

## **Critical Discourse Analysis of the Iraq Conflict in the British and German ‘Quality’ Press**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper focuses on how the British and German ‘quality’ press has dealt with the warfare interests of the US administration in Iraq. In this context, particularly the papers’ presentation practices with regard to the ostensible existence of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and the alleged terrorist connection of al Qaeda with Saddam Hussein will be closely investigated. In order to operationalise this research agenda, I follow a cultural heuristics of research that consists of a social studies approach and the application of pragmalinguistic methods (including the analysis of frames, conceptual metaphors, speech acts, schemata of communication etc.) from a genre-based perspective. By virtue of this framework, it becomes possible to determine press genres and their cultural impact as well as the borderlines of discourse cultures about the de-/construction of war. The findings comprise a wide variety of empirical evidence for the shaping of policy lines in the papers’ front page articles from a comparative intra-European perspective.

### **1. Overview**

Last year, the US American ‘quality’ papers, the NEW YORK TIMES (From the Editors, 26.05.2004, A10) and the WASHINGTON POST (Kurtz, 2004, 12.08.2004, A1), apologized to their readers for having disseminated information of poor quality in the wake of the Iraq war. Their self-criticism mainly focused on the direct adaptation of unproven details that

were provided by Iraqi defectors and the press releases of the White House. In particular, the papers' editors blamed themselves for having published 'news' about the alleged existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) on the front pages, whereas counter positions were ignored or relegated to pages of less importance.

As far as I know, the other papers in our data sample<sup>1</sup> did not offer an excuse to their readers. With regard to the London *TIMES* (TT) and the *FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG* (FAZ), which are known for covering predominantly right-wing perspectives, and their political counterparts, *THE INDEPENDENT* (TI) and *SÜDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG* (SZ), I would like to find out if this is justified. For this purpose, my paper will particularly focus on how the British and German papers have dealt with the two main reasons the USA and Great Britain<sup>2</sup> brought to the fore in order to legitimise the necessity of the Iraq war:

- a) Iraq has WMDs or at least the capability to build and use them. Therefore, the Iraqi government poses a threat to its people and its neighboring countries, as well as to the USA and the world.
- b) The Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, is supposed to collaborate with terrorists of the al Qaeda group. This implies great risks that have to be eliminated in due time.

To date, a wide range of counter-evidence has been produced that totally negates the reasons' validity.<sup>3</sup> Usually, the papers' lines of argument are analysed on the basis of editorials (e.g. Eilders and Lüter, 2002; Lüger, 2002; Dirks, 2005a, 2006b); my contribution aims at providing empirical evidence for the shaping of policy lines in the papers' front page articles. The articles' relevance for investigative purposes seems to be unquestionable as front pages are generally conceived as the papers' billboards, as the place where quality papers usually make great efforts to enact their best performances in terms of a professional information management (cf. Bucher and Straßner, 1991: 53).

After having provided a brief outline of the research focus, the following sections will describe the cultural theory approach (section 2) and its methodical operationalisation by the Documentary Genre Analysis (section 3). Turning from the theoretical to the empirical side of the analyses, the fourth part presents the results of a comparative analysis with regard to special Critical Discourse Moments (CDMs) of the pre-war phase (section 4). The paper concludes by drawing correlations between the presented results and journalists' professionalism (section 5).

## **2. The Cultural Heuristics of Research: An Approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The research methodology is defined by a concept of a cultural theory that, to a great extent, corresponds to the CDA-description by Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (1997: 258): With regard to the language use of the press, the texts being published are considered "as a form of social practice". In accordance with Giddens (1984: 332-3), I

refer to texts both as a medium and a product of a mutual, meaning-based ‘relating’ between structure and (written) agency (cf. “duality of structure & agency”; see also Weiss and Wodak, 2003: 7ff). News language and press texts are identified as transmitters and producers of meaning with affectively loaded, pragmatic and cognitive dimensions in the context of superindividual, communicative (discourse) actions. To put this in a different way: In the process of acting, journalists select and enact more or less automatically and unconsciously specific collectively shared orders of knowledge (cf. Mannheim, 1952/1929: 13ff), i.e. frames,<sup>4</sup> scripts, and conceptual metaphors.<sup>5</sup> They are necessary for making sense of what goes on around us (cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 185-6). In connection with a wide range of linguistic instantiations, such symbolic devices of knowledge enable journalists to develop, sustain and reproduce genre- and press-specific rules of action. Due to the dynamics of social change, the rules are always in the process of being altered: They may be transformed into new rules – which in turn are responsible for shaping new structures. Thus, every instance of political language use – mostly being a constitutive dimension of any political action – can make a significant contribution to reproducing and/or transforming social structures along with their cultural impact.

Under these premises, the main goal of CDA is to reveal distortions of the intertextual and recontextualised connections, particularly between causes and effects, what can be identified as the *critical* impact of CDA (Fairclough, 1995: 747). The operationalisation of this goal is dedicated to ...

- the re-/construction of ‘interpretive explanations’, as Max Weber (1988/1913) has coined them. On the one hand, this approach consists of an ‘interpretive understanding’ of the situation-bound inner and outer conditions in connection with the actors’ framings of the situation. In order to answer the question: “What is it that’s going on here?” (Goffman 1974: 8), a praxeological theory of action<sup>6</sup> is applied. On the other hand, Weber’s approach embraces causal explanations that focus on the mutual relationship between the actors’ practices and the pragmatic and/or structural outcomes.
- data-driven approaches seeking “second-grade constructions” (Schütz, 1962: 3ff) that follow scientific, methodically controlled principles – in contrast to first-grade constructions that are part of everyday discourse.

As “CDA is the analysis of linguistic and semiotic aspects of social processes and problems” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997: 271), it was necessary to find analytical tools that are able to transgress the disciplinary boundaries of linguistics and social studies. The respective methods will be outlined in the next section.

