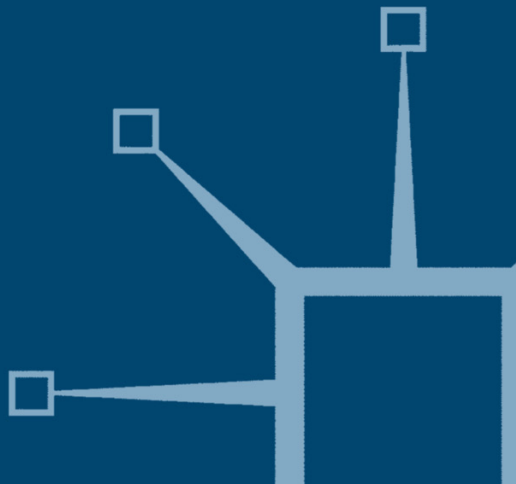# Television and Terror

Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse

Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin

Television and Terror

New Security Challenges Series

General Editor: **Stuart Croft**, Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Studies at the University of Birmingham, UK

The last decade demonstrated that threats to security vary greatly in their causes and manifestations and that they invite interest and demand responses from the social sciences, civil society, and a very broad policy community. In the past, the avoidance of war was the primary objective, but with the end of the Cold War the retention of military defence as the centrepiece of international security agenda became untenable. There has been, therefore, a significant shift in emphasis away from traditional approaches to security to a new agenda that talks of the softer side of security, in terms of human security, economic security, and environmental security. The topical *New Security Challenges series* reflects this pressing political and research agenda.

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Television and Terror

Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse

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'Post 9/11'. This has become the principal marker of terror and insecurity today. It remains to be seen whether the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 have permanently disrupted the notions and structures of security the West had settled upon after the Cold War or whether they contribute to a continuity, one link in a chain of terror events enabled and executed through 'our' media. What is beyond doubt, however, is that television has been unable to prevent itself elevating and supporting a mantra. *Nothing can be the same, the world has changed.* Post 9/11, we become aware of the compression and entanglement of environmental, economic, and ontological insecurities. Out of a single discursive order are generated a thousand pinpricks of insecurity.

Central to this, terror and terrorism have acquired an extensity and mobility that is accelerated primarily by mass media, which become the terrorists' weapon of choice. Terror is the dynamic that courses readily through those intensive modes of representation that underlie what we understand as 'news'. It is on and through television that terror infuses and catalyses speculative discourses alongside, or at the expense of, proportionate, substantiated, and contextualised reporting. The medium pulls events increasingly into an anticipated, often-dreaded future as it dwells on the catastrophes and near-calamities of the past. And the 'enemy', constructed by and through this discursive crisis of our times, is all that is and which becomes 'post 9/11'.

And yet, television, as it delivers daily the spectre of endless terror and violence from places far and near, also rescues us from the brink of chaos. The unimaginable is rendered familiar and terror is harnessed in the frames, rituals, and routines of the major medium of our age. And it is this entanglement of television and terror that is pivotal in both the spinning and containing of the discourses of insecurity that appear already to mark the mediatised experience of the twenty-first century.

1
Introduction

Origins

This book presents research from a project conceived in 2003 to investigate the security environment in Britain in the aftermath of the Cold War, 9/11,[1] and the Coalition intervention in Iraq in 2003. The emergence of an apparently new world of insecurities prompted a number of questions. How would governments and military policymakers try to manage security problems? How would media represent security problems? And how would audiences and publics perceive these security problems – as representations *and* as issues potentially impacting upon their lives? The project, *Shifting Securities*, ran from 2004 to 2006, a period in which security problems seemed to proliferate.[2] Alongside relentless but low-lying anxieties about environmental threats and health hazards, terror threats, and unending wars, the period was also characterised by unforeseen catastrophes such as the 2004 Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and fairly regular terrorist incidents often connected to Al-Qaeda. We were living in conflicting times.

