

The Presentation of Alternative Ways of Settling the Gulf Conflict in German, Norwegian and Finnish Media

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1. Media and conflict escalation

The current discussion among journalists and scholars in media research and peace studies focuses on the question of how the media can become vehicles for conflict prevention and constructive, nonviolent conflict transformation. This proposal of critical peace journalism as an alternative to traditional war reporting is not suggesting that violence should not be reported or that what is reported as facts should not be empirically correct. However, it emphasizes the point that the form in which conflict is reported may contribute either to the escalation or to the de-escalation of the conflict.

Escalating conflicts entail systematic distortions of how the parties in the conflict view themselves, their opponents and impartial third parties who try to mediate in the conflict, and of how the parties evaluate their goals and actions etc. (Kempf, 1996b). The more a society is involved in a conflict, the more will its public and its media be susceptible to such distortions.

Even propaganda does not just invent some sort of propagandistic view of the conflict but rather takes up and fosters those natural processes. Therefore, if a piece of journalism looks like propaganda, this does not necessarily mean that it was systematically constructed for propagandistic purposes. It may appear propagandistic simply because the journalist responsible for it became the victim of a heated public atmosphere. Critical peace journalism therefore has to take such processes into account in order to break the propaganda trap.

In his book *The Ancient Foe* (1986), Luostarinen developed a model of war propaganda according to which both restrictive and supportive methods of information control are used in propaganda in order to get people to strongly and personally identify themselves with the goals of war. Restrictive methods try to minimize all information which could cause negative effects on the fighting spirit, while supportive methods try to maximize all information with a positive effect. According to Luostarinen, this latter goal is handled by fabrication, selection and exaggeration of information.

From this point of view, the coverage of alternatives to violence may be regarded as a minimum requirement for peace journalism. However, it is not simply the facts which are reported but also the way in which they are presented which contributes to the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict. Though truth is only raw material for the propagandist (and if you have to lie, that is only a technical and operational question, not a moral one), it is better if no lies are needed. This can be achieved if the propagandist succeeds in manipulating the audience's entanglement into the topic of propaganda in order to influence its interpretations in such a way that is apt to reorganize its hierarchy of values 'so that winning the war is on the top and all other values – for instance the truth, ethical considerations and individual rights – are only subservient to the goal' (Luostarinen, 1994b: 1).

2. Design of the study

An interdisciplinary and multinational content analytical study of the Gulf War coverage (Kempf, 1996a; 2000) has shown that alternative ways of settling the war are among the themes that were covered most extensively during the Gulf War.

The sample of media that was analysed in this study included European, US and some Third World media and covered a total of 31 dates pertaining to 10 time-spots between 2 August 1990 and 15 January 1993. At these times, the Gulf War coverage in the biggest nationwide prestige paper, in the biggest tabloid paper, in a major regional paper and in one of the most important non-commercial television channels in Germany, Finland, Norway and Sweden were analysed. The sample of US media followed the same rationale, though it included no regional paper, and the US TV material only covered time-spots 3–7 for the television channels *ABC*, *CBS* and *NBC* as (partially) distributed by *Sky News* over Europe. The sample of Third World media included two Ethiopian prestige papers (for time-spots 1–10) and the Iraqi *Baghdad Observer*, which ceased publication after the start of the air strikes, however, and therefore could only be analysed for time-spots 1–3.

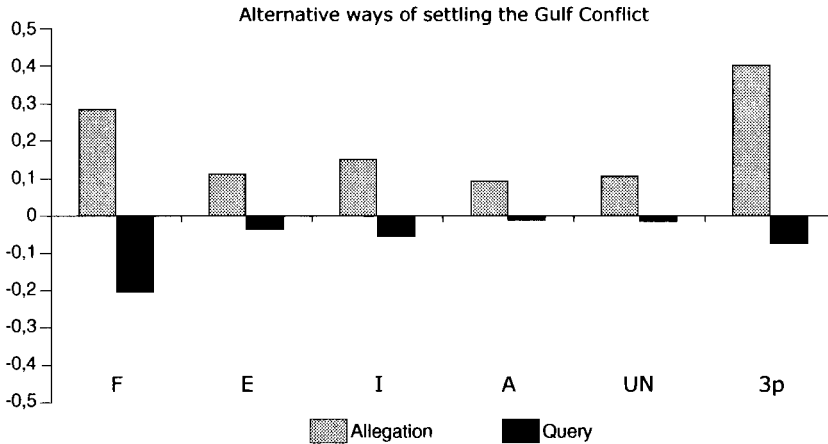
In order to make accessible the changes in the Gulf War coverage over a longer period of time, the selection of dates included time-spots from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait until after the end of the Gulf War. Included in the content analysis were all news items and reportage dealing with the Gulf conflict on these dates. Altogether, a total of $n = 4096$ news items were included in the analysis.

A total of $n = 740$ (18.1%) of the analysed news items dealt with alternative ways of settling the war by allegation (+) or query (–) of one or several of the following issues or arguments:

1. Force against Iraq is the only possible or most effective way of settling the conflict.
2. Economic embargoes on trade with Iraq should be given, or should have been given, more time to be effective.
3. Iraqi initiatives for negotiations or peace talks.
4. Initiatives by the alliance or its member-states (excluding the UN) for negotiations or peace talks.

5. UN initiatives for negotiations or peace talks.
6. Third party or neutral initiatives for negotiations or peace talks.

Figure 1. Alternative ways of settling the war: overall distribution of style characteristics. F = Force; E = Embargo; I = Iraqi initiatives; A = Allied initiatives; UN = UN initiatives; 3p = Third party initiatives¹



The overall distribution of these arguments (see Figure 1) shows that force against Iraq was the most intensively and most controversially discussed mode for settling the conflict. In 28.4% of the news items, it was presented as the only possible or most effective way of settling the conflict. In 20.0% of the news items, this was denied, doubted or questioned. Third party or neutral initiatives for negotiations or peace talks follow in the second place (39.6% allegation; 6.8% query). The alliance's or member-states' initiatives for negotiations played the least significant role (9.2% allegation; 0.8% query).

Statistical data analysis based on Latent Class Analysis revealed that the distribution in Figure 1 is a mixture distribution of nine latent styles of coverage that presented specific patterns of information to the public (see Chapter 8).

Three of these styles (41.1% of the analysed news items) focused on the use of military or economic means against Iraq:

- Pure military logic (16.7%),
- Query of military logic (14.3%), and
- Economic rather than military means (10.1%).

Three styles (25.5% of the analysed news items) focused on either of the war parties' initiatives for negotiations or peace talks:

- Coverage of Iraqi peace initiatives (11.4%),
- Coverage of UN peace initiatives (7.8%), and

- Coverage of Allied peace initiatives (6.3%).

Three styles (33.3% of the analysed news items) focused on third party or neutral initiatives for negotiations or peace talks:

- Coverage of Third Party initiatives (29.0%),
- Query of Third Party initiatives (2.3%),
- Comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives (2.0%).

As these styles only describe *what* information was actually given by the media, qualitative content analysis was needed in order to unveil *how* this was done. Therefore, a qualitative method specifically designed to analyse escalation- and de-escalation-oriented elements of news reporting (see Kempf, Reimann & Luostarinen, 1996; see also Chapter 8) had to be employed. As this method is very detailed and time-consuming, only a subsample of German, Finnish and Norwegian media underwent this part of the study (see Table 1).

