in the coverage of 21st century conflict, news media have failed to meet their responsibilities. I explain the theory of nation states and describe why that theory fails in the 21st century, despite the need for national governments to continue the myths supported by this theory. This serves as a basis for my conclusion that news media have a newly important responsibility to perceive and describe our geopolitical world in terms different from those used by national governments. I conclude with examples of what counts as responsible reporting.

Despite my focus here on conflict in the 21st century, the intellectual project described in this article did not start with the attacks of September 11. The changes in technology and relations between nations have been evolving over the past half-century to make our traditional notions of the nation state dangerously outdated and nationalistic reporting unhelpful for citizens. The political world is in a period of transition. National governments are attempting to apply old rules while attempting to find new models of collaboration. Unlike governments, news media have both the ability and a special obligation to step outside of nationalistic perspectives to help citizens develop alternative ways of understanding world conflicts.

> *News media have both the ability and a special obligation to step outside of nationalistic perspectives to help citizens develop alternative ways of understanding world conflicts.*

Comparisons are necessary to help people put new and unexpected events in context. Comparisons assist people in developing meaning. Consider the comparisons drawn after the September 11 attacks. Throughout the days following the attacks, U.S. officials and some U.S. journalists made comparisons between September 11, 2001 and those of December 7, 1941, when a U.S.-owned military base on what was then the foreign territory of Hawaii was attacked by Japanese soldiers. This comparison highlights the point that both attacks were made on the United States. However, there are important differences between these attacks as well.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was an attack on a military base with few citizen deaths as compared to the loss of military personnel and warships. The Pearl Harbor attack was ordered by a legitimate government of a recognized nation. In comparison, the primary target on September 11 was civilian rather than military. Although the Pentagon was a military target on September 11, the World Trade Center, where most of the victims died, was not. Unlike the attack on Pearl Harbor, the attack on September 11 was not one by state-sanctioned military personnel.

Instead of fighter jets and artillery, the weapons of the recent combatants were commercial airliners, credit cards, and a willingness to act in a way completely alien to what is traditionally understood as hostile enemy action.

As Brennen and Duffy (2003) pointed out, the use of Pearl Harbor as a foundation for reporting on the September 11 attacks in addition created an unnecessary ethnic division. "Ultimately, the coverage of Japanese-Americans as well as Muslim and Arab-Americans is framed to evoke a pervading sense of fear about the Other" (p. 13).

Although it is understandable that the U.S. government would use the similarity of attacks on its property and personnel to make the comparison between September 11 and Pearl Harbor, news media could have chosen not to repeat those comparisons or could have brought other comparisons to the public conversation and highlighted other aspects of the September 11 attacks, such as the intentional targeting of civilians. Here, comparisons with suicide bombings would have provided that context, as would the comparisons with the lives of 6 million civilians taken by Nazi Germany in World War II or the more than 300,000 civilian lives taken by U.S. action in Japan during that war.

There are obviously important differences among these comparisons as well. Far more lives were taken and far more property destroyed in the attack of September 11 as compared with single suicide bombings in Israel or in Iraq. Those killed by the Nazis were not random victims, and the city bombings in Japan occurred during a declared war and were justified at the time by the belief that such acts might bring about an earlier end to that costly war.

However, despite these differences, "targeting of civilians" would have provided an important dimension to the world-wide discussion of September 11 because this aspect is one of the important changes in how conflicts are waged in the 21st century. Throughout the 1900s casualties among innocents increased during armed conflicts and attacks. Ultimately, by the end of the 20th century, it was safer to be a soldier than a civilian in a place where armed conflict was taking place. In 1900, the ratio of soldier to civilian casualties in armed conflict was 9:1; nine soldiers were killed for every one civilian who was killed. By the turn of the 21st century, the ratio has

switched to 1:9, that is, one soldier killed for every nine civilians (Stremlau, 1998). The term *civilian* in this context includes humanitarian workers and journalists as well as those noncombatants who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The traditional definition of war breaks down when one seeks to discuss conflicts involving terrorists. Wars are traditionally acts of aggression or defense waged by recognized governments against other recognized governments, or factions within a territory fighting for recognition or geographical control. Wars traditionally use state-sanctioned or faction-sanctioned combatants.