The *Shifting Securities* project involved three strands of empirical research. The first was an *audience ethnography*, in which researchers carried out regular interviews and focus groups with families and individuals around Britain to map how perceptions of security events and political responses shifted during this period of conflict and catastrophe. The 200 or so people interviewed in the research were of a considerable demographic mix – on axes of ethnicity, religion, language, class, gender, and age. This allowed for an examination of questions of multiculturalism, national and transnational news consumption, and relations between citizenship and security. The second strand of research was an *analysis of news media* over the period. The particular focus was television

news coverage of major security events: the outbreak and aftermath of the 2003 Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, and the 2005 7/7 London bomb-ings. It is this strand of research that is primarily presented in this book. Finally, in a third strand, researchers carried out *elite interviews* with poli-cymakers in government and the military, with news journalists, editors, and producers and with 'experts' who appear in news media whenever a security catastrophe or controversy occurs. These individuals were faced with responsibilities for conducting state and media responses to critical security problems, while achieving consent and legitimacy from a British citizenry often hotly divided about the nature of security problems and the desirability of possible solutions.

The three strands of research were intimately connected and mutually shaping. For instance, findings from audiences' interviews about what citizens felt to be key stories fed into choices about news media analysed, while findings from such analyses of news was used to frame questions for the elite interviews. The *Shifting Securities* project therefore moved iteratively, to illuminate how perceptions of security among different groups of policymakers and news publics were triggered, altered, or rein-forced by security events as they occurred. In addition, the project was resolutely interdisciplinary, with researchers coming from sociology, political science, and security studies, such that the tools of each discip-line could be applied where applicable to the complex 'objects' of study. The process of working with researchers from other disciplines forced our assumptions and categories to be questioned and addressed more critically than might have been the case in a single discipline project. Methods had to be justified and concepts such as 'security', 'public', 'legitimacy', and 'influence/effect' had to be reconsidered and defined afresh.

In this book, we present and use our findings from the project's second strand, an analysis of news media, to advance an argument about news coverage of security events in this period of conflict and insecurity. We also make use of the audiences research to shed some light on the relation between news production and consumption, between news content and its use by audiences. But before we introduce our argument, we will provide the reader with a brief summary of our approach, method and data.

Our approach, method, and data

We experience today a new media 'ecology' (Cottle, 2006) or media 'surround' that scholars and analysts increasingly characterise using

terms such as connectivity, saturation, and immediacy. Many have hypothesised that people, events, and news media have become increasingly connected and interpenetrated, thanks to developing technologies, all part of 'time–space compression', the collapse of distance, and the availability of information immediately. The empirical foundation for such claims may be uneven, but few would deny that qualitative changes have occurred in the production and consumption of media in the last decade, altering the relation of media to politics and security matters. In the audiences ethnography strand of *Shifting Securities*, for instance, an interview with London schoolchildren in 2004 found them talking about downloading beheading videos to their mobile phones in the school playground. The possibility of children (happily) plugging into globally available footage of distant atrocities seems to exemplify the connectivity, saturation, and immediacy produced by media technologies today.

Since satellite television and then the Internet became publicly available, it is not so much that events are straightforwardly *mediated* by media to audiences; rather, media have entered into the production of events to such an unprecedented extent those events are *mediatised* (Cottle, 2006). Media are built into the design of any political event, war, or terror attack, while even when something unexpected happens, citizens may have camera phones such that the unexpected can be instantly recorded and transmitted beyond those immediately witnessing it. Hence, what becomes interesting, we suggest, is how media enter into the constitution of events.

Certain research questions follow from this. How do those attempting to direct the conduct of the 'War on Terror' use the media to advance their goals? How do the news management strategies of governments, militaries, or indeed terrorist groups contribute to what appears in the news media? How do the characteristics of particular media shape how political discourses are represented on-screen? For instance, how does the sheer *televisuality* of television – the particular modes of integrating moving images, sounds, and verbal representations – affect whether news legitimates certain actors or policies on any given day? These research questions are distinct from those studies of news media that aim simply to map the content of news over time. We have in mind here the more conventional content analysis approaches that ask only what words or images are present in media, how words cluster together, produce systematic analyses and comparisons, and make inferences from this positive data. We contend that claims generated by such systematic analyses are problematised by conditions of connectivity, saturation,

and immediacy. Comparisons of the content of media over time are undermined by the changing relationship between news media and the events being reported. It is not that the content of news media has become unimportant, but that such an approach risks obscuring what is interesting and important about the changing relations of media, politics, and security. We feel that in a period when events are often mediatised – when media enter into the very 'happening' of catastrophes and controversies such that those events are to a large extent *constituted by* media – it becomes more valuable to focus research questions not just on what the content is but on *how* this content is produced *in any specific instance.*