As a first step of the sampling procedure, those news items in the original sample that most exactly represent the various styles – or patterns of information – were identified. Since prestige papers used to claim the highest standards of critical journalism, this sample was then reduced to those items that had been published in one of the national prestige papers. If there were no items representative of a certain style in the prestige papers of a country, the sample included the regional papers instead. If there were no representative items in the regional papers, the sample included the tabloid papers; and only if there were still no representative items in the tabloids, did the sample include items from TV news. Finally, from this choice of news items, one item was randomly chosen for each style in each of the three countries.²

3. Empirical results

3.1 Military and/or economic force against Iraq

Pure military logic

16.7% of the news items presented pure military logic which described force against Iraq as the only possible or most effective way of settling the conflict (99.9%) and did not take notice of any other alternative (see Figure 2).

In particular, the days shortly after the outbreak of hostilities in mid-January 1991 were the days when pure military logic ruled the media. A look at some headlines of that period may demonstrate what 'pure military logic' may look like:

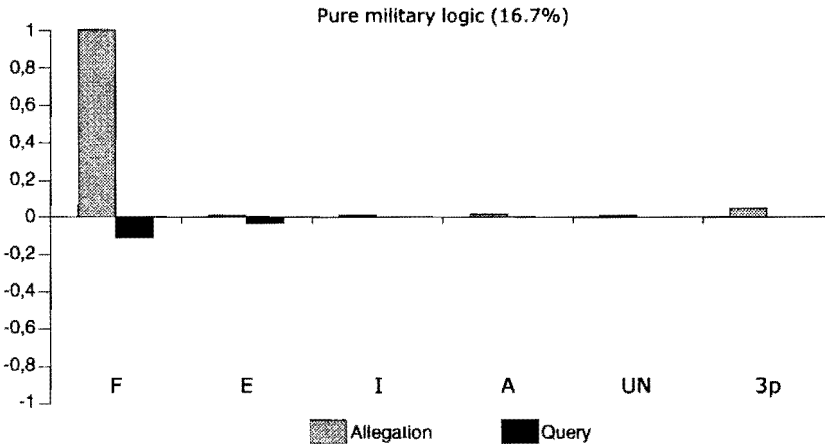
- 'Iraq's president calls for a holy war' (14 January 1991; document 1),
- 'Broad Norwegian support for the offensive' (14 January 1991; document 3), and
- 'Bush rather satisfied so far (with operation "Desert Storm")' (18 January 1991; document 4).

Public debate in Germany, Finland and Norway had been narrowed to only a small range of perception, suggesting that war had become inevitable; it had lost its horror, and military logic had become the *ultima ratio*. Peaceful alternatives were no

Table 1. List of documents analysed, sorted by country of origin, style and group of styles

Group of styles	Style	Country	Doc. No.	Headline, Medium, Date	
Military and economic means against Iraq	Pure military logic	G	1	Iraq's president calls for a holy war. <i>heute</i> , ZDF, 14-01-91.	
		SF	2	Kuwaiti soldiers confused: what to think about the Iraqi people. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 23-02-91.	
		N	3	Broad Norwegian support for the offensive. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 14-01-91.	
			4	Bush rather satisfied so far. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 18-01-91.	
			5	Disappointment and dejection. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 22-02-91.	
	Query of military Logic	G	6	Moslems: We do not want blood to be shed. <i>Blid</i> , 19-01-91.	
		SF	7	UN ready to use force. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 29-11-90.	
	Economic rather than military means	N	8	Muslim pray for peace in the Gulf. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 18-01-91.	
		G	9	Kohl says Iraq alone bears the responsibility. <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , 18-01-91.	
		SF	10	US congress ready to allow to use armed force. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 13-01-91.	
		N	11	War by majority vote. <i>Bergens Tidende</i> , 16-01-91.	
War parties' initiatives for negotiations and peace talks	Coverage of Iraqi peace initiatives	G	12	Saddam Hussein's offer a trap. <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , 22-02-91.	
		SF	13	Hint from Arabic sources in the UN: Iraq will submit. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 12-01-91.	
		N	14	Bush still has hopes for peace. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 14-01-91.	
	Coverage of UN peace initiatives	G	15	Bush says the world could wait no longer. <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , 18-01-91.	
		SF	16	Bush authorized to use armed force. <i>Turun Sanomat</i> , 13-01-91.	
	Coverage of allied peace initiatives	N	17	Baker: We mean business. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 13-01-91.	
		G	18	Iraq and Kuwait are silent. <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , 02-08-90.	
		SF	19	Saddam will meet Arab leaders. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 04-08-90.	
			N	20	No gains for Mitterand. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 19-01-91.
	Third party peace initiatives	Reporting of third party initiatives	G	21	Gorbachev blames Saddam Hussein. <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , 18-01-91.
			22	Poos says that Baghdad should set a date for withdrawal. <i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i> , 21-02-91.	
SF			23	No progress in peace process. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 13-02-91.	
N			24	USA troubled over cease-fire. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 21-02-91.	
			25	Soviet will in the arena again. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 22-02-91.	
			26	Ultimatum to Saddam. <i>Aftenposten</i> , 23-02-91.	
Query of third party initiatives		G	27	"The worst possible solution". <i>Südkurier</i> , 23-02-91.	
		SF	28	Saddam asserted Iraq will continue. <i>Heisingin Sanomat</i> , 22-02-91.	
Comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives		N	—	—	
		G	29	Chances for Peace Uncertain. <i>Südkurier</i> , 14-01-91.	
	SF	30	Parliament of Iraq declares Iraq is ready for war. <i>TV-uutiset</i> , <i>YLE-TV1</i> , 14-01-91.		
	N	—	—		

Figure 2. Pure military logic



longer given any chances, and yet the slightest criticism had to submit to military logic.

At that time, nearly the whole range of escalation-oriented features of conflict coverage was in use. Common features of the media coverage of the conflict in the three countries were:

- the fixation on military conflict resolution, and the construction of military force as the only suitable means for conflict resolution;
- the refutation of peaceful alternatives;
- military values;
- incentives for partial social identification; and
- élite reporting.

Similar patterns of argumentation arose everywhere, in Iraq as well as in the USA, and in nations supporting the US policy. One striking example of this is the (mis)use of religious symbols in support of militaristic argumentation: Saddam Hussein is reported to 'call for a holy war' (document 1), and George Bush, too, seeks ecclesiastical assistance as he takes 'with him most of his cabinet members to a service in a military camp ... conducted by the evangelist Billy Graham' (document 4). Interesting enough, the media that reported about these events – the German TV news broadcast 'heute' and Norway's *Aftenposten* – in no way ever questioned such misuse, and thereby took over such argumentation.

Differences between the countries can only be seen with regard to the 'refinedness' of war propaganda:

- The Norwegian *Aftenposten* mostly adhered to rather 'crude' war propaganda. For instance, it quoted without comment cynical remarks like: 'If [the Iraqis] are prepared for martyrdom, we are prepared to help them in that' (document 5). In two *Aftenposten* articles, almost no de-escalation-oriented elements appeared at

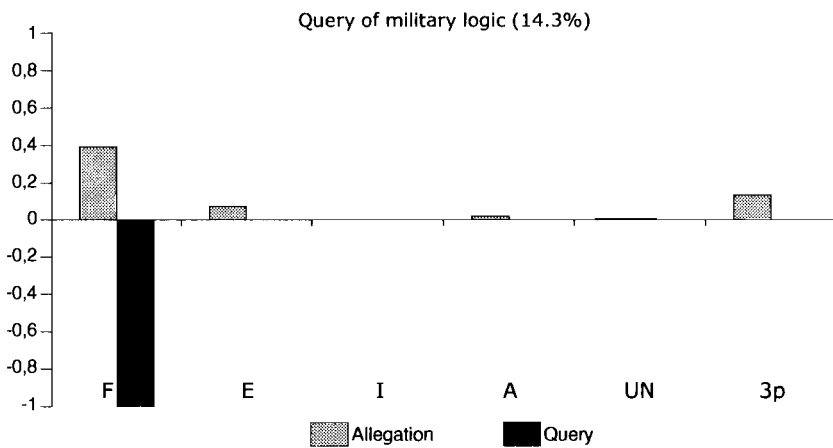
all (documents 4 and 5); in a third article, the allied policy was occasionally criticized, but these criticisms stayed within the framework of military logic (e.g., 'Norwegian authorities were in no manner informed about the ... attacks'; 'Isn't it incomprehensible that one reacts so quickly against Iraq and not against Serbia?'; document 3).