Terrorism is aimed at inflicting indiscriminate violence and the fear of random violence on innocent civilians. Terrorism, on the other hand, is waged by fighters who are not officially sanctioned by a recognized nation state or by a faction seeking control of an identified nation state. Instead, these fighters are fueled by their allegiance to specific cultural, religious, or ethnic distinctions that cross political borders. Terrorists follow no international agreements regarding just war declarations or procedures. They are often funded through multiple sources, including some recognized governments, private funding sources, and renegade coalitions. Rather than seizing power or identified territory, their goal may be as amorphous as the destabilization of a particular culture or ruler. As even different governmental agencies in the United States disagree about what counts as the essential element of terrorism, it is probably true that terrorism is in the eye of the beholder. One group's terrorist is another's militant or yet another's freedom fighter.

However, in covering the U.S. government's "War on Terror," which began in September 1999 and continues through to this day, journalists have not been reporting, but rather simply repeating governmental claims. Journalists, who have the special responsibility for making accurate information available for citizens, have instead contributed to citizens' confusion.

September 18, 2001, President Bush said, for the first time publicly, that there was no evidence linking Saddam Hussein to the attacks of September 11 (Miller, 2003). This must have been confusing to the 70% of Americans polled who believed in the connection (Milbank, 2003). The President's statement that Hussein was not involved was certainly surprising to me as it was President Bush and White House staff who intentionally created the misunderstanding in the first place.

Beginning September 1999, the Bush administration worked to link Saddam Hussein with the terrorist attacks of September 11. Then White House speechwriter David Frum said that his assignment "for the State of the Union last year was to extrapolate from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks to make a case for 'going after Iraq'" (Reynolds, 2003).

Frum wrote and Bush said in the State of the Union address, and news media repeated in January 2002 that,

> Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror … . States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world … . The United States of America will not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons … . We can't stop short. If we stop now—leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked—our sense of security would be false and temporary. (Bush, 2002)

The subtle linking of Saddam Hussein with September 11 continued throughout other speeches in 2002 and was reinforced in the State of the Union address in January 2003. Bush (2003) said:

> And this Congress and the American people must recognize another threat. Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al Qaeda … .
>
> Before September the 11th, many in the world believed that Saddam Hussein could be contained. However, chemical agents, lethal viruses, and shadowy terrorist networks are not easily contained. Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans—this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that that day never comes.

President Bush often mentioned both the September 11 attacks and Saddam Hussein in the same sentence, without directly saying that Saddam Hussein was involved with the September 11 attacks. The rhetoric worked.

A Knight–Ridder poll in January 2003 found that 44% of those asked thought that most or all of the hijackers on September 11 were Iraqi. The true answer is *none* (Davies, 2003).

A NYT/CBS poll in February 2003 found that 72% of those asked thought that it was very or somewhat likely that Saddam Hussein played a direct role in the September 11 attacks (CNN, 2003). By *The Washington Post* poll in August 2003, the number of people who believed in this untrue statement stayed steady at 70%.

The Bush administration was wrong to spread this misinformation. However, the American news media were even more wrong in allowing the false governmental claims to stand without challenge. Web sources are plentiful regarding the misleading connection made by the administra-

tion, but when administration claims were reported in the print and broad-cast press, they stood unchallenged.

Journalists learned a half century ago when repeating the false claims made by Senator Joe McCarthy regarding communists in our midst that journalism had to be something more than a megaphone for the powerful. What was reported then as by some brave journalists as an abuse of politi-cal power has now been softened into something current pundits call "spin." News media recognized then a responsibility that seems to have been forgotten since September 11—the responsibility to report the truth regardless of the message that political leaders want citizens to believe.

> *Journalists learned half a*
> *century ago … that journalism*
> *had to be something more than a*
> *megaphone for the powerful.*

Perhaps a history lesson and an explanation of how the world is changed will help to show the increasing importance of the press separat-ing itself from government.