Our approach partially falls within the ethnomethodological tradition of social research, in which the primary question applied to all social life is, how is that organised? How do television programmes come to be? How did those people in that company create that new product at that moment? How did those laws come to be applied in that way in that context? Ethnomethodologists such as Harold Garfinkel (1967, 2002) explore how people account for their actions as they do things, in particular contexts. They often go into the context itself, crossing the line from disembedded researcher to participant, working in firms, scientific laboratories, or schools, in order to discern the regularities and principles guiding practices and the meanings these practices hold for participants. Although this investigation is not based on, for example, participant observation, the principles of ethnomethodology nonetheless can be applied to textual analysis (Jalbert, 1999). One can discern the principles or logics that guide the production of television news. For instance, in what we call the 'economy of liveness', stories offering live footage have greater news value than old footage or non-visual stories. A live story may take precedence on the running order of a news bulletin, implying what is considered 'newsworthy' in the practice of news production. Of great interest in ethnomethodological textual analysis are the slips and errors made by a broadcaster, for it is in the slip and the reflexive attempt to remedy the slip that we see what norms and standards are guiding the broadcaster (Goffman, 1981). It is often in the disorderly moments of a television broadcast that we see how orderliness could ever be achieved. We hope our analyses of breaking and rolling news coverage of critical security events demonstrate this insight.

The emphasis on meaning further distinguishes our approach from many studies of media, politics, and security. Unlike some other recent analyses of media and political texts in the War on Terror, our objective is not to 'expose' or contest any particular political strategy at work

(cf. Jackson, 2005; Lewis, 2005). Our interest is in establishing the properties of texts that *could* be taken to mean X or Y and that *could* be interpreted as biased. For one exponent of this approach, Paul Jalbert, such 'meanings can be logically argued to inhere in actual texts in virtue of their organization etc.; the issue is what is available to be grasped from them' (Jalbert, 1999: 32). We identify what grammatical, iconographic, lexical, and other properties are *organised into* television broadcasts. To this end, we borrow from the *multimodal* approach to textual analysis devised by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) (see also application by Chouliaraki, 2006), in which the analyst examines how verbal, visual, and aural aspects of television content come together on a moment-by-moment basis, allowing for inference regarding how different sensoral modes in a text are combined by producers in order to establish intended meanings. For instance, a news producer of a report on the commemoration of the 9/11 attacks may use sombre music to create 'mourning', or a silent, lingering close-up on a firefighter, or footage of people jumping out of the twin towers to achieve a visceral shock. Each mode targets the audiences' senses differently to achieve a particular meaning.

A final, related approach to inform our analysis is that of John Caldwell's (1995) *Televisuality*. Caldwell argues that the way in which television brings together different modes is qualitatively different to other media and so can be analysed on its own terms. For instance, news on the radio is intensely about sound, and the lack of visuality forces audiences to imagine the visual aspect of what is reported. Think of radio news broadcasts on the day of the 7/7 London bombings or the attacks of 9/11, hearing the attacks only through the voices of eyewitnesses and reporters and the sound of sirens from the emergency services. Compare this to the experience of learning of the bombings by watching television – the flashing graphics, the oversized captions, the white faces, the blood and bodies and wreckage. Both multimodal and televisual approaches to textual analysis raise questions of coherence. Coherence applies both to the simultaneous verbal, visual, and aural aspects of a news broadcast and to the micro- and macro-aspects of texts: The set of propositions or points made in a news broadcast may be unified by a headline, striking image, or concluding verbal proposition (van Dijk, 1997). The absence of coherence and orderliness will reveal the ordering principles.

Following the principles of ethnomethodology, guided by its problematic – how is anything achieved? – we hope to offer a valid and illuminating analysis of television news coverage of key security events. Informed too by multimodal and televisuality approaches, the research

presented in this book is not straightforwardly ethnomethodological. Consequently, it is more eclectic and 'messy' (Law, 2005) than many empirical studies of media, politics, and/or security. But we argue this messiness is necessary. The traditional categories applied in studies in this field, categories such as 'public', 'effect', 'national', and indeed the very boundaries of different media, offer an uncertain analytical grasp of what is happening today. We are forced to take a focused, second-by-second, frame-by-frame analysis of television news in order to begin to establish the principles, logics, and mechanisms by which television, alongside and in combination with other media, now conveys security events.