### 3. The Documentary Genre Analysis and its Methods

The cultural heuristics of research is methodically operationalised with the help of the

'Documentary Genre Analysis' (Dirks, 2005a). It is a synthesis of the Documentary Method (Mannheim, 1964) and the Analysis of Communication Genres (Luckmann, 1986, 1995). Bearing on assumptions of social constructivism and the sociology of knowledge, a journalist's work is conceived in terms of producing texts that try to connect with the cultural frames and scripts of most of the paper's readers. According to the genre-based theory, which Thomas Luckmann has developed in the tradition of Bakhtin and Volosinov, these texts can be regarded as cultural solutions for coping with (proto-) typical communicative problems on a meta-linguistic and content-based level that fit the respective situation and therefore can make a contribution to the social constructivist assumption of how social dis-/order is established (Günthner and Luckmann, 2002: :223). Hence, the term 'discourse' is understood to cover all sorts of language-bound and pictorial presentation practices that share a joint topic and bear on a particular socio-political problem of general importance; here, the textual de-/ construction of the Iraq war is such a problem.

The Documentary Genre Analysis differentiates between three domains of meaning. Although they may overlap partly, for analytical purposes it is necessary to investigate them separately by specific pragma- and textlinguistic methods that have proved to be adequate tools for reconstructing the different domains with regard to news reports:

- The revelation of the *immanent* horizon of meaning refers to the inner text structure. It provides answers to the physical and physiological 'what' of a text. Whereas the latter is analysed on behalf of a detailed description of the situation at issue (which is part of the 'interpretive understanding'; cf. section 2), the physical 'what' focuses on the text structure. Its schemata of communication (narration, description, argumentation) are analysed with the help of the news-as-narrative-approach (cf. Bell, 1991, 1999; Hicethier, 2002; Kallmeyer and Schütze, 1977; Labov and Waletzky, 1967; Ochs, 1997; Rehbein, 1984; White, 2003). Further textlinguistic tools aim at the analysis of implications/ presuppositions (cf. Burton-Roberts, 1989; Smith and Wilson, 1979), stereotypes (cf. Quasthoff, 1973), *thema/ rhema*,<sup>7</sup> hyperboles, prosodic simulations, language varieties, etc.
- The *expressive* horizon of meaning is mainly constituted by the modes of mediation journalists frame the topic-related situation with. Thus, expressive meanings emerge from the potential illocutions of the journalists' presentation practices. As the interactive reading modes of media users follow a logic of their own, the analysis aims at covering most of the co-text- and context-related potentials of situation-bound framings, even if they may not have actually been intended by the text producers.

The expressive horizons of meaning and with that the articles' framings are reconstructed on behalf of the articles' preference structures (cf. "referential strategies" and "predicational strategies", Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; cf. "contextualization cues", Gumperz, 1992) that are instantiated by speech acts (Austin, 1980; Brown and Levinson, 1987; Searle, 1969, 1976), the re-contextualisations of politicians' sound bites,<sup>8</sup> by

Membership Category Devices (MCDs, particularly enhancing ingroup and outgroup formations) along with the respective “category-bound activities” (Jayyusi, 1984: 20ff; Leudar et al., 2004), and by different modalities.

- The *documentary* horizon of meaning both transcends and integrates the immanent and expressive strands insofar as it is built on press-specific collective patterns of meaning (cf. Mannheim 1964: 133f). These patterns include specific expectancies and value judgements, which – from their end – are the result of habitualised processes of interaction (cf. Bohnsack, 2001) or discourse-bound processes of development.

The documentary meaning is reconstructed on the basis of conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Lakoff and Turner, 1999) and frames, but also with the help of all kinds of documents that are needed for comprehensive interpretations and explanations of the topic at issue. Moreover, interpretive explanations as well as typologies and theoretical models are considered to give important insights into documentary meaning features. The leading core question to be answered is: “What does this document stand for?”.

The immanent, expressive and documentary dimensions that have turned out to be relevant to the articles’ sequences are condensed to codes of genre patterns. Next, the patterns are subsumed to the process of ‘constant comparison’ and selective codings in line with the principles of the grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) on the basis of an abductive posture (Peirce, 1998/1931-58; Reichertz, 2003). Thus, it becomes possible to explore the stability and fragility of genre patterns amounting to press genres, but also the emergence of new genres from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. The outcome of this empirical work consists of the development of medium-range theories (Merton, 1967) that enable us to determine the borderlines of discourse cultures about the de-/construction of war with regard to a clearly defined field of research. In relation to the different levels of abstraction, the research work provides us with more or less far-reaching insights into the discourse cultures’ constitutive parts.

The data sample referred to in this article comprises the papers’ front page articles in the pre-war phase that were published on the occasion of several *Critical Discourse Moments*<sup>9</sup> covering about two weeks before and after the CDM at issue: The “State of the Union Address”, in which the US president, George Bush, reanimates the “axis of evil” with regard to Iran, Iraq and North Korea (28.01.02), the press conference of Tony Blair in his Sedgefield constituency (03.09.02) preceding the memorial day of 9/11, the ensuing address of George Bush to the UN General Assembly (12.09.02), the publication of the British Iraq dossier (24.09.02), the return of the UN inspectors to Iraq (27.11.02), the presentation of the first weapons report by Hans Blix and Mohammed el-Baradei (27.01.03), the presentation of alleged ‘evidence’ of Iraqi WMDs by the US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to the UN Security Council (05.02.03), the most important anti-war protests on February 15, 2003; the decision of the Turkish parliament against the deployment of US American troops on their territory (02.03.03); the rather optimistic report of the chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, at the UN Security Council on March 5

and 7, 2003; the prime-time news conference held by G. Bush (06.03.03); the announcement of France and Russia on March 10, 2003 to veto a second UN Resolution; the clash of opinions between Blair and Bush with regard to another resolution at the Security Council (12./13.03.03); the summit of the 'coalition of the willing' in the Azores on March 16, 2003, issuing an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein, and the beginning of the Iraq war (20.03.03).