The Notion of Nation

What we call *nations* are, in reality, legal fictions. They lack the character-istics of persons that we use in holding people responsible for their actions. Like corporations, nations are lacking in will and in reason. The term *na-tion*, or its synonyms *nation state* or *state,* is used metaphorically to stand for certain types of ruling bodies that have control over certain geographical areas. The concept of nation, as we know it, has been defined since the 17th century. France and England, which served as home to some of the politi-cal theorists who constructed the notion, are not accidentally recognized as the oldest examples of national consciousness. What is called a nation is re-ally no more than a general acceptance of a particular ruling body. The na-tion is "a system of animated institutions that govern the territory and its residents, and that administer and enforce the legal system and carry out the programs of government" (Copp, 1998, p. 3). Nations have designated combatants to protect the nation's interests from internal and external threat. When nations enter into aggression or defense against one another, traditionally speaking, the motivation is control of territory. Traditionally, designated combatants from one nation would seek to overpower the des-ignated combatants from another nation. Citizen deaths occurred in armed

conflict, but they were generally "collateral damage"—unfortunate, unintended consequences.

Traditionally, all that has been necessary for something to be able to function as the nation is that the ruling group is recognized by powerful people within and by ruling bodies outside of the territory. Not surprisingly, appeal to how the government came to be in power was traditionally not considered important in determining the legitimacy of a state. The boundaries of most modern states were created by laws, wars, treaties, and by the imposition of colonial boundaries. Many "states were founded in a way that involved wrongful exercise of force and fraud" (Copp, 1998, p. 45). As the initial definition of nation came from intellectuals in nations that had taken land that they could seize, how land was acquired was not traditionally considered important in determining the legitimacy of a nation. What mattered was that the ruling body was recognized by powerful individuals and other nations as being legitimate.

A ruling group that has "recognitional legitimacy" has special powers that no other group wishing to speak for that particular territory can simultaneously have. These powers include the following:

1. The right to territorial integrity.
2. The right to noninterference in internal affairs.
3. The power to make treaties, alliances, and trade agreements thereby altering juridical relations with other states.
4. The right to make just war.
5. The right to promulgate, adjudicate, and enforce legal rules on those within its territory. (Buchanan, 1998, p. 49)

The primary function of government with recognitional legitimacy is to keep the peace by protecting citizens from one another and protecting the territory, its citizens, and its ruling body from outside aggressors. Through what has been called the Social Contract, citizens are expected to give up some of their freedom in return for the government's protection. British philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) argued that it was rational for individuals to give up their individual personal sovereignty only in exchange for the protection of a larger, stronger body—that is, the state. Citizens agree to obey the laws and government agrees to protect them from some harms and to promote general welfare (Ebenstein, 1991, pp. 409–411).

However, Hobbes's companion theory of how nations can best coexist is not nearly as symbiotic as the citizen–state relation. Nations, in Hobbes's view, stand in relation to one another in a state of nature, just as individuals would stand in regard to one another if not for the government's control. There is no social contract possible between states in this view, only uneasy

and temporary alliances developed with mutual suspicion (see Ebenstein, 1991, pp. 413–416). In the 17th century, there was no body larger than a nation, like our current United Nations (UN), to protect nations from one another or to seek to create another notion of sovereign superior to any individual nation.

The obligation then, was for each state to protect itself from all of the others. All nations were seen as potential threats to every other nation. Escalating and demonstrating military force is significant to this idea of how one state should protect its citizens from the potential aggression of another. The more fearsome one could look to potential intruders, the less fear one has of actual intrusion.

While Hobbes sought to describe and justify the relations between individuals and nations and between nations, Hugo Grotius (1625; 1583–1645), a Dutch natural law theorist, was arguing that conflicts between states needed to be regulated. Complementary to national consciousness, each government was obliged to avoid a state of war between nations, if possible. Nations were under moral obligation to first attempt to settle disputes peacefully. If battle was necessary, it had to be just in conditions in which to enter war (*jus ad bellum*) and just in the manner in which war was waged (*jus in bello*; Grotius, 1625).

Legitimate governments making war on other nations were said to be acting justly if the war was waged in self-defense, if the purpose of the war was to take back what was rightfully theirs, if the nation had a reasonable chance of succeeding, and if the amount of force used was proportionate to the goal. Only combatants were to be targets.