We do not offer a systematic comparison of news over the 2004–2006 period, but an analysis of 'perspicuous instances' of television news and security events intersecting in ways that exemplify or point towards regularities that characterise contemporary dynamics of news and security (Jalbert, 1999: 41).[3] We conducted ethnomethodologically informed analyses of recent key security events. We took eight hours of television footage for three events: the opening strike of the 2003 Iraq war, Hurricane Katrina, and the 7/7 London bombings.[4] The footage was digitised, transcribed, coded, and stored using *Transana*[5] software. The categorisations informing our coding were based around core thematics addressed throughout the book, such as security, legitimacy, and identity, as well as televisuality, sanitisation, and technology – and, of course, terror. *Transana* then enabled the comparison of instances of a particular code (e.g. a sanitised depiction of dead bodies) both within the eight-hour footage of an event and across events. This core analysis was bolstered by analysis of other security-salient stories in the 2004–2006 period, such as television footage of 9/11, of the Israel–Lebanon war, and images from Abu Ghraib prison.

We paid particular attention to events that arose in the interviews in the first strand of the project, the audiences ethnography; that is, to stories citizens took note of. Such research is comparable with the work of the Glasgow Media Group. For instance, in *Bad News From Israel*, Greg Philo and Mike Berry (2004) analyse the verbal and visual contents of British mainstream television news coverage of the Israel–Palestinian conflict and in particular the second Intifada in 2000 and moments of intensified conflict in 2001 and 2002. They then assessed audiences' perceptions of this news content by conducting focus groups and questionnaires with viewers around Britain. Finally, the researchers spoke to journalists about their own practices of news production and their assumptions about audiences' political and media literacy. But where Philo and Berry studied news of one (long-running) story,

the Israel–Palestinian conflict, our conclusions about a crisis of news discourse and the shifting nature of a 'news culture' are based on analysis of many stories and draws on a more long-term, intensive audiences' study. It is our intention therefore to characterise and explicate the main dynamics of a period – the conflicting times and 'new' security environment that has spanned the vistas of Afghanistan and Iraq, European train stations, and downtown Manhattan and sites as disparate as Bali, Chechnya, and New Orleans, and also the living rooms and locales of television audiences and citizens whose interest in security matters may differ considerably from journalists and policymakers.

Here, in sum, are the aims and objectives of this book:

Aims:

- Address the intersection of media and security in the post-Cold War, post-9/11 context;
- Elucidate the nature of the contemporary crisis of news discourse;
- Clarify this crisis through two concepts, the 'modulation of terror' and 'renewed media';
- Demonstrate the value of an ethnomethodologically informed approach to the analysis of news media.

Objectives:

- Present new data as a contribution to the wider current reassessment of relations of media, politics, and security;
- Present analysis of two major recent security events: the 2003 Iraq war and Hurricane Katrina;
- Articulate relationships between news texts, the practices of news production, and the social, political, and economic contexts within which news production occurs;
- Articulate relationships between news production and news consumption by situating analysis of news media content with analysis of audiences data.

In the next section we offer working definitions of the concepts 'security', 'terror', and 'discourse' that are integral to our analysis, before we outline the argument of this book.

Concepts: security, terror, and discourse

'Thinking about the nature of security, insecurity, who is secure, from whom or what, when, where, and how' was part of the remit for our project (http://www.newsecurity.bham.ac.uk/). Through discussions

with the 40 or so other projects in the ESRC's New Security Challenges programme, we are regularly reminded of the different meanings and uses of the terms 'security' and indeed 'terror' taken by researchers and policy practitioners according to their political, disciplinary, and pragmatic purposes. For instance, not only are there competing definitions of 'security' but there is no agreement that security is necessarily a good; for some, forms of insecurity are desirable in some instances (think of Western governments' attempts since the mid-1990s to improve the lives of unemployed people by removing their social security such that in the long term this insecurity forces them to find jobs and economic security). Security can be understood simply as freedom from some danger or terror or as that which provides that freedom from danger or terror.[6] In this book we write of human, environmental, and economic security, and for each the double sense applies: human security as freedom from that which makes insecure and as that which provides human security. Most of the book is given over to issues of human security, but our study of Hurricane Katrina in Chapter 3 examines the televised coverage of an environmental security catastrophe that resulted in economic insecurity for many American citizens, while in our presentation of data from a study of audiences' perceptions of security in Chapter 8, we find individuals perceive a panoply of differing insecurities – locally, at work or walking down the street, and global environmental or terrorism-related insecurities. We also write of ontological security, by which we mean our familiarity and trust with the world around us, formed by acting in and upon that world in our daily routines and social life (Giddens, 1984). Through our interactions we can create a degree of order such that the ambiguity, complexity, and risk of social life are rendered manageable. We explore the relation between individuals' ontological security and media and political discourses that represents imminent security catastrophes, for it is by no means guaranteed that individuals will take note of these more pessimistic discourses, should it disrupt their routine, ontological security.