- The excerpt from the German TV news broadcast *heute* (document 1) is quite similar with regard to the occurrence of de-escalation-oriented elements: it contains none at all. Yet, as it conveys war propaganda on two levels, it can be regarded as more refined. On the first level, it simply quotes Iraqi propaganda; on a second level, it is a piece of propaganda against Iraq, as it ridicules Iraqi habits and parliamentary procedures, and quotes without comment exaggerated Iraqi propaganda formulas that must sound strange to Western ears.
- The Finnish article from *Helsingin Sanomat* (document 2) can be regarded as 'high-quality' war propaganda. It tells its readers about the thoughts and beliefs of Kuwaiti soldiers, who even mention self-criticism and understanding of their Iraqi opponents. Yet, this seemingly balanced picture turns out to be highly refined propaganda: the article, for instance, makes use of a two-sided message by which self-criticism can be ward off, and the massive incentives for social identification only serve to draw the readers into double-bind communication that causes emotional confusion and makes the readers long for ready-made, 'easy' solutions (see chapter 10).

Query of military logic

14.3% of the analysed news items doubted or denied the necessity or effectiveness of force against Iraq (99.9%) and sometimes referred to third party peace initiatives (13.4%). However, these items did not reject the use of force unequivocally, but also corroborated it quite often (38.0%) (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Query of military logic



Nonetheless – and particularly in contrast to ‘pure military logic’ – at a first glance, this style of querying military logic looked quite promising as a candidate for de-escalation-oriented reporting. And, in fact, the respective articles from Germany, Finland and Norway do contain quite a lot of de-escalation-oriented elements. In all the three countries, emphasis was laid on questioning war and military logic by questioning military force as necessary, suitable and/or effective, by questioning the competitive character of the conflict, by demanding peaceful alternatives or by exploring the basis for cooperation. In addition, the German and Norwegian articles transmitted indignation with the war and reported on critical evaluations of both sides’ actions. They also quoted civil actors striving for peaceful conflict resolution and gave incentives for social identification with such actors. Finally, they contained hardly any escalation-oriented elements.

Yet, this is only one side of the coin. In all the three countries, these de-escalation-oriented elements of conflict coverage are relativized, if not warded off completely. Surprisingly, very similar mechanisms were used to achieve this, and these can be classified as ‘rejection of criticism by marginalization’.

In Germany and Norway, the topic of the respective articles is the same. It consists of sympathetic descriptions of how Muslims who live in Germany or Norway view the conflict shortly after the beginning of the war in January 1991. The headlines read:

- ‘Moslems: We do not want blood to be shed’ (document 6), and
- ‘Muslims pray for peace in the Gulf’ (document 8).

Such statements, on the one hand, support the thesis that Saddam Hussein alone is responsible for the war and that he stands isolated in the Muslim world. Yet, they can also be understood as critical remarks which question the allied war policy. However, these statements are made by representatives of a religious minority that is at least unfamiliar for many people; in addition, these representatives mostly do not use political but religious arguments against the war policy. Thus, their point of view loses importance for the large majority of the German and Norwegian population. Their criticism is made harmless by marginalizing it. Still worse, the Norwegian article even ridicules it at one point: ‘May Allah step in and stop this madness’ (document 8).

Another kind of marginalization can be observed in the Finnish article. Here, remarks which might question the use of military force are embedded into a framework of military logic: the occurrences of escalation-oriented elements are presented as standard, against which the de-escalation-oriented elements are deviations.

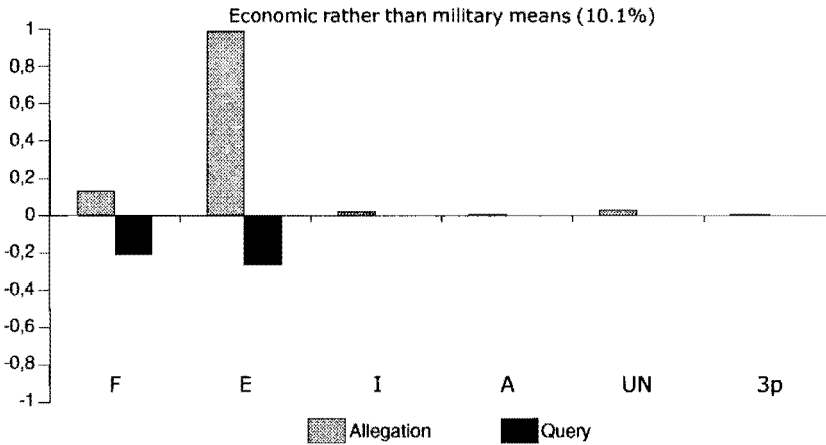
Therefore, qualitative analysis shows that ‘query of military logic’ cannot keep the promise of a peace-journalistic style of conflict coverage. De-escalation-oriented elements are in fact included, yet strongly relativized.

Economic rather than military means

10.1% of the news items argued in favour of economic rather than military means. Although it was said in these news items that the economic embargo on trade with Iraq should have been given more time to be effective (98.2%), only some of the items explicitly doubted the need for force against Iraq (20.2%). Moreover, these items did not unequivocally favour the alternative of an economic embargo, but

quite often doubted or denied it (25.3%) and sometimes they even described force against Iraq as the only reasonable alternative (13.0%), (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Economic rather than military means



Moreover, economic sanctions against Iraq were discussed as a means of conflict resolution only until war actually started (see Kempf, 1996a: 18): at that point, sanctions became 'yesterday's paper' – there was no need to talk about them any more. As long as economic means had a chance to be an alternative to war, they remained in the public debate.

By the time war had begun, two patterns of argumentation had arisen:

- Some, like the German Opposition Leader Hans-Jochen Vogel, argued against military action and said that sanctions had had 'an insufficient period of time to work' (see document 9);
- others, like President George Bush, said that sanctions had shown 'no sign of accomplishing their objective' (see document 15) and thereby tried to legitimize the use of armed force.

The articles from Norway, Finland and Germany, although randomly chosen for qualitative analysis, all have one thing in common: they all describe parliamentary discussions in which both patterns of argumentation were used. The Finnish and the Norwegian articles (documents 10 and 11) contain comprehensive descriptions of the political discussion in the USA, right before the US Congress is about to vote on the final resolution before the war; the German article (document 9) describes a 'tumultuous' parliamentary discussion in the German Bundestag right after the outbreak of hostilities.

In all the three articles, the style of coverage clings to the parliamentary majority:

- In Finland, the argument 'economic rather than military means' in fact is mentioned. Yet, support for military solutions as possible and effective is the backbone of the article; all in all, the text gives the impression that there is not much

left to do for finding a peaceful way out of the conflict constellation (document 10).