#### **4. Results**

The articles' argumentative character can be identified, if it is possible to reveal implicit or explicit argumentative markers that indicate the nomological semantics of the conjunctions 'that's why', 'because' or 'therefore', and that pursue the goal "to justify or refute a standpoint, with the aim of securing agreement in views" (van Eemeren et al., 1997: 208). Contrary to formal logical approaches of analysis, arguments and the respective meaning horizons are studied from a functional perspective by systematically taking into account the situation at issue and the relations between the physical and physiological 'what' between form and content, structure and agency.

The analysis of the text architecture has provided some basic insights into the papers' strategies to define the agenda: The preferred 'information' is found in their first-order positions, i.e. in the title or lead as well as at the beginning or end of an article, whereas less valued information appears in a rather unspectacular position somewhere in the middle of the text. Besides the semiotic dimensions of the text architecture, the semantic/pragmatic or syntactic strategies of centering or marginalising either implicitly legitimise or delegitimise the US American (and British) warfare plans. Against this background, it seems quite reasonable to conceive the structural as well as descriptive and narrative presentation practices that usually prevail in the front page articles also as covered argumentative implications or presuppositions.

In order to outline the argumentative impact of the papers' performances in more detail, the following chapters will exemplify various modes of mediatizing the official reasons for waging the Iraq war (subsection 4.1) as well as the papers' practices to exploit specific norms of conceptual metaphors (subsection 4.2) and the narrative-descriptive news schemata in terms of war-supporting or war-opposing ingroup and outgroup formations (subsection 4.3). In addition, some argumentative devices are mentioned which seem to close the war-preventing discourse of diplomacy (subsection 4.4). The presentation of the findings is concluded by a short summary (subsection 4.5).

##### **4.1. The mediatization of the main arguments in favour of the Iraq war**

The alleged terrorist connection of the Iraqi president with al Qaeda is hardly mentioned in any of the front page articles. However, there are a few exceptions to this practice of de-topicalisation that could be seen in numerous articles of the London TIMES, but also in one

article of the FAZ (see below).

In contrast, the Iraqi WMDs are attributed a social reality per se: all papers cover iterative remarks on the necessity of sufficient evidence proving Iraq's failures to disarm, if a war is to be waged. Thereby, the papers' presentation practices usually imply or presuppose the existence of weapons (e.g. "Iraq 'has made no effort ... to disarm'". TT, 06.02.03, p. 1). The triangulation with our interview data – originating from journalists who wrote the front page articles (cf. Dirks 2006a) – corroborates our news-based hypothesis that most of the journalists had been highly influenced by a punitive distrust framing with regard to the Iraqi president and his ostensible 'smoking gun'.<sup>10</sup> In general, their reports were not based on investigative analyses of Iraq's military situation, but rather on their political preferences, which are basically in line with the editors' stances:

The rather war-opposing left-wing papers, the SZ and THE INDEPENDENT, display a careful wariness in their presentation of so-called evidence for quantitative and qualitative details of the WMDs. In line with this habit, the papers' articles take advantage of the genre pattern: *potentially decamouflaging, banalising and/or delegitimising re-contextualisation of hyperbolic, verdictively shaped threat constructs of the US administration*. For example, this genre pattern covers an inflationary use of distrust framings with regard to the Iraqi regime amounting to an 'oracular reasoning'<sup>11</sup> by virtue of verdictive assertions, as they had been disseminated by 'Downing Street' and the US administration. Hence, on the occasion of the 'State of the Union Address' in 2002, the subtitle of an SZ-article contains the following sound bite of the US president: "Tens of thousands of killers like ticking time bombs spread all over the world" (my re-translation of: "Zehntausende Killer wie tickende Zeitbomben über die Welt verstreut"), which is repeated in the first paragraph of the text together with the scary vision: "... time bombs that can explode without warning". (SZ, 31.01.02, p. 1) which, however, is never substantiated by any facts. In the context of another CDM, the above-mentioned genre pattern is even amplified by *hedge markers indicating irrelevance*: here, the hedge mark "by the way" is integrated into the free adaptation of one of Powell's statements at the Security Council on 5, February 2003 in reported speech: "By the way, Saddam is firmly determined to develop nuclear weapons". (my translation of: "Saddam sei *im übrigen* fest entschlossen, Atomwaffen zu entwickeln". SZ, 06.02.03, p. 1). In addition, this verdictive truth claim is called into question by the structural metaphor TIME AS PROOF, as 'time' can hardly substitute the evidence needed for the claim: "This [determination, U.D.] is proved by a whole 'decade of evidence'". (my translation of: "Dies belege ein ganzes 'Jahrzehnt von Beweisen'". SZ, 06.02.03, p. 1). Another presentation practice applies *hyperbolic modifiers* that seem to provoke *banalising* effects, e.g.: "Iraq ... is working *without pause* to hide them [the WMDs] from international inspections". (TI, 06.02.03, p. 1).

In contrast to the left-wing papers, the FAZ repeatedly demonstrates some carelessness in coping with the quality of information: on the occasion of George Bush's address to the UN Security Council on 12, September 2002, the paper re-contextualises his threat constructs on behalf of the ostensible Iraqi WMDs in all the details (FAZ, 13.09.02, p. 1), although the existence of most of them was already denied by the renowned British

International Institute of Security Studies just three days before. As the FAZ even included a report of the study's results in its edition of 10.09.02 (p. 2), it is quite surprising that ensuing articles – at least on its front pages – never refer to these findings, although one would have expected the necessary corrections from a professional information management. Moreover, in its report on Colin Powell's address to the Security Council on 5, February 2003, the FAZ is the only one of our data sample that extensively describes the terrorist links Saddam Hussein was supposed to be involved in (FAZ, 06.02.03, p. 1).