No concept has been more contested in recent years than 'terror' and its relations 'terrorism', 'terrorist', and 'terrorised'. It has been used to refer to state and non-state acts designed to induce terror in a population, whether terror is defined as outright fear or relentless low-level anxiety (see Bourke, 2004). But as Carr (2006: 6) notes, terrorism is defined not by who is carrying out the action but simply as a technique: 'The essence of this technique is the use of violence against symbolic targets in order to achieve a political rather than a military victory over a particular government or regime.' Symbolic targets may be civilians, officials, and

leaders, or infrastructure. It is this technique that has defined terrorism from the French Revolution and its Reign of Terror in 1793–1794 to the actions of Al-Qaeda today. Terrorism is a communicative act, therefore (Nacos, 2002; Barnett, 2003; Devji, 2005), intended to induce a response from a target population. As Kepel (2004) has documented, the history of Al-Qaeda is a history of trying to communicate to non-pious Muslims, first in the Middle East and more recently in Europe and wider afield, the need to reject aspects of modernity and accept a particular doctrine propounded by Al-Qaeda's intellectual vanguard. Terrorism is a performance intended to evoke a response from audiences (Layoun, 2006), audiences who witness the event either first hand or via news media. That terrorism is a communicative act is reinforced by the political communication techniques used by terrorists in recent years, such as the hostage video or the recording of 'martyr tapes' in which political or religious justifications are offered for acts about to be committed. Hence, on many occasions, television and terror are interwoven, part of the same communicative phenomenon.

In arguing there is a crisis of news discourse, what do we mean by news discourse? Discourse is a term used loosely in public debates and is defined and treated differently in different theories of the social sciences (Howarth, 2000). For positivists, discourses are treated as cognitive schemata – mental maps – that people hold intersubjectively. That is, discourse is an instrument for shared understanding and cooperation (Denzau and North, 1994; Braun and Busch, 1999). For realists, the social world contains objects independent of us, and discourses are one such object. Discourses are objects or systems that have relations to other objects or systems, such as the economy or the state. Discourses can therefore be caused by objective political or economic processes (Bhaskar, 1978, 1989). For post-structuralists, everything is discourse: nothing has meaning outside discourse, and therefore, discourse comes to constitute all subjects and objects, though at the same time discourse is always incomplete and ambiguous (Derrida, 1978; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; cf. Wittgenstein, 2001). Finally, critical discourse analysts posit a duality between social structure and human agency such that while discourses can be treated as structuring and giving meaning to social life, the analyst must examine how (powerful) social actors seek to sustain particular discourses in order to dominate a society (Fairclough, 1992; Howarth, 1995; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). In our view, critical discourse analysis provides a relevant and useful framework, insofar as it links texts, practices, and social context such that none is analysed in isolation. For example, in his critical discourse analysis of the

representation of Islam in British newspapers, John Richardson (2004) attempted to draw connections between racism in Britain per se (based on official studies), the financial, organisational, and occupational pressures on journalists that lead to certain practices of (mis)representation, and the actual newspaper texts. We suggest that this approach to media analysis is consistent with our ethnomethodological approach to television news. Any examination of how a piece of news comes to be must entail exploring the connection between the news clip as text, the practices of journalism and news production, and the social and political context within which the text is broadcast and the practices operate. For example, in our analysis of CNN's coverage of the opening of the 2003 Iraq war presented in Chapter 4, though the connection of CNN's programme content with the practices of journalists trying to produce a 'media event' and the social context of a nation about to go to war, it becomes possible to identify how it is that this particular news text is accomplished in *that* way and not another.