- The Norwegian article reports on self-critical evaluations and on a preference for economic means rather seldom; on the contrary, it is dominated by military logic and the idealization of the intentions and actions of the USA. The Democratic Senator Sam Nunn, who speaks in favour of economic means, remains in the framework of binary logic: he describes sanctions as just another means to 'torment' Saddam Hussein (document 11).
- The German article comes very close to a balance between escalation- and de-escalation-oriented elements of conflict coverage. Yet, it gives the legislative majority clearly more impact: it puts the militaristic arguments of the majority in first place. Some arguments on the de-escalation-oriented side, on the other hand, are rather mythological and need war as a precondition – like the suggested 'comprehensive development plan for the Middle East for the post-war period' (document 9).

Economic sanctions were no 'peaceful' alternative to war. They could only be regarded as 'de-escalation-oriented' in the sense that they represented a lower level of escalation than war. Still, qualitative analysis showed that the articles included here are not candidates for a de-escalation-oriented style of conflict coverage even in that sense: sanctions are mentioned rather scarcely, and even if they are mentioned, they remain embedded within a framework of military logic. In one case, they are even depicted as being nothing more than a possibility for political aspirants 'to make themselves visible' (document 11).

Summary

The articles pertaining to this largest group of styles represent 41.1% of all items analysed. They all deal with more or less violent options to resolving the conflict, that is with war or economic sanctions. Although they range from slightly critical queries of military means to pure military logic, they are all grounded in a framework of binary logic: the tenor is 'Good vs. Evil', and only the means of overcoming the evil is sometimes a topic of discussion. Even the more critical articles never go beyond a reconstruction of the conflict as a competitive process: the standard is escalation-oriented elements of conflict coverage, while de-escalation-oriented elements appear as deviations.

In that sense, the analysed articles do not differ very much with regards to their country of origin. Yet, the analyses showed that the degree of refinedness with which the military solution is promoted differs: the Norwegian media included here tended to use very crude war propaganda, supporting the military option most openly and marginalizing or even ridiculing potential critics. The German and Finnish media, on the other hand, sometimes included more 'balanced' pictures of the conflict: for instance, incentives for social identification with self-critical Kuwaiti soldiers are given (document 2), Muslims living in Germany are quoted with critical statements on behalf of both parties to the war (document 6), or critical remarks made by German opposition leaders are given quite some space (document 9). Yet, the common ground of binary logic is never left: in order to achieve this, the more complex and

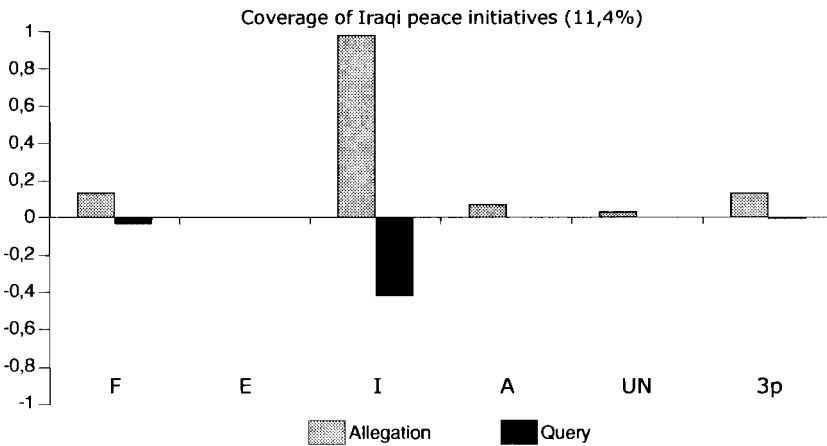
refined patterns of two-sided messages and double-bind communication are employed.

3.2 War parties' initiatives for negotiations and peace talks

Coverage of Iraqi peace initiatives

11.4% of the news items took notice of Iraqi initiatives (97.0%) and sometimes also referred to neutral or third party initiatives (13.4%). However, these items often doubted, denied or questioned the Iraqi initiatives (41.0%) and tended to present military force as the only reasonable solution to the conflict (13.4%), (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Coverage of Iraqi peace initiatives



Qualitative analysis confirmed that Iraqi initiatives were not taken seriously. In typical representatives of this style of coverage, such initiatives were rather taken as an occasion to spread mistrust against Iraq and to dehumanize the Iraqi élite.

Even more surprising is the fact that this tendency is dominant in all the three countries included in the qualitative analysis. One possible explanation for that might be that Iraq's information policy in fact was rather unclear and that the media all around the world depended on rumours or anonymous sources while analysing Iraqi policy.

Yet, this cannot explain the harsh rejection of Iraqi initiatives common to the articles from all three countries. To quote rumours and anonymous sources (e.g., 'Iraqi opposition circles in Syria', document 12) is one thing; to use them in order to stir up mistrust against the other side is another.

While mistrust against Iraq is a common feature, the articles differ on the actual points of main emphasis:

- The German article from *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (document 12) contains the crudest propaganda against Iraq. It includes no de-escalation-oriented elements at

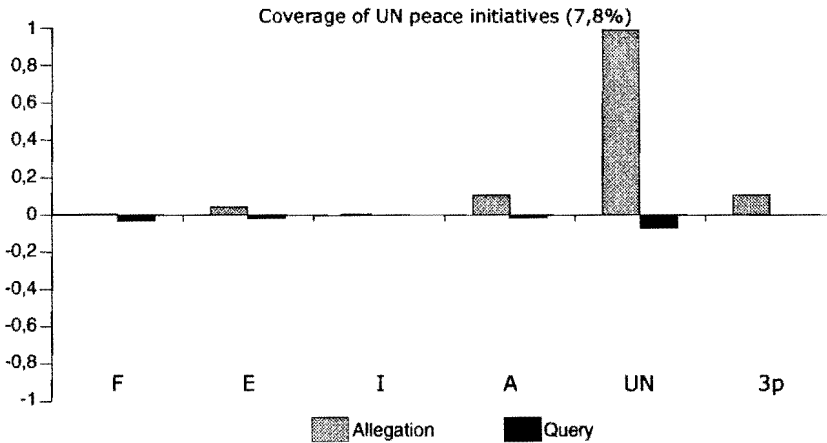
all, and it mainly bases its argumentation on mistrust. Its headline already shows where it is heading for: 'Saddam's offer a trap – "After the withdrawal from Kuwait, Baghdad will launch a terrorist war"’.

- The Finnish article also contains no de-escalation-oriented elements (document 13). Yet it differs from the German article in that mistrust is not expressed so openly: the paper rather observes Saddam Hussein's actions as turns in a game – which, however, is not so far away from describing Saddam's offer as a 'trap'. Its focus is on the construction of the conflict as a competitive process and on the revelation of antagonistic intentions of the parties in conflict.
- Although the Norwegian article starts with the headline 'Bush still has hopes for peace' (document 14), it doesn't give much hope for peace but focuses on military action as the only effective way of dealing with Iraq. It is the only article of the three that contains some self-critical remarks and some perspectives of reconciliation; yet these are counterbalanced by idealizations of own intentions and actions and by the ever-prominent mistrust of Iraq.

Coverage of UN peace initiatives

In contrast to the coverage of Iraqi peace initiatives, those 7.8% of the news items that reported about UN initiatives (98.2%) raised only little doubt against them (6.2%). They tended to link them both to third party (10.2%) and allied initiatives (9.9%), and they made no positive reference to the use of military force (0.1%), (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Coverage of UN peace initiatives



Right before the outbreak of war, UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar made a last desperate attempt to prevent war and went to Baghdad to negotiate with the Iraqi leadership. Several Arab leaders also tried to find an 'Arab solution' for the conflict in order to avoid military action.