A little more than 100 years later, Immanuel Kant (as cited in Ebenstein, 1991) agreed in his essay, *Perpetual Peace,* that although it is "the desire of every state (or its ruler) to … dominat[e] the whole world, if it all possible," (p. 537) he argued that there were more positive reasons than fear of war to keep states from fighting one another.

Kant (as cited in Ebenstein, 1991) said:

> Nature also unites nations … and does so by means of their mutual self-interest. For the spirit of commerce sooner or later takes hold of every people, and it cannot exist side by side with war. And of all the powers (or means) at the disposal of the power of the state, financial power can probably be relied on most. Therefore, states find themselves compelled to promote the noble cause of peace, though not exactly from motives of morality. (p. 545)

For 300 years or so, nations' mutual reliance on hard boundaries seemed to work out reasonably well, with fear of aggression and the mutually compatible desire for financial stability working to generally sustain the peace. During that time, the internal affairs of a nation was considered to

be a private matter. If one state acted aggressively toward another, then the aggrieved party had a recognized right to protect itself and its citizens. Otherwise, sovereign nations were to be free from interference from another. That perception has been affirmed at every peace conference since Westphalia in 1648 (Stremlau, 1998, p. 8). As philosopher Alan Goldman (1982) noted, "Observance of a rule against all foreign intervention limits internal struggles that might otherwise escalate into great power confrontations" (p. 441).

Violence within a state is not a matter of global relevance or concern. Within the traditional understanding of relations among sovereign states, it was ethically required that the world stand by while factions fought for legitimate leadership within a country or while a government brutalized the people within its territory. Each state was a sovereign on to itself, with its citizens subject to the sovereign. An essential of the hard boundary theory is that state borders are defensible, that the only one who has the power and resources to wage war with other states is the legitimate ruling body.

The World Has Changed

From 1500 to 1900, 500 political entities devolved into the 25 that now rank among the world's most viable modern states (Stremlau, 1998, p. 14). The Hobbesian idea of hard boundaries worked in that, for a time, nations stayed out of each other's way regarding internal affairs, and also allowed only the fittest to survive. However, the tide turned in 1900.

The number of newly sovereign entities rose rather than declined in the last century. In addition, an understanding has evolved over the past century that the legitimacy of states should be based on something other than the fact that some strong or rich nation was able to claim other territory as their own. The period of colonization had ended. Global configurations multiplied. Through decolonization in the 1960s, 140 new states were accorded formal recognition within the UN. Thirty new states were admitted in the 1990s alone. From a start of 51 original state members of the UN in 1949, the list has grown to 191 (UN, 2003).

No longer do disagreements or conflicts occur mostly between recognized nations or legitimate governments. In 1995, 49 of the 50 armed conflicts in the world were wars of secession or conflicts among ethnic rivals who did not want to be controlled by a centralized or culturally different political ruling body. In the period between 1989 and 1996, there were 96 armed conflicts—only 5 were between nations (Gurr & Moore, 1997, p. 1080).

David Hume (as cited in Ebenstein, 1991) could be reflecting on the events of today when he said, in the late 1700s, "The face of the earth is continually changing, by the increase of small kingdoms into great empires, by the dissolution of great empires into smaller kingdoms, by the planting of

colonies, by the migration of tribes" (p. 482). Whereas Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant saw the world growing toward greater structure and stability, Hume's view of constant flux seems more accurate today.

Nonnation sanctioned fighters who have the power to create terror throughout the world have created an essential question for how it is reasonable to think about state-to-state relations. Self-declared sovereign agents threaten a return for the world from a state of society to a state of nature. First, those who are called terrorists are taking for their own the role-related responsibilities and privileges traditionally granted only to states—the ability to be an aggressor in a foreign state's territory. Next, and far more frightening, the fighters of today are showing that no state is capable of defending its citizens. The primary justification for the Social Contract is that individuals give up their power to a greater, protective power.

> *Terrorists are taking for their own*
> *the role-related responsibilities*
> *and privileges traditionally*
> *granted only to states.*

Hobbes (as cited in Ebenstein, 1991) told us, "If there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will, and may, rely on his own strength and act for caution against all other men" (p. 408).

