

# In Pursuit of Peace: Why the US Didn't Use Peace Journalism in the Iraq War

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## Abstract

The United States embedded journalists with its troops in the Iraq War at a higher rate, and for longer periods, than in any previous conflict. This project investigates why, given this investment in shaping reportage, and given President Bush's characterization of the conflict as, "in pursuit of peace," the US didn't use peace journalism as a peacebuilding tool. I present evidence that these embeds acted as an extension of the Department of Defense, furthering its agenda and legitimizing violence against Iraqis. The DOD's publicized agenda was shaped by a policy of secrecy in war that facilitated its strategic information campaign, which posed Iraq as a direct threat to the US. Furthermore, coverage was also disproportionately focused on elite diplomats, making the peacebuilding process opaque and concealing US transgressions, giving it negotiating power and hiding weakness. I conclude that the US adopted war journalism instead of peace journalism to obscure its own interests in the war, namely imperialism via the War on Terror and securing access to Iraqi oil.

## Research Puzzle

In light of governmental steps to adapt media coverage "in pursuit of peace," why didn't the US employ peace journalism as a tool in the Iraq peacebuilding process?

## Peace Journalism vs War Journalism

**Peace Journalism:**  
the application of peace and conflict studies to reporting and editing the news

<b>Peace Journalism</b>	Peace/Conflict Oriented	Truth-Oriented	People-Oriented	Solution-Oriented
<b>War Journalism</b>	War/Violence Oriented	Propaganda-Oriented	Elite (Diplomat)-Oriented	Victory Oriented

## Embedded Journalists: An Extension of the Department Of Defense

### Censorship

- ❖ Ground rules for embedded reporters
  - ❖ Restrictions on information
  - ❖ Prepublication security review

### Control

- ❖ DOD placed journalists in specific units, controlling what information appeared on which platform

Resulted in partial, propagandized coverage & a zero-sum perception of conflict.

Legitimated US violence & occluded information from the public, giving the US negotiating power.

## Secrecy in War

### Strategic Information Campaign

- ❖ Promotion of a DOD agenda
  - ❖ Weapons of Mass Destruction
  - ❖ Iraqi links to Al Qaeda
- ❖ Even though both of these themes were disproven by governmental agencies

### Narrow Scope of Coverage

- ❖ Coverage favored the US military and neglected most other actors

Resulted in closed space, closed time reporting that pushed disinformation and centered the military.

Excluded context necessary to humanly portray all sides and concealed US weaknesses.

## Elite Coverage

### President Bush vs Saddam Hussein

- ❖ Foregrounded President Bush & Saddam Hussein as the two major actors in the war
- ❖ Nationalistic rallying around figureheads

### Narrow Scope of Coverage

- ❖ Coverage ignored grassroots peacebuilding efforts

Distracted from US violations of international law and erased grassroots peacebuilding.

Promoted the idea that elite peacebuilding is the most effective, obscuring other methods.

Concealed US motives for involvement and methods of peacebuilding.

## Concealed US Motives

### US Imperialism

- ❖ Invested in displaying might in War on Terror
- ❖ Gaining a stronghold in the Middle East

### US Oil Interests

- ❖ Gain access to the 2nd largest oil reserves in the world, skirting Iraqi law and ousting Saddam Hussein