These initiatives are included in all three articles from Germany, Finland and Norway (documents 15, 16 and 17). In fact, they are covered quite positively: appeals for peaceful conflict resolution are mentioned; perspectives for reconciliation are described; and the depiction of UN and third party initiatives is – at least in the article from Germany – supported by incentives for social identification.

Yet, these initiatives are only of secondary importance:

- the Norwegian article lays most emphasis on the threat that Iraq represents (document 17);
- the Finnish article puts its focus on the escalation process, and other processes are seen as reactions to it (document 16);³
- the article from the German paper is a transcript of President Bush's speech two hours after 'allied forces began an attack on military targets in Iraq and Kuwait' (document 15); its main tone is that of binary logic: it converts possible indignation with the war into indignation with the enemy, and throughout the speech Bush dehumanizes Saddam Hussein, holding him responsible for the outbreak of war.

George Bush's speech can be regarded as a Pandora's box of modern war propaganda. Bush uses nearly the whole spectrum of escalation-oriented arguments and a great variety of rhetorical gadgets, which makes the speech quite instructive for propaganda research. He summarizes the political discussion up to that day and even takes up criticisms, hesitations and doubts (e.g., 'Some may ask, why act now? Why not wait?'). Yet, in the end, he manages to turn the tide: all critical arguments are swept away and turned into outrage with Saddam Hussein and into reasons to wage war. He achieves this by:

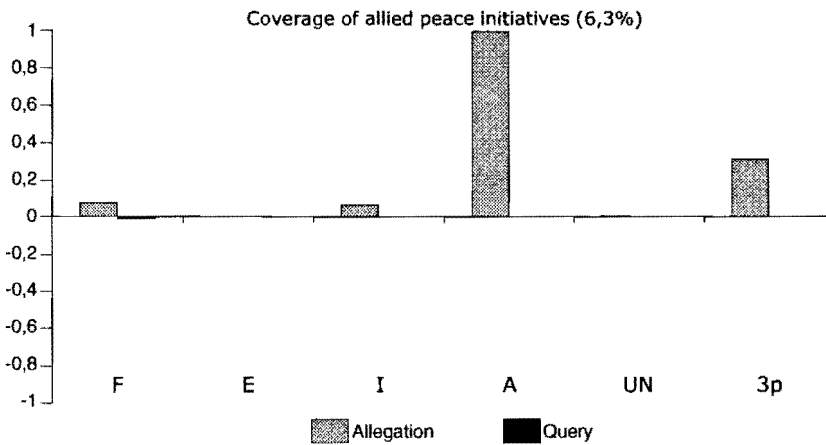
- using two-sided messages: e.g., 'For the innocents caught in this conflict, I pray for their safety' (see Chapter 10);
- by constantly repeating formula-like sentences: 'While the world waited, Saddam Hussein (... raped, pillaged and plundered, etc.)';
- by describing the conflict as one of 'the world versus Saddam': 'the world waited, Saddam ...', '28 nations – from five continents ... – have forces in the Gulf area ...', etc.;
- by giving incentives for social identification with US politicians and 'ordinary soldiers': 'Our Secretary of State, James Baker, ...', 'listen to Jackie Jones, an Army lieutenant, when she says ...', etc.;
- and, finally, by developing the famous mythological vision of a 'New World Order'.

In this context, the sympathetic descriptions of Perez de Cuellar's last-minute mission ('the Secretary General of the UN went to the Middle East with peace in his heart ...') and of Arab leaders' initiatives only serve to reinforce outrage with Saddam: 'While the world prayed for peace, Saddam prepared for war.'

Coverage of allied peace initiatives

6.3% of the items focused on allied initiatives (99.9%). They did so without direct doubt or questioning (0.1%), and often contextualized them with third party or neutral initiatives (31.0%). Though these news items sometimes even referred positively to Iraqi initiatives (6.0%), they still showed some tendency towards the approval of military force (7.6%), (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Coverage of allied peace initiatives



The first observation to be made here is that no peace initiative from the 'core' of the allied war coalition, that is to say from the United States of America, could be detected among the typical items following this style. Furthermore, in the light of the qualitative analyses, the question arises of whether peace initiatives which were launched from the 'periphery' of the coalition were ever taken seriously at all: the 'Arab solution' was reported with great reservations, and French mediation efforts were even dismissed openly. This tendency to ward off such peace initiatives grew over time; therefore, the articles included here show a specific dependence on their date of publication:

- The article from Germany (document 18) dates from 2 August 1990. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which happened on the very same day, is not yet reported; the article's topic are the 'reconciliation talks' between Iraq and Kuwait in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, which had been encouraged by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.
- The Finnish article (document 19), published two days after the invasion (4 August 1990), reports on Saddam Hussein's willingness to meet Kuwaiti leaders at a top-level meeting of Arab countries, following an initiative by King Hussein of Jordan.
- The article from Norway (document 20), published on 19 January 1991, right after the first allied attacks on Iraq, reports on French foreign policy and peace initiatives.

The first two articles are quite ambiguous in their manner of describing peace initiatives by Arab leaders. This may be due to the actual constellation in early August 1990, when public debate was still more open and not yet purely anti-Iraq. Both articles are written in a rather neutral style and contain explorations of the basis for cooperation and arguments in favour of peaceful alternatives. Yet they also make use of escalation-oriented arguments by doubting possibilities for cooperation between the parties in the conflict and by quoting mutual allocations of guilt.

The Norwegian article, on the other hand, stems from a time when anything that might have disturbed the clean picture of 'Good vs. Evil' received harsh criticism. It contains sharp propaganda against the French last-minute peace initiatives and against the 'imagined (French) position of a very unique and special country as an international peace mediator' (document 20). Its main purpose is to stir up mistrust of French motives for mediating in the conflict. According to the article, there is no 'special French desire for peace, but rather a French version of isolationism combined with opportunism'. The open, sometimes ironically expressed mistrust is accompanied by warding off social identification with members of the French élite. Thus, the content of this article can be described in just one phrase: 'French-bashing'.

Summary

Quantitative analysis showed that more than one fourth of all articles dealing with alternative ways of settling the conflict reported about war parties' initiatives for negotiations and peace talks. Thus, the public was actually given the facts about initiatives from the United Nations, Iraq or the allies.

Yet, this is only one side of the coin: qualitative analysis showed that the way the media presented these facts was in no way useful for supporting de-escalatory processes. Although in principle such initiatives open up the possibility of overcoming camp mentality, the media stuck to binary and military logic.

Obviously, this can be seen most clearly in the treatment that Iraqi initiatives were given by the media: these initiatives were met with *a priori* mistrust. More surprisingly, initiatives from the 'periphery' of the alliance, such as France, were also harshly criticized and mistrusted. Last but not least, UN initiatives were not mistrusted but they were misused in order to legitimize war by holding Iraq responsible for the failure of these initiatives.

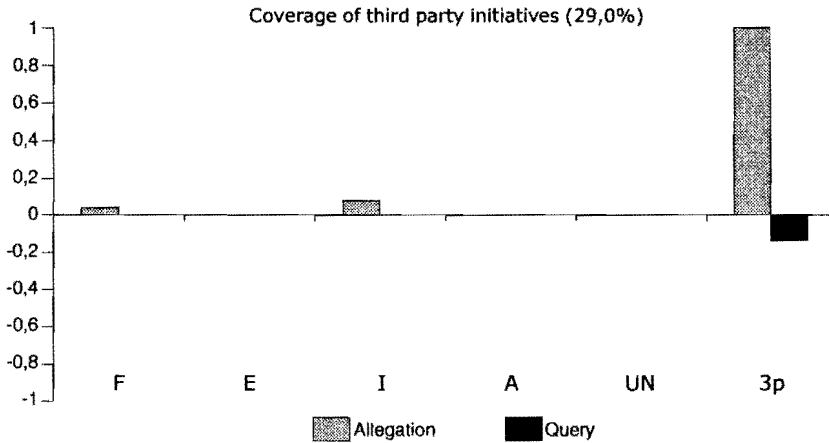
The three countries included here do not differ very much with respect to these tendencies. One can only say that the Finnish media were more moderate in their orientation towards escalation, while the Norwegian and German articles include some pieces of rather rude anti-peace-initiative propaganda. In one case, however, the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* took advantage of highly refined US war propaganda, which does not need to get 'rude', by printing a translated version of a speech by George Bush.