A more extreme case is represented by the front page articles of the war-supporting TIMES, as the paper apparently does not hesitate to take any evidence from official sources for granted; the virtual rhema (here: information about the Iraqi WMDs) is presented as a factually established topic. Interestingly, the London TIMES is also the only paper in our sample that provides alleged evidence itself, for instance, by referring to Iraqi dissidents who informed THE TIMES “that Saddam could be in a position to make three nuclear weapons within the next few months, if he has not already done so”. (TT, 16.09.02, p. 1). In another front page article, the paper claims to have “discovered that Saddam's agents have been on a secret shopping spree in 13 African countries in a so-far unsuccessful attempt to acquire uranium for a nuclear weapons programme” (TT, 25.09.02, p. 1).

If the other papers happen to produce topical objects or subjects virtually exerting a rhematic function conveyed by a distrust framing of Hussein's ostensible ambitions to build and maintain his WMDs (cf. the indirect quotes referring to Colin Powell: “While focused mostly on *Iraq's concealment efforts*, ...” TI, 06.02.03, p. 1; “*Mit diesen Täuschungen* habe sich Bagdad in eine äußerst schwierige Lage gebracht”. SZ, 06.02.03, p. 1), the further co-text usually embodies more differentiated perspectives and distance markers (e.g. “*what he [Colin Powell] described as ‘irrefutable and undeniable’ evidence*”, “a description of *alleged* links between President Saddam and international terrorist groups”, TI, 06.02.03, p. 1) leading to a correction of the topically presupposed truth claims.

Apart from ‘markers of potential distancing’, all papers apply various techniques of embedding the quoted sound bites with the help of evaluative qualifiers that provide us with important cues for the press-specific lines of argument. As the English language usually renders indirectly reported speech by virtue of predicates in an apparently indicative mood, the British papers must make even greater efforts than the German ones (which can operate with subjunctive moods) to indicate a certain distance from the reproduced quotes. From this angle, it is quite remarkable that in contrast to the other papers, the London TIMES hardly uses any distance markers in its re-contextualisation of politicians' sound bites and their assertive truth claims. The respective propositions are likely to adapt the shape of facts (verdictive sound bites) instead of individual constructions that could be challenged by different points of view. For instance, at the beginning of a front page article, the paper seems to adopt an ‘oracular reasoning’ of Colin Powell that relies on verdictively predicted, ultimate rules and implies an ‘expressive warning’ that Hussein actually could use his WMDs: “Saddam Hussein and his regime *will* stop at nothing until something stops him”. (TT, 06.02.03, p. 1). The same sound bite is applied by THE INDEPENDENT, but it is embedded by the distance marker “meant to show” and is not put into a first-order position



(TI, 06.02.03, p. 1).

However, during a short period of time, THE TIMES went through an interim phase of irritation, in which it started to apply potential distance markers like “Mr Powell said that it [a tape of “the al-Qaeda mastermind addressing the Iraqi people”] demonstrated the link between al-Qaeda and Iraq, a link that Washington *has been trying to prove* since the September 11 attacks”. (TT, 12.02.03, p. 1). This change was preceded by the paper’s revelation that the Iraq dossier, which had been provided by the British Government and which Powell had seized on in his address to the Security Council, was mainly sourced by rather outdated ‘information’ taken from a journal’s article (TT, 08.02.03, p. 1).<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.2. Binary clusters of conceptual metaphors and their argumentative impact

From a documentary meaning perspective, front page articles of the pre-war phase are highly involved in the competition of two networks of conceptual metaphors:

- On the one hand, there is the cluster: DIPLOMACY AS A DEADEND/ TIME AS NO RESOURCE or AS A MENACE, POWER POLITICS IS UP/ SECURITY AS A (NATIONAL) CONTAINER, mostly in connection with directive speech acts in the shape of an *urging* (e.g. with regard to the acceptance of a second UN resolution that would legitimise the Iraq war) and expressive speech acts like *blaming* and *warning* in the face of the alleged ‘evil’. Features of these metaphoric domains are mostly highlighted by the FAZ and TIMES (cf. the subtitle “Time to avert war is running out, warn US and Britain” TT, 28.01.03, p. 1; cf. the quote taken from Powell’s address to the Security Council implying a directive urging: “*How long* are we willing to put up with Iraq’s non-compliance before we as a Council say *enough is enough?*” TT, 06.02.03, p. 1). Instantiations of the ‘power’-metaphor are adopted particularly from mid-February, 2003 onwards with regard to a new approach of the Bush and Blair administrations to win public approval of its case for war (e.g. the headline of TT, 18.02.03, p. 1: “Show Saddam strength not weakness, EU is told”).
- On the other hand, the conceptual metaphors comprise DIPLOMACY AS A JOURNEY/ TIME AS A RESOURCE/ POWER POLITICS IS DOWN, also in connection with recommendations or demands for prolonged weapons inspections, either in the shape of directive or expressive speech acts with a warning impact, particularly on behalf of the aftermath of war (e.g. “But governments around the world continue to worry about the consequences if the US loses patience with diplomacy and attacks alone”. TI, 13.09.02, p. 1). Features of these concepts are mostly exploited by the SZ and TI. Their presentation practices are accompanied by moral guidelines that appeal to the cause of a world community and its humanity in the face of the impending Iraq war. Against this background, which clearly favors a policy of rational responsibility (cf. Weber, 1964: 58), the papers highlight negative prognostic framings (Snow and Benford, 1988: 199) by pointing to the risks of destabilising the Middle East and enhancing terrorism as well as by stressing the harm a war would inflict on the Iraqi

people.

Due to the predominance of narrative and descriptive news schemata, the conceptual metaphors are mostly instantiated by the application of interactionist categories of action that focus on the framings and inter-/actions of politicians with regard to the Iraq conflict at issue. Apart from this person- and process-oriented script of writing news reports, each paper uses further theories of action that are enacted according to its preference structures. For example, the rule-based features of the ‘homo sociologicus’-concept are exploited with regard to the “questionable legality” of a military attack on Iraq (e.g. TI, 18.03.03, p. 1) or on the voting status of members of the UN Security Council, which turned out to be the decisive hurdle for the introduction or dismissal of a second UN resolution.