The influence of Foucault on critical discourse analysis cannot be overstated, and it is helpful to briefly summarise the conceptions of discourse Foucault proposed because it helps us see how it is possible to distinguish 'discourse' per se from 'news discourse' as well as 'media discourse' and 'political discourse'. In *The Archaelogy of Knowledge* (1972) [1989] Foucault characterises discourse as a system of statements that constitute bodies of knowledge (e.g. scientific knowledge). Such a system acts as a containing 'discursive formation' within which only certain things can be said and in which statements have meaning relationally rather than as isolated speech acts. The analyst's task is to describe the system of statements produced within a discursive formation in order to arrive at the *rules* of formation that structure such discursive practice. Additionally, not only are discursive formations constitutive of objects, insofar as the meaning of any object is only generated within the discursive practice, but so too are subject positions constituted in this way; Foucault argues that *roles* or 'enunciative modalities' are produced and meaningful within a discursive formation. All of this may appear extremely relevant for defining and analysing 'news discourse'.

News has all the features of a discourse described by Foucault. It is a system of statements in which some things can be said and others cannot – norms about what counts as news, what counts as fact, what is litigious, and so on. News as a discourse produces roles – anchor, reporter, expert, and witness.[7] News as discourse produces objects too. In coverage of the 2003 Iraq war, Western television news referred to the 1991 Gulf War. The latter was, as we shall argue later, an object

created through the practices of television; that is, in parallel with the military's conduct of the actual war, CNN's rolling twenty-four-hour news coverage of the 1991 Gulf war helped constitute the war as an object for viewers and citizens. That object can now be retrieved, discussed, and used for comparison. News contains many such objects: a 'breaking news event', a commemoration, or a keynote political address. Finally, while Foucault's definition of 'rules' was vague, in our analysis of television news, we identify economies, logics, and grammars followed and sustained by those producing news. These may not become codified as rules, but can be considered rules insofar as news producers and journalists feel compelled to follow them, use them to justify their actions, and which may occasionally be broken or not followed. For instance, we identify an 'economy of liveness' in which the value of a news story depends on whether it is live and immediately accessible; or the grammar of breaking news, featuring cycles beginning with a report, interviews with witnesses, then studio analysis with in-house or external 'experts', before returning to the report.

This *archaeological* approach to discourse was not without problems, in particular the notion of treating a discourse as a coherent entity or *episteme* analysable as a single structure. In his later *genealogical* writings, Foucault broadened his analytical horizon (Foucault, 1978, 1980, 1985, 1986). Instead of analysing discourse as an exploration of what could be said within a particular discursive formation, he paid attention to the power relations that form discourses in the first place. That is, the focus now is on the mutual relation between power and knowledge. In identifying contemporary discourses he deemed oppressive (around sexuality, for instance), the question became: How did this discourse ever come to be? What role did state and church play in forming and institutionalising these discourses, and to what extent did citizens themselves become self-regulating in a manner that sustained the discourses? Discourse is taken as shaped by social practices and broad political, economic, and social processes, yet can be considered to shape social practices and process too. This takes us to the work of Fairclough and other critical discourse analysts (e.g. Howarth et al., 2000; Richardson, 2004) who explore the connections between texts, practices, and broader contexts. It provides a model of discourse analysis in which we can identify how, for instance, economics and politics, market pressures and pressures from government and military, bear upon journalistic practices and the news texts produced.

In this way, we can distinguish news discourse from other discourses (media discourse, political discourse) by reference to its internal rules,

roles, and particular specifications of what is 'say-able', and carry out close analysis of news texts to see what news discourse produces on a moment-by-moment basis. Yet we can also locate news discourse within broader social, political, and economic relations to see how news discourse is shaped by and shapes those broader relations. Finally, where Foucault paid little attention to the actual texts, assuming their content to be determined by macro-discursive structures (Fairclough, 1992: 57), our ethnomethodological approach will highlight any variety, mess, and error in television news; that is, where the following of rules is not achieved.

But what of political discourses? Our enquiry explores the relation of televisual news discourse to political discourses that attempt to frame issues surrounding terror and insecurity. It follows that political discourses can also be understood in the terms set out above: a political discourse contains rules, roles, and things 'say-able' which together will constitute subjects (vigilant citizens, terrorists, strong leaders