3.3 Third party peace initiatives

Reporting of third party initiatives

29.0% of the items reported or at least mentioned third party peace initiatives (99.9%). Although they sometimes doubted these neutral initiatives (14.1%), these items expressed only little approval of military force (3.4%) and even made some positive references to Iraqi initiatives for negotiations or peace talks (6.7%), (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Coverage of third party initiatives



As this style comprises nearly one third of all news items dealing with alternative ways of settling the conflict, it deserves a closer look. At time-spot No. 6, which covers 21–23 February 1991, its usage exceeds that of all other styles of coverage at all time-spots; consequently, most articles chosen for qualitative analysis stem from that period, when the last peace proposals before the start of the ground offensive were made.

Yet, as the results of qualitative analysis show, ‘reporting of third party peace initiatives’ does not necessarily mean that initiatives, like the one launched by the Soviet Union at that time, were taken up positively and supported by the media. In particular, the Norwegian media did not care much about Gorbachev’s initiative from mid-February 1991. Of course, they had to mention it, but they rather took up the event in order to describe eventual problems that Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait would create (document 24), to promote inescapable conditions imposed on Saddam (document 26) or to stir up mistrust of Moscow (document 25).

Yet the situation in Germany and in Finland is not that different: the headlines of the analysed news articles already show that in all three countries the proposal of ‘Moscow’s peace plan’ was not taken as an occasion to foster such peace efforts. On the contrary, it is rather taken as an occasion:

- to discourage the public (Finland’s *Helsingin Sanomat*, document 23);
- to lay emphasis on preconditions imposed on Iraq (Germany’s *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, document 22; Norway’s *Aftenposten*, document 26); and
- to ward off concrete steps towards peace (*Aftenposten*, document 24).

Although the existence of mediation efforts by third parties in general (or ‘in theory’) gives the media the possibility of turning to peace journalism more easily, closer examination of the articles shows that in all three countries the media would rather stick to the usage of conflict-escalating style elements. All through these articles:

- Peaceful alternatives are refuted by denying the effectiveness of diplomatic means of conflict resolution and by emphasizing how limited the possibility of success is for them.
- Military logic is predominant in large parts of the articles: as the conflict is conceptualized as a competitive process, military force is constructed as (the only) suitable and necessary means for conflict resolution, and military operations are even depicted in a positive or glorifying manner.
- Social identification with mediating politicians is warded off by marginalizing them, and mistrust of them is even stirred up.

De-escalation-oriented elements, on the other hand, clearly have a tough job. In all three countries, they are used rather seldom. In some cases, they hardly appear at all (see document 26). In some, they are embedded into surroundings that are biased towards conflict escalation (e.g., document 24). Sometimes they are even misused by making them part of two-sided messages (see document 21). As far as de-escalation-oriented elements appear at all, they consist of:

- perspectives for reconciliation, represented by the depiction of attempts to mediate between both sides on behalf of neutral third parties;
- impartial elite-reporting and social identification with efforts towards peaceful conflict resolution by members of the elite, and/or impartial social identification with victims of the war;
- critical evaluation of own side's rights, intentions and/or actions, and/or critical evaluation of both sides' actions; and
- recognition of the price that has to be paid for military victory.

Yet, all in all, de-escalating elements of conflict coverage are marginalized, and news items that dismiss the peaceful settlement of the conflict in a straightforward way are most typical for this style of reporting about third party initiatives.

An example of this is an article that was published in the Norwegian *Aftenposten* (document 24). The main concern of this article is the eventual problems that Saddam's withdrawal from Kuwait will create. The headline 'USA troubled over cease-fire' shows how the UN mandate has become synonymous with the US involvement in the war. The US concern is evident in the lead, where top political leadership is reported as worried over an Iraqi decision to abide by the peace proposals. The president himself refuses to elaborate on the subject. As we are told, it is not the prospects of peace but Saddam's remaining in power that concerns the USA. The peace proposals initiated by Gorbachev are pointed out, but not much credence is attached to the actual contents of the proposal.

As the elimination of Saddam does not appear in any UN mandate or resolution, the Americans and the British do not officially talk about any attempts on the life of Saddam but the desire is definitely present. Another important aspect of the article is the actual war efforts and the talk about precision bombing and destruction of Iraqi military infrastructure. The article is loaded with symbols of war and war propaganda, i.e. destruction of tanks, superiority of US war technology and its humane side (precision bombing), and the necessity of preparedness (Iraqi forces breaking down but still capable of inflicting damage), etc.

The whole text is dominated by escalating elements, such as military values, emphasis on threat from the enemy, demonization of enemy intentions and incentives for identification with one's own side's élite. Only with a certain amount of good will, some (implicit) tendency towards critical evaluation of the allies' intentions, can be detected on the de-escalating side.

In particular, the last paragraph of the article is war propaganda, pure and simple. The details on precision bombing, the technological superiority of the US war arsenal and the number of helicopters destroyed seem like excerpts from Schwarzkopf's press conference.

As Kempf (1997b) showed for US and Swedish media, news items reporting on third party initiatives often demonstrated a dramatic lack of critical journalism, and a wide variety of modes were used in the coverage of third party peace initiatives in order to raise support for the war – even if the initiatives themselves were not questioned explicitly. Similarly, the article from the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* included here (document 21) takes up a Soviet peace initiative only in order to portray the war as unavoidable.

The article begins by summarizing international reactions to the air attack on Iraq as worldwide 'shock and concern' over the outbreak of war in combination with 'restrained to unreserved support for the actions of the multinational force', while there was 'hardly any support' for Iraq. The Soviet mediation efforts are not reported until the audience has been told that Mikhail Gorbachev reacted immediately to the airstrikes by putting the blame for the war on Saddam Hussein.

Next, the article lines up the reactions of various Western (mainly European) states and politicians, of which most support the US policy. The tenor of these reactions, however, is to regard the outbreak of war as a tragic event which was unavoidable since Iraq had proved to be unyielding. Consequently, it is the Iraqi leadership – and in particular Saddam Hussein – who is to blame for the outbreak of war and the further course of the conflict. Critical voices are quoted from Cuba, Yemen, North Korea, Jordan, Iran and Libya. UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar feels 'only sorrow over the war', and Pope John Paul II regrets the outbreak of war as 'a grave defeat for international law and the world community' and expresses his 'deepest grief' and 'especially his sorrow for victims on both sides, as well as his doubts whether war is 'an appropriate means for solving problems among nations'. After these critical voices, the article ends with a statement from the Gulf Cooperation Council, which welcomed the attack, and with further reproaches against Saddam Hussein, who made the outbreak of war 'inevitable'.