However, to what extent institutional rules are highlighted, mentioned at random or de-topicalised, basically depends on the normative maxims that are inherent in the papers’ metaphorical practices: As a result of our data analyses, COHESION IS UP<sup>13</sup> has emerged as the most significant norm that almost all articles draw on. This concept usually complies with the ontological metaphor SECURITY-AS-CONTAINER, being of existential importance, as it implies the argument: ‘The alliance between X and Y takes care of our safety’. In spite of the over-arching dominance of these conceptual metaphors, the papers differ distinctly in their preferences for building and maintaining a cohesion of allies:

- In the case of the FAZ, we find a clear preference in favor of the German-American alliance that even seems to be worth the price of war.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the FAZ plays the part of a “faithful servant” (Wolfsfeld 1999) to the Conservative US American ally rather than to the domestic opposition CDU (Christian Democratic Union), although its female leader, Angela Merkel, turned out to be a devoted follower of Bush’s path to war. The pursuit of this framing is accompanied by the paper’s habit to put cause and effect into reverse order, blaming the German Chancellor and his allegedly bad diplomacy for the divide that, as I would argue, had been caused in the first place by the unilateral warfare interests of George W. Bush. This distortion of cause and effect by virtue of specific MCDs is substantiated by presenting Chancellor Schröder repeatedly as someone who draws on morally unacceptable principles that are part of a rational choice theory of action: Hence, it is claimed his rejection of the Iraq war was not caused by real interest in peace, but by selfish motives of winning the general elections. In contrast to the paper’s permanent criticism of Social Democrats of the German Government, the Conservatives of the US American administration are usually framed positively and placed in first-order positions.
- At the beginning of the pre-war phase, THE TIMES seems to take advantage of the broad inter-/ national opposition to war, as it builds all sorts of formations of ingroups and outgroups. In the long run, however, the selective highlighting of politicians’ sound bites in the titles, leads and articles makes it clear that the paper takes sides with the war coalition: For example, when THE TIMES was informed that the chief weapons inspector, Hans Blix, would deliver a positive report on Iraq’s “proactive co-

operation'” being in accordance with the UN resolution 1441, the paper even extends its distrust framing towards Mr Blix and reproaches him for not helping “the London-Washington axis”, but playing “his own political gambit to prevent war” (TT, 07.03.03, p. 1) and “hid[ing] the revelation” of “a huge undeclared Iraqi drone” (TT, 10.03.03, p. 1).

- The US-oriented setting of priorities is countered by the SZ and THE INDEPENDENT who put emphasis on a joint euro-zone: Their presentation practices are mostly guided by the norm COHESION IS UP between the EU and the UN. For example, on the occasion of the 40th memorial day of the German-French ‘Treaty of Elysee’, the SZ headline runs as follows: “Chirac and Schröder *united* against the Iraq war” (my translation of: “Chirac und Schröder *vereint* gegen Irak-Krieg”, SZ, 31.01.03, p. 1), whereas the FAZ tries to define the German chancellor as a single actor (FAZ, 31.03.03, p. 1). In line with its preference for an alliance between the EU and the UN, the SZ and THE INDEPENDENT are the only papers in our data sample that positively frame the anti-war positions of France, Germany and Russia as a convincing alliance (cf. the headline: “War opponents display unity”; my translation of “Kriegsgegner demonstrieren Einigkeit”, SZ, 06.03.03, p. 1). As a consequence of this unity, THE INDEPENDENT questions the perlocutionary effects of Colin Powell’s address to the Security Council on 5, February 2003, as they are suspected not to be accepted by the world community (cf. the application of differing epistemic modalities: “While his speech *may* help sway American public opinion, *whether* it *will* close divisions in the Council *is not clear*”. TI, 06.02.03, p. 1). In addition, the two left-wing papers have made great efforts to outline the potential fragility of the US-UK alliance by delineating the isolation of the USA in the EU, NATO, and the UN, and by labelling the USA as being deviant from the norm of building international alliances.

However, at least until the beginning of February 2003, the SZ also applied arrangements of sound bites and qualifiers that produced intratextual coherences implying criticism of categorical anti-war positions (e.g. of China, Russia, Germany), as they did not seem to take into account the concealment efforts and dangers of the Iraqi regime properly. The implicit line of argument (see also subsection 4.3) includes a divide between politicians whose actions are either morally motivated by a specific ideology or by an ethically grounded responsibility. The latter, which is supposed to belong to the basic resources of professional politicians (Weber, 1964: 54), serves as the norm against which categorical war opponents are measured critically – although the SZ-editors themselves were opposed to war.

#### 4.3. The story-based enhancement of building ingroups and outgroups

As a result of the Documentary Genre Analysis of the British and German papers’ front page articles, I found some cross-cultural features that are shared by all papers at issue. On the basis of these findings, front page articles carry the following genre code:

- Anti-thetical, narrative<sup>15</sup>-descriptive (FRG), partly comment-like<sup>16</sup> (UK) re-contextualisation of politicians' sound bites by virtue of selective preference structures potentially enhancing specific appraisals or dismissals. (cf. Dirks 2005b)

In the German papers, the application of the 'orbital principle'<sup>17</sup> is mainly based on descriptive schemata in contrast to the British press that prefers narrative patterns in connection with comment-like practices. The most popular genre pattern being ratified either by descriptive, narrative or argumentative schemata is the so-called *focused observation of war-preparing actions* (cf. the headline "Britain gets ready for war", TT, 04.03.03, p. 1). In the case of THE INDEPENDENT, it is also subsumed into a moral framing that includes appeals to the case of humanity in general and to the well-being of the Iraqi people, in particular, on the basis of a deontic modality (cf. "The talking is over. Now *the world must confront the reality of war*". TI, 18.03.03, p. 1). The cross-cultural relevance of the genre pattern may have been effected by the high amount of newsworthiness criteria war reports and the included narratives draw on.