Terrorism provides the ultimate contradiction to the argument for a sovereign state. However, national governments had lost their power to protect their citizens from external aggressors and accidents long before September 11. For decades, we have lived in a world in which political borders are increasingly meaningless in the ability of one state to impact another.

Degradation of the water, land, and atmosphere happened without respect for national boundaries. A nuclear accident in one country causes death and destruction in another.

No nation is a financial isolationist. The markets of all depend on the markets of each. Popular culture from fast food to music, television and film, are consumed globally. Economic or cultural aggression is viewed as equivalent to military aggression by some of the world's citizens.

States have the ability, albeit unequally shared, to access information about one's neighbors, with some of us having access through satellites that allow us to peer in one another's backyard. Global communication no longer allows citizens to remain ignorant of the plight and strife of innocents anywhere in the world.

Of course, every nation and most terrorist groups, no matter how rich or poor, have the ability to use nuclear and chemical and biological agents to

destroy not only other governments but the very world that allows for geopolitical boundaries to exist.

Accompanying these changes is a change in the global perception of the conditions under which it is ethically permitted or required for a state to tolerate intervention from others. World War II dramatically illustrated the horrific results of nonintervention.

In response to the atrocities of that war, the UN committed all of its members to uphold a set of fundamental principles that includes promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction to race, sex, language or religion (UN, 2003). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in a short preamble and 30 articles, articulates the following human rights: "the right to life, liberty and property, the right to remain free from torture, the right to a fair and public hearing, the right to remain free from slavery" (UN, 2004).

The fact that some people in the world have not realized even the most basic of these rights does not change the humanitarian realization that all people are due these rights. People who have not achieved these rights are deprived world citizens. They are not getting what we realize everyone is entitled to have. However, whether or not the government that rules the territory in which they live is ethically blameworthy, however, for the individual's deprivation depends on how that person's life is in regard to others in the territory. At a minimal level, the state's responsibility is to make sure only that no person or identifiable group has substantially less than others in the territory. However, it was quite a while before the UN held any state accountable for failing to meet even this minimal level of human rights claim.

The UN's declaration of the universality of human rights was initially little more than a declaration. "Only two years after the Charter was adopted, the UN Commission on Human Rights formally declared that it could not act on any reported complaints about violations of human rights. The commission refused to compromise the absolute sovereign authority of states" (Korey, 1999, p. 153).

However, over the next 40 years, the UN and nongovernmental organizations began to work together to formally and informally put pressure on nations that violated human rights. Human rights have begun to be recognized, slowly, ever so slowly, as a legitimate standard for intervention in another nation's affairs. A new global understanding is emerging that governments are required to be just toward their people. The list of UN sanctioned humanitarian interventions in the late 20th century show has the absolute sovereignty of the hard borders era has dissolved.

The recognition of internal justice as a basic responsibility of a recognized ruling body means that a state can forfeit its legitimacy through violations of human rights. In the philosopher Allen Buchanan's (1998)

words, "To be legitimate, a political order must exemplify a common good conception of justice according to which every individual's good is to count … . Therefore, a legitimate political order must respect the basic human rights" (p. 53).

The legitimacy of a state can be measured by the citizens' ability to make changes within it. Within what Buchanan (1998) called "minimal democracy," state legitimacy is based on the following criteria:

> (1) There are representative, majoritarian institutions for making the most general laws, such that no competent adult is excluded from participation, (2) the highest government officials are accountable, that is, subject to being removed from office through the workings of these representative institutions, and (3) at least a minimal amount of freedom of speech and association are secured for reasonable deliberation about democratic decisions. (p. 60)

Within an understanding of statehood based on justice, states must include in their documents of formation methods for changing the government itself. It must be possible for citizens within a legitimate state to strip the current leadership of its right to govern. If citizens have this power, then it is automatically illegitimate for a state to have its right to govern extinguished by any other means. Otherwise, external intervention on behalf of a people or a government is sometimes morally acceptable.

What we have seen since September 11 is an even greater softening of national boundaries to yield the harboring of terrorists as yet another UN justification for violating state sovereignty and for nation's suppression of individual human rights.