The Soviet peace efforts are covered quite positively and with great detail. They are neither queried nor explicitly rejected. There are even incentives for social identification with Gorbachev. As qualitative analysis unveiled, however, the whole article has the form of a two-sided message, for which the positive coverage of Gorbachev's peace initiative plays an essential role. Criticism of the allied war policy, as well as indignation with the outbreak of war and the failure of the international community, are turned against Saddam Hussein. In this scenario, the detailed description of the Soviet mediation efforts and the incentives for identification with Gorbachev serve to reinforce the outrage at Saddam Hussein all the more. The more the Soviet mediators have striven for a peaceful settlement of the conflict and the more this is appreciated by the article, the more it is justified to blame Saddam Hussein for the failure of the mediation efforts; and the more the responsibility and

guilt for the war can be attributed to him, the more one ought to boil with indignation at him and the more it seems justified to fall back upon military means. Although it reports about third party peace initiatives quite positively, the article does not give any perspectives for a peaceful settlement to the conflict. It simply misuses the Soviet mediation efforts in order to add to the plausibility and acceptance of the war.

Yet, the results of qualitative analysis also show that the mere dominance of escalating aspects in conflict coverage does not necessarily imply that a piece of journalism has stepped into the propaganda trap. Quality journalism claims to mirror and reflect facts and to escape judgements. Even a story of diplomatic efforts to put an end to the war can thus involve escalating elements, just because these efforts have failed.

The Finnish article from *Helsingin Sanomat* (document 23) is such a piece of journalism. The article is a news text, written partly in telegram style, concerning two diplomatic efforts to stop the Gulf War. The first theme of the article is the visit of Yevganij Primakov to Baghdad (as a special representative of Gorbachev), whose mission failed since he did not succeed in meeting anyone. The second theme is the meeting of the non-aligned countries who 'were in dispute' about the means of stopping the war.

Reporting mainly on the level of day-to-day events, the article involves quite a few escalating elements. However, since most of these are denials of the efficiency of diplomatic or political means of conflict resolution, they seem to be rather unavoidable in reporting the events which are the topic of the article.

When the article, for instance, underlines the 'loneliness' of Gorbachev's representative in Baghdad, this might be read as some tendency towards marginalizing a member of the third party élite who tries to mediate in the conflict. But this marginalization is due to the facts reported and not to the specific journalistic presentation of them. On the contrary, by quoting his own words saying that he has nothing to tell and that he has met no one, the article rather takes up Primakov's own view.

The only critical sequence of the article which might indicate some bias towards conflict escalation is when Gorbachev's spokesperson is described as assuring that there are no secret deals between Iraq and the Soviet Union. Reported quite abruptly and without any visible reason on the surface of the text, this sequence might rather stir up mistrust of the Soviet mediation efforts than build up trust in the mediating third party.

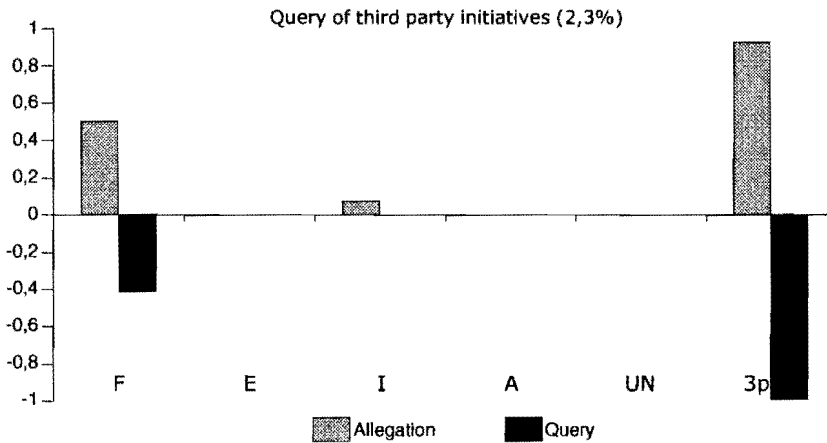
Yet, as a whole, the Finnish article differs from the German and Norwegian news items representing the 'reporting of third party initiatives' in that it shows no tendency to misuse the apparent problems that mediation efforts have to face. Here, the appearance of conflict-escalating elements is grounded in facts, not in judgments or attempts to ward off possible criticisms of one's own side. The Finnish article might thus serve as an example to study in order to improve journalistic treatment of facts that, like the failure of mediation efforts, are apt to escalate an ongoing conflict.

Query of third party initiatives

A rather small number of news items (2.3%) put third party initiatives in the context of military logic. In doing so, these items either presented arguments for and against, or two-sided messages, and they showed a clear bias towards refuting the initiatives

(Allegation:Query = 92.0%:99.0%) and backing up a military solution (Allegation:Query = 49.7%:40.6%) (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Query of third party initiatives



The two articles included here (documents 27 and 28)⁴ relate to an initiative launched by the Soviet Union in mid-February 1991, right before the start of the allied ground offensive, containing the proposal of an immediate ceasefire. Neither article reports on the initiative itself, but on reactions to it:

- The article from the German provincial paper *Südkurier* (document 27) describes the public opinion in Israel with regard to the Soviet initiative. Its tenor is summarized by the headlines: “‘The worst possible solution’. Israeli politicians see an increased danger to their country in an immediate ceasefire’.
- The Finnish article (document 28) reports on a radio speech by Saddam Hussein, relating it to the Soviet mediation efforts. The headlines read: ‘Saddam asserted Iraq will continue. He didn’t answer to the peace proposal made by the Soviet Union’.

Both articles have several style characteristics in common: they both clearly put the Soviet initiative in the context of military logic; based on a construction of the conflict as a competitive process, both articles try to promote military solutions as possible and effective, and to ward off the irritation that the Soviet proposal might cause; finally, they both make use of partial élite reporting by holding Saddam Hussein responsible for the situation.

In addition, the German article contains a two-sided message (see Chapter 10), that makes it possible to ward off critical information. It reports on an opinion poll in Israel: ‘83.6% of all Israelis are against military intervention at the present time, and 62.7% even believe that Israel should refrain from future involvement in the war’. Yet, the critical impact of this information is ignored by the article:

- The critical argumentation behind this standpoint is not mentioned.

- Critical facts are hidden in subordinate clauses; ‘mainstream’ facts are presented in main clauses.
- When presenting critical information, the argumentation shifts from the conflict-context level to the day-to-day level, which – in the context of the whole article – seems to be the inadequate level of argumentation.
- The standpoint of the majority of the Israelis is devaluated to a seemingly irrational ‘belief’, while growing support for military intervention is presented as a quasi-natural development.

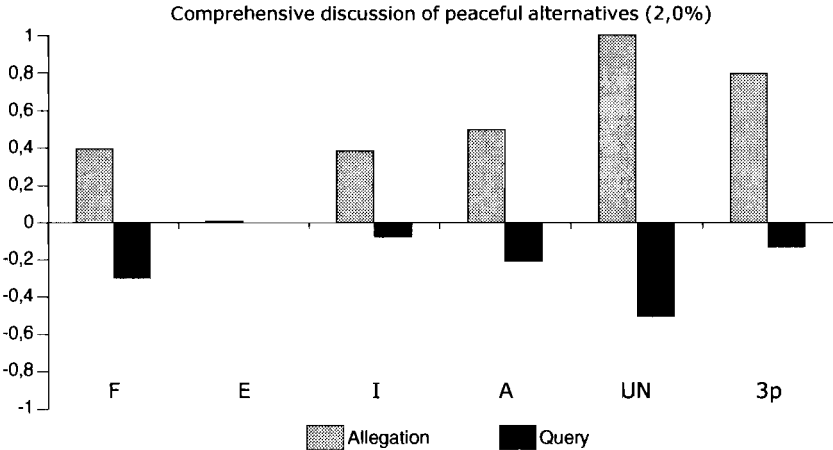
Therefore, neither article discusses the Soviet initiative impartially by presenting arguments for and against; instead, they discuss it in the framework of binary and military logic and thereby devalue it to a minor irritation in the course of martial events.

Comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives

A very small number (2.0%) of the items referred to third party initiatives in the context of a comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives (see Figure 10):

- In most cases these items referred positively to third party initiatives (79.8%) and only sometimes they expressed doubt against them (13.5%).
- The focus of the items was put on UN initiatives, which were evaluated much more ambiguously, (allegation: 99.9%, query: 50.0%).
- Allied initiatives were reported less often but with the same ambiguity (allegation: 38.2%, query: 20.3%) as the UN initiatives.
- Against Iraqi initiatives, on the other hand, which were given the same positive reference as the allied ones (38.2%), only less doubt was expressed (8.4%).

Figure 10. Comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives



This is the rarest and most complex style of covering alternative ways of settling the Gulf War. Interestingly enough, it can be characterized as a TV-news style of mid-January 1991 (see Kempf, 1996a: 17ff.). At that period of time, right before the outbreak of the war, one got the impression that the events went head over heels. Television and radio news broadcasts seemingly became the only possibility for fulfilling the need of people to keep up with the events (see Reimann & Kempf, 1994a). Information given in such news broadcasts, however, was often restricted to telegram-style listings of events and opinions. Therefore, 'comprehensive discussion' does not mean careful considerations of arguments for and against certain theses; it just points to the fact that the pros and cons of different peaceful *and* military options are (at least briefly) mentioned.

The characterization as 'telegram-style' applies to both documents included here.⁵ The German article from the provincial paper *Südkurier* contains a listing of events of 13 January 1991 (document 29). This article, however, is one of the few examples in which de-escalation-oriented elements are predominant. In particular, it reports on Perez de Cuellar's last mission to Baghdad a few days before the outbreak of the war and on other appeals and diplomatic efforts to prevent military action. Although the article also makes use of a two-sided message and other escalation-oriented style-elements, it is dominated by the questioning of war and military logic, and by demands for peaceful alternatives. In addition, the de-escalation-oriented argumentation is supported by constructive emotions and by incentives for social identification with mediating politicians.

The Finnish text is a typical representative of TV news broadcasts from that period (document 30). Several 'events of the day' (14 January 1991) are reported: negotiations between the United Nations and Iraq, a peace proposal made by Yemen, the decision of the Iraqi parliament to give Saddam Hussein the authority to wage war and reactions to all of these events.

The text constructs the current situation as follows: there are two parties in a rapidly escalating conflict constellation in which cooperative interaction no longer exists. Consequently, discourses of both parties are drifting to war and military logic, and to refutation of peaceful alternatives. Still, there is a third party which tries to open perspectives for reconciliation.

Yet, although it is called 'a sudden ray of hope', the position of Yemen's mediation effort is rather marginal. In the course of the whole text, Yemen's proposal rather fulfils the role of a dramatic opener for the news. Yet, once again,⁶ the dominance of escalating aspects in the text does not necessarily imply that it has stepped into the propaganda trap. It rather reflects the fact that both parties in the conflict themselves devaluated Yemen's efforts: the Iraqi side was occupied with making harsh war propaganda and, on the other side, James Baker is quoted as commenting laconically that he has never heard about this proposal.

Therefore, the pessimistic tone at the end of the news is also due to the facts reported: Yemen's initiative in fact was nothing more than a footnote to the events.

Summary

Third party peace initiatives were discussed in the media quite often: 33.3% of all articles included here dealt with this matter. The greatest part of this group can be characterized as 'reporting' on such initiatives (29.0%), while 'query' and 'comprehensive discussion' were rather marginal phenomena (2.3%, and 2.0%).

'Reporting of third party initiatives' is quite a good example of the ambiguity of the Gulf War coverage. At first glance (which is methodologically caught by quantitative methods), the media fulfilled their function, in that they actually gave the facts the public deserved. A closer look, methodologically represented by qualitative methods, reveals that through the way in which the media reported on these facts, they undermined their potential de-escalatory effects. Once again (see the summaries of 3.1 and 3.2), third party peace initiatives were only depicted within a framework of binary logic and were kept out of the framework of sensible alternatives by the spreading of mistrust of their promoters, by denying their effectiveness, by marginalization or by two-sided messages.

'Query of third party initiatives' tops that by its frankness: the Soviet initiative from mid-February 1991, for instance, is repeatedly labelled 'the worst possible solution' (document 27). The most seldom style of all, the 'comprehensive discussion of third party initiatives', on the other hand, is much more open to peaceful alternatives of conflict resolution. Yet, this may be partly due to its form of presenting facts: typical representatives of this style consist of telegram-style summaries of the 'events of the day', which also contain 'sudden rays of hope' – and which may be forgotten the next day. Nevertheless, this style actually contains rare examples of predominantly de-escalation-oriented conflict coverage.

Again, the respective countries of origin differ only slightly. The Norwegian media, however, contain the most open refutations of peaceful alternatives and, interestingly enough, there is no Norwegian representative for the most balanced style of all, the comprehensive discussion of peaceful alternatives. The German and Finnish media, on the other hand, give peaceful alternatives at least some space. The Finnish pessimism towards them seems to be based on facts, rather than on an orientation towards escalation.

4. Conclusions

The results of the study demonstrate a gross orientation towards conflict escalation in the Gulf War coverage. Although the media put high emphasis on reporting about alternatives to violence, there was extremely little critical journalism that gave peace a chance. The facts were all there, but the media placed them within a framework of binary and military logic and thereby undermined possible de-escalatory effects of promising alternatives to war.

With regards to this overall orientation, the media in the respective countries included in this study differ only slightly. On the contrary, the media in these countries sometimes even use the same journalistic techniques to ward off possible criticisms of camp mentality and orientation towards war (see the remarks on documents 6 and 7 in 'Query of military logic').

However, the Norwegian media can be described as the most escalation-oriented: compared to Germany and Finland, it devoted the least space to reporting on alternatives to violence (only 11.14% of all items) and most openly expressed its adherence to the military option and its rejection of peaceful alternatives. The German media, on the other hand, devoted the most space to reporting on alternatives to war and, in particular, the 'query of military logic' (38.86%, and 13.19% of all items). Yet, if the German reporting looks more 'balanced', this is mostly due to

more 'refined' style elements, such as two-sided messages or double-bind communication; just like the Norwegian media, the German media hardly ever left the common ground of binary and military logic. Finally, the Finnish media also fit into that framework. However, the style of reporting is more cautious: refutation of peaceful alternatives, for instance, is hardly ever expressed openly and is rather based on facts than on an orientation towards escalation.

This 'Finnish pessimism' also demonstrates some of the difficulties that the enterprise of critical peace journalism has to face. If a peace initiative has failed, the mere coverage of this event may contribute to the plausibility of war and military logic. Critical peace journalism, obviously, demands more than avoiding judgements and reporting facts only. It requires an intellectual capacity which goes beyond antagonism.

Notes

1. The same abbreviations are used also in Figures 2–10.
2. The authors wish to thank Risto Suikkanen and Rajesh Parashar for the qualitative analysis of the Finnish and Norwegian material.
3. In its second half, however, wind turns towards questioning of war and military logic.
4. 'Query of third party initiatives' is irrelevant in Norway (0.0009%), and therefore no 'typical' Norwegian article was determined by LCA.
5. Once again, this style of reporting was irrelevant in Norway (0.0005%).
6. See the comments on document 23 in 'Reporting of third party initiatives'.