In general, the analysed articles take advantage of narrative features insofar as they coincide with newsworthiness criteria like "personalization", "negativity", "recency", "proximity"/ "relevance", "meaningfulness", "consonance", "superlativeness", "eliteness" (Bell, 1991: 156ff; Galtung and Ruge, 1965). No matter, how a journalist re-contextualises the politicians' sound bites, the prevailing application of quotations complies with a core feature of narratives. This "residual orality" (Ong, 1982) of news reports simulates authenticity (cf. Fishman, 1980: 92) and provides the news with a "flavour of the eyewitness and colour of direct involvement" (Bell, 1991: 155).

The press-specific story lines in our data sample predominantly draw on a simplistic binary world view that divides actors into members of ingroups and outgroups, whose performances are described within the categories of an interactionist theory of action. Under these premises, the front page articles are shaped by an antagonistic, interpersonal constellation between ingroup and outgroup members; due to this clear-cut dichotomy, the articles are provided with the typically narrative features 'coherence', 'clarity', and 'disambiguity'.

Particularly, THE TIMES excels in performing a punitive distrust framing of Saddam Hussein that is corroborated by emotionally connotated judgements; war-supporting factions are granted multifarious opportunities to express their definition of the situation in Iraq which substantiates the distrust framing, whereas the anti-war countries like France, Germany, and Russia are conceived as ideologically motivated neglecting their responsibility for world politics (e.g. TT, 06.03.03, p. 1). Moreover, the FAZ is another candidate that is apt to produce adversary images with regard to the Iraqi Government. The construction of 'the other' seems to be exerted as a means to highlight the necessity of the transatlantic war alliance. As the most crucial point of reference, the CDM 'Colin Powell's address to the UN Security Council, 05.02.03' could be identified: In contrast to the other papers, the FAZ describes Colin Powell's claims with regard to terrorists collaborating with Saddam Hussein in great detail. What kind of evidence, if any, the US Secretary of State

had provided, seems to have been of no great interest to the paper (FAZ, 06.02.03, p. 1). The more the British and US American spin (particularly with regard to distrust frames towards the process of disarming Iraq and to the outgroup member, Saddam Hussein, being suspected of playing tricks on the weapons inspectors and the world community) has been adopted by THE TIMES and the FAZ, the more the papers seem to support and implicitly legitimise or at least tolerate a military solution of the Iraq conflict. Whatever “the dictator Saddam Hussein” happens to do or not do, in the re-contextualised sound bites of the US president or of his security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, it is always regarded as another issue of efforts of concealment. Although the prevailing genre pattern of the FAZ – *additive juxtaposition of different positions by dismissing evaluative qualifiers, interpretations and explanations* leading to variants like *narrative description of a perlocutionally intended, warmongering performance of the US administration and of a war-preventing diplomacy* – basically provides the impression of an objective information management; the selection, amount and positioning of sound bites clearly indicates a preference for US American perspectives.

In line with distinctly separated MCDs for specific ingroups and outgroups which the conceptual metaphors bear on as well, THE INDEPENDENT and the SZ highlight *war-preventing counter-realities in opposition to the irritation-resistant singularity of the US president's ‘threat’ theories and war plans*. For example, the SZ stresses the probable impossibility of preventing Bush from the enactment of his singular warfare interests by a re-contextualised assertion of the French president, Jacques Chirac (“the problem is, that it is impossible to prevent Bush from going to the end of *his* war logic’.” SZ, 06.03.03, p. 1; cf. the subtitle “Bush determined to go to war”, my translation of: “Bush zeigt sich zum Krieg entschlossen”, SZ, 08./09.03.03, p. 1). This over-arching genre pattern is supported by a continuous focusing on the disarmament of Iraq (e.g. first headline “Blix: Iraq has substantially disarmed”, TI, 08./09.03.03, p. 1), contrasting sharply with the FAZ and THE TIMES that rather highlight the inspector's criticism of the “‘very limited’” cooperation of the Iraqi leaders with the UN inspectors (e.g. FAZ, 08.03.03, p. 1). Moreover, the genre pattern is complemented by war opponents' perspectives in the shape of a substitute discourse with the help of disclaimer sound bites or by changing roles transforming the US president into the aggressor and the Iraqi people into victims, also by implicit corrections of unjustified, one-sided blaming acts as well as by negative prognostic framings of the war's outcome and by the decamouflage<sup>18</sup> of allegedly war-preventing, but only pretended diplomatic acts. In its critique of the British-American course of war, THE INDEPENDENT apparently conducts a substitute discourse by mainly focusing on ethically and politically inappropriate advances of the US administration and at the same time avoiding Face Threatening Acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987) towards the British Government.<sup>19</sup> However, on the eve of the beginning of the military attacks, these genre performances start to lose their committed advocacy in favour of a diplomatic solution (cf. the ‘rally-around-the-flag effect’, Russett et al., 2004).

#### 4.4. Argumentative features of closing the discourse of diplomacy

Particularly in the case of the London TIMES, the boundaries of news genres are blurred to a great extent because of the adoption of comment-like features, which close rather than open up the discourse about the Iraq war. This habit is amplified by the use of short-cut verdictive effectiva<sup>20</sup> which always bear the risk of fallacies, if the situation at issue is not sufficiently taken account of: For example, the paper draws on emotionally connotated judgements by the US Secretary of State that hardly leave any room for the readers to make up their minds for themselves (e.g. Powell's sound bite which no other paper reproduced in its front page article: "what I can share with you, when combined with what all of us have learnt over the years, is *deeply troubling*". TT, 06.02.03, p. 1). In a similar way, the headline "US makes the case for war" (TT, 06.02.03, p. 1) is to be conceptualised by the genre pattern *resultative evaluation of the topic at issue by virtue of a verdictive effectivum and judicial framing*. In line with its adherence to the first cluster of conceptual metaphors (cf. subsection 4.2), but in contrast to the other papers, its propositional content stresses the unavoidability of war (cf. the factive verb "makes") turning it into an irreversible path, although another report of the weapons inspectors was still due in the next days and a war-preventing diplomacy still governed the agenda of the international political arena. Thus, THE TIMES draws distinct borderlines at a very early point of time (Tony Blair's address to his Sedgefield constituency, 04.09.02) indicating the end of diplomacy and the beginning of war.