Not surprisingly, terrorism unites UN member states as no other issue has. In October 2001, an overwhelming number of states joined in a 5-day discussion on the problem of terrorism. "It is unprecedented in the history of the UN for 167 member states and four observers to participate in the debate on a single agenda item," said Assembly President Han Seung-soo (2001) of the Republic of Korea. He added that all participants had "wholeheartedly condemned the 11 September attacks against the United States" (p. 1). Although unprecedented, global agreement on this issue is not surprising. It would be irrational for legitimate governments not to agree on the threat of terrorism. Armed attack by nonnation sanctioned zealot combatants threatens the legitimacy of all nations.

Despite the dissolving of hard borders between nations and the growing strength of the UN, U.S. governmental rhetoric in response to the attacks of September 11 continue to be strongly nationalistic. It is in the interest of recognized governments to have their citizens continue to believe in the myth of nations with hard borders and the ability of individual national governments to protect their citizens against any threat. It is the obligation of news media to reject that myth.

The Role of the Press in Reporting State Actions

In this brave new world, citizens need journalists who can fulfil their special role separate from government. Journalists need to be independent observers who provide context and report in a patriotic fashion—that is, giving citizens what we need to make educated decisions.

If news media build an independent rhetoric, news coverage could avoid the "us versus them, good versus evil" way of describing crises. Negotiators and mediators have long known that diplomatic outcomes are found somewhere between the extremes clung to in polarized positions.

An alternative rhetoric to polarized positions is based on democracy itself. This rhetoric includes respect for the other and the goal of full information and intellectual honesty. Commitment to this kind of rhetoric provides a way for news media to raise questions on how to judge the legitimacy of response rather than simply repeating governmental explanations for why a particular response is justified. Doing so, according to scholar Richard Leeman (1991),

> Would enact democracy, a valued process that, intrinsically, terrorism (or problematic regimes) cannot embody. Democratic rhetoric would thus model the process of democracy, re-creating the values of democracy at the same time that it perhaps lessened the incidence of terrorism. (p. 115)

Contextualized reporting includes letting citizens hear the voices of our government's enemies, as well as critics of governmental policy from within and outside the country. This reporting was missing from the coverage of September 11 and drowned out during the buildup to the 2003 War in Iraq. Alternative rhetoric tells citizens when evidence contradicts the speaker's claims, whatever the national origin of the speaker.

Contextualized reporting includes letting citizens hear the voices of our government's enemies, as well as critics of governmental policy from within and outside the country.

An example of media coverage that exemplifies this alternative way of reporting includes an article from November 2001 in the *New York Times.* Here, the writer Barbara Crossette provided context for examination of U.S. strategy of how to build legitimate government in Afghanistan by

quoting an authority who argued that excluding enemy voices breeds more terrorism.

In the article, a former undersecretary general of the UN, Sir Brian Urquhart, who worked on early peace keeping missions in the Congo and Middle East, claimed that the United States was making a mistake in insisting that anyone associated with the Taliban be excluded from the process of rebuilding Afghanistan and that the UN was wrong in giving in to U.S. demands for this.

Urquhart (as cited in Crossette, 2001) called this exclusion reminiscent of early Mideast policy errors involving the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) because the Taliban represents the Pashtun, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group:

> You can't have a Middle East peace conference without including the PLO, but that's what we tried to do for 40 years and got into a hell of a mess. It's an old old story. We don't deal with somebody for supposedly moral grounds and then we get something infinitely worse. We wouldn't deal with the PLO and now we've got Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Some element of the Taliban should be in these talks. They were the previous government, after all. (p. A11)

We need much more reporting on the fragile institution of the UN. Why and when it mattered to the UN that Iraq was not in compliance with its resolutions is a mystery to most of us. Whether it will ever matter that Israel and Turkey are not in compliance with UN resolutions remains a mystery. Why the UN removed its inspectors from Iraq when it seemed clear that the United States was going to launch a military strike remains unreported. If the UN Security Council had been serious in preventing the U.S.-led attack on Iraq, it would have kept its inspectors and other workers on the ground there and would have sent in a peace-keeping mission to protect the Iraqi government from the U.S.-led invasion. Of course it did not. The UN proclaimed and the United States acted.

Journalistic voices are needed to make sense of puzzles like this and to keep citizens from being mesmerized by the line that any particular government—our own or others—wants us to buy. Most of us are too busy most of the time to explore the Web to try to find the alternative perspectives that we should have handed to us by our mainstream journalists every day.

The purpose of providing alternatives to the U.S. governmental perspective is not to harm the country, but to open those messages to broad examination and understanding. Support for governmental perspective, if warranted, will be stronger when citizens can understand that view against opposing alternatives.

We need to allow news managers to use their judgment in the process of working to provide citizens real news. In April 2003, after the fall of the

Baathist regime in Iraq, CNN news executive Eason Jorden revealed that over the past 10 years CNN had sat on material regarding torture, murder, and assassination attempts by the Baathist government in Iraq to protect their sources and to protect their access (Johnson, 2003). I am one of the few who thinks that CNN did exactly what it should.

That information needed to be developed, and it is good that citizens have it now. The compiling of information about Saddam Hussein makes it possible that some sort of humanitarian intervention was called for. If CNN had removed itself from a position in which it could witness and compile that information, it is one more piece of the puzzle that would still be missing.

References

Brennen, D., & Duffy, M. (2003). If a problem cannot be solved, enlarge it: An ideological critique of the "other" in Pearl Harbor and September 11 *New York Times* coverage. *Journalism Studies, 4,* 3–14.

Buchanan, A. (1998). Recognitional legitimacy and the state system. *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 28,* 46–78.

Bush, G. (2002). *State of the Union Address*. Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.whitehouse.gov

Bush, G. (2003). *State of the Union Address*. Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.whitehouse.gov

CNN. (2003). *Selling an Iraq–al Qaeda connection*. Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/03/11/Iraq.Qaeda

Copp, D. (1998). The idea of a legitimate state. *Philosophy & Public Affairs, 28,* 3–45.

Crossette, B. (2001, November 25). How to put a nation back together again. *New York Times*, p. A11.

Davies, F. (2003). War poll uncovers fact gap. *The Philadelphia Inquirer.* Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/front/6085261.htm

Ebenstein, A. (1991). *Great political thinkers, Plato to present.* Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace.

Elliott, D. (1986). Foundations of press responsibility. I D. Elliott (Ed.), *Responsible journalism* (pp. 40–41). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gert, B. (1998). *Morality, its nature and justification.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldman, A. (1982). The moral significance of national boundaries. In P. A. French, T. E. Uehling, Jr., & H. K. Wettstein (Eds.), *Midwest studies in philosophy VII* (pp. 437–543). London: Blackwell.

Grotius, H. (1625). On the law of war and peace. Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/philosophers/grotius.html

Gurr, T., & Moore W. (1997). Ethnopolitical rebellion: A cross-sectional analysis of the 1980s with risk assessments for the 1990s. *American Journal of Political Science, 41,* 1079–1103.

Johnson, P. (2003, April 14). CNN takes heat for action, inaction. *USA Today.* Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.usatoday.com/life/world/iraq/2003-04–13-cnn

Korey, W. (1999). Human rights and NGOs: The power of persuasion. *Ethics and International Affairs,* pp. 151–174.

Leeman, R. (1991). *The rhetoric of terrorism and counterterrorism.* New York: Greenwood Press.

Milbank, D. (2003, September 18). Bush disavows Hussen–Sept 11 link. *Washington Post,* p. A18. Retrieved http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/polls/vault/stories/data082303.htm

Reynolds, M. (2003, January 21). 'Axis of evil' rhetoric said to heighten dangers. *Los Angeles Times,* p. A17.

Stremlau, J. (1998, May). People in peril, human rights, humanitarian action, and preventing deadly conflict. *A report to the Carnegie Commission on preventing deadly conflict*. New York: The Carnegie Corporation.

Seung-soo, H. (2001). Statement by the President of the General Assembly at the conclusion of the plenary meetings on measures to eliminate international terrorism. Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.un.org/terrorism/statements/gapresconclusion.html

United Nations. (2001). Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.un.org/News/dh/20011005.htm

United Nations. (2003). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Retrieved February 24, 2004, from http://www.un.org/overview/rights.html

United Nations. (2004). Retrieved February 5, 2004, from http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html