#### 4.5. Summary

Up to this point in my article, I have outlined an extract of genre-based findings that resulted from the re-/construction of typical presentation practices of the British and German press. Their practices seem to depend primarily on the press-specific policy lines: the SZ and THE INDEPENDENT share a great number of similar genre patterns in connection with specific frames and conceptual metaphors that take the shape of war-opposing preference structures – in contrast to the right-wing papers, the FAZ and THE TIMES, whose shared practices quite indifferently display their readiness to accept a military attack on Iraq.

Time and again, one could get the impression that the quality of the 'quality' papers at issue mainly consisted of their practice to cover multifarious, more or less well-balanced, anti-thetical arrangements of politicians' sound bites and with that a wide scope of different points of view, in order to elicit the attention of potential readers primarily for dramaturgical reasons and/ or to provide the impression of an objective information management. In the context of the Iraq conflict, these functions are basically fulfilled by stories in the speech act shape of an 'oracular reasoning' blaming Saddam Hussein for his ostensible failures to disarm and by the reproduction of sound bites that belong to members of the Iraqi Government being contrasted with war opponents' arguments.

Although the genre analyses do not serve the argument that *each* presentation practice

meets the papers' policy lines, the comparative studies have resulted in the re-/ construction of particular policy profiles of each paper (as you find them also in the editorials) with regard to the Iraq conflict. The respective practices may be conceived as documents of frame-alignments with the stances of the domestic governments (SZ, partly TT) and the distribution of positions in the countries' parliaments (cf. the 'indexing hypothesis' after Bennett, 1990; cf. the 'policy action model' after Robinson, 2000). Counter views to the papers' policy lines are usually presented in such a way that they somehow appear to be deviant.

The argumentative impact of front page articles could be traced on the basis of specific arrangements of the text architecture that provides selected information (e.g. argumentative sound bites of politicians being in favour of or against the Iraq war) with a primary or secondary position, as well as with regard to the papers' information management concerning carefulness or carelessness in coping with the lack of reliable evidence for the ostensible WMDs and with the 'officially' disseminated distrust framing (cf. de-topicalising of relevant information; taking hold of information provided by Iraqi dissidents; decamouflaging/ de-/legitimising re-contextualisations of sound bites by virtue of hedge markers, potential distance markers, evaluative qualifiers, and topical subjects with a virtually rhematic function). Both, the conceptual metaphors and the narrative-descriptive news schemata portray particularistic world views from which clear-cut ingroups and outgroups emerge advocating opposite norms and stances in the Iraq case. Comment-like features and particularly the speech act type 'short-cut verdictive effectiva' were made responsible for tendencies of closing the discourse of diplomacy and the exchange of arguments, thus pressing for war.

In order to build middle-range theories of press-specific discourse cultures, the genre types will be complemented by the findings of the expert interviews with the journalists (cf. Dirks 2006a) and further insights that originate from topic-relevant documents (e.g. weapon reports, speeches, the history of Iraq).

## **5. Professional journalism at issue: a demand for interpretive explanations**

As a consequence of the findings, one could have expected excuses from all papers for not having re-examined the sources they relied on properly. The papers' coping with epistemic truth claims seems to be one of the biggest contemporary challenges. As the economic situation of the printmedia has worsened during recent years, considerable numbers of journalists have been dismissed. For example, in 2002 the SZ lost almost 40 journalists and the FAZ as many as 60 (Mihl, 2005: 75). Therefore, one could easily assume that it has become more difficult for journalists to pursue such time-consuming tasks as the sourcing of information from multifarious contexts and perspectives.

Of course, attempts to explain the herewith analysed fallacies of the media cannot stop us from demanding of them a more transparent information policy. This is obviously also the main concern of van Eemeren et al. (1997: 227), who point to the need for an

information-based journalism:

... what the public needs is not just more or better information about the content of issues but more and better information about the way in which information is being provided.

Hence, transparency of the paper's information management could be conceived as a core feature of professional journalism. However, its application will cause severe problems as regards the well-known information dilemma: the price for gaining and maintaining access to well-informed sources is usually paid by granting loyalty to one's informants. If they do not want their identity to be disclosed, this has to be respected. Besides the political profile of a paper's owner, this dilemma could be responsible for one of its main constraints causing inconsistencies in its policy lines. As, for example, *THE TIMES* refers to the largest network of very prominent governmental sources in our sample, its information management was certainly faced with dilemmatic constraints that perhaps could have prevented the responsible journalists from re-examining and even contradicting the information they were provided with.

Nevertheless, as long as journalists follow the principles of an information-based journalism or even the rules of an investigative journalism, the ultimate goal of becoming a professional seems to consist of the capability of generating 'interpretive explanations' of the topics they report on. According to Max Weber (1988/ 1913), this would demand of journalists that they be able to understand the politician's actions on the basis of circumspect reconstructions of situation-specific matches between the exterior conditions (i.e. institutional rules, cultural frames, materialistic resources) and the political actors' interior conditions (i.e. individual frames, scripts, identities). In addition, journalists would be expected to explain causal-functional mutual relationships between politicians' actions and the effects that have possibly emerged from their actions. Providing readers with carefully substantiated interpretive explanations by systematically taking into account the situation at issue, could be conceived as the core of professional journalism.

### **Abbreviations**

|       |                                |
|-------|--------------------------------|
| CDM   | Critical Discourse Moment      |
| FAZ:  | Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung |
| MCD : | Membership Category Device     |
| SZ:   | Süddeutsche Zeitung            |
| TI:   | The Independent                |
| TT:   | The Times                      |
| WMD:  | Weapons of Mass Destruction    |



## Notes

1. The research project I am referring to investigates the “De-/construction of the Iraq war in the international ‘opinion-leading’ press. It is financed by the German Foundation of Peace Research:

[<http://www.bundesstiftung-friedensforschung.de/projektfoerderung/forschung/dirks.html>].

2. Finally, by the end of September 2004 (28.09.2004), Tony Blair admitted in a speech he delivered to the Labour Party that Hussein did not dispose of WMDs: “The evidence about Saddam having actual biological and chemical weapons, as opposed to the capability to develop them, has turned out to be wrong. [[http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/3692996.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3692996.stm)].

3. See, for example, the reports of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2004) and of the Select Committee on Intelligence, United States Senate (08.09.2006).

4. I refer to the broader frame concept as defined by Goffman (1974) and Minsky (1980): In addition to frame-specific structures of perception and lexical semantics, it comprises pragmatic contexts of experience as well. The cognitive and pragmatic features of a frame represent prototypical information, for example about its constitutive parts and functions, about its agents and sequences of action, i.e. its scripts (Abelson, 1981; Schank and Abelson, 1977). Whatever features are reified, they are related to each other through a complex hierarchical order.

5. “Metaphor works by appropriating one taken-for-granted field of knowledge and applying it to another”. (Chilton and Schäffner, 1997: 222). From a cultural perspective, this cognitive metaphorical approach – basically originating from Lakoff and Johnson (1980) – has to be supplemented by pragmatic and structural dimensions.

6. The praxeological action approach argues that it is primarily on account of certain frames and scripts one has acquired in his or her lifetime that action is taken and certain practices are performed. Of course, the general superior goals of action like social approval, physical and mental well-being which can only be operationalised by particular ‘commodities’ (Becker, 1982) may offer an explanation to the question: How come *that* action is taken one way and not the other way around? (cf. Mannheim, 1964: 134). But from a praxeological point of view the social practices being guided and accompanied by certain frames and scripts are of primary interest, because they elicit socially conventionalised (cf. scripts), interpretive and emotional knowledge (of experience) that builds the platform for the development of specific goals, expectancies, and interests (cf. Reckwitz, 2003; Schütz, 1972) – and not vice versa, as for example the rational choice approach and the ‘homo oeconomicus’ theory would argue. According to Clifford Geertz, the social practices re-/produce contingent ‘local knowledge’ that is rooted in a specific history.

7. The position of the traditional grammatical subject at the beginning of a sentence is of particular interest: Here, we would expect the topical subject which is supposed to be known. However, if this syntactic position is used for new information – usually to be identified as the so-called rhema – it becomes necessary to investigate the potential of its persuasive functions (cf. Bolinger, 1980: 30, 177f; Lyons, 1977: 506f).

8. The term ‘sound bite’ refers to quotations that have been extracted from speeches delivered to the public. Due to the reduced propositional contents of sound bites they are apt to enter the collective knowledge of the public (cf. Hils, 2002; Trosborg, 2000).

9. ‘Critical Discourse Moments’ function as focal points in a discourse. Characteristic features of CDMs are their highly interactive density, their lingual and pictorial construction of drama-like climaxes and a great variety of persuasive devices being elaborated in a very careful way that offers

collective patterns of orientation to the respective co-communicators (cf. Chilton, 1987; Dirks, 1991).

10. In the pre-war phase, this metaphor was used quite often as a synonym to the WMDs. It goes back to an address by Adlai Stevenson (cf. “Stevenson moment”) which he delivered to the UN Security Council in 1964. In contrast to Colin Powell’s address on 5, February 2003, he succeeded in providing clear evidence indicting Cuba to dispose of Soviet rockets. After that, the ‘smoking gun’ became quite popular once again during the Watergate-Crisis (cf. Billig and Macmillan, 2005).

11. As the discourse analyst, Hugh Mehan (1999: 573), has found out, even well-educated experts may tend to apply some of the scripts that are typical of the ‘oracular reasoning’: “A basic premise or a fundamental proposition is presented which forms the basis of an argument. When confronted with evidence which is potentially contradictory to a basic position, the evidence is ignored, repelled, or denied. The presence of evidence which opposes a basic position is used reflexively as further support of the efficacy of the basic position” (565).

12. Interestingly, the paper is the first one of our data sample that has reported on the controversial quality of evidence of the Iraqi WMDs on its front page: “Officials also admitted that chunks of the document [the Iraq dossier provided by Britain] – praised by Colin Powell on Wednesday [05.02.03] – were copied word-for-word from an article by a 29-year-old Californian academic”. (T1, 08.02.03, p. 1; cf. T1, 08.02.03, p. 4; 17.02.03, p. 1).

13. The metaphor’s positive connotations draw on features that members, at least of the Western cultures, usually associate with the orientation of ‘up’.

14. In this context, I should mention that the paper’s feuilleton pages mainly were covered by war-opposing views.

15. In contrast to personal narratives (cf. Labov and Waletzky, 1967), front page articles of the Western press have to be read as open-ended serials that do not necessarily end with a coda; the wrap-up of actions rather happens in the lead and headlines.

16. Argument, description and narration are basic discourse modes that can be traced back to traditional rhetoric (cf. Rehbein, 1984).

17. The news stories that are included in the front page articles usually follow the so-called orbital principle, i.e. “the key relationship is between some central textual nucleus (the headline/lead, in the case of the news item) and a set of dependent satellites which act to specify that nucleus” (White, 2000: 388). As a consequence, news stories do not obey to the narrative principle of a chronological coherence of action sequences (cf. Bell, 1991: 153-55).

18. ‘Decamouflaging’ refers to the revelation of politicians’ attempts to acquire specific effects on behalf of their sound bites (cf. Dirks 2005b).

19. As *THE INDEPENDENT* was repeatedly confronted with reproaches of the British Government to draw on unreliable sources like the Iraqi regime (cf. Fahd Al-Harithy, 2004: 1), the performance of carefully arranged substitute discourses could have been a strategy to cope with these offences.

20. According to Bach and Harnish (1979: 110f), *effectiva* change the state of institutional structures and rules, as they contain information about the effects of specific events. Whereas Bach and Harnish conceive *verdictiva* and *effectiva* as separate speech act types, my data analysis rather suggests a combination of both of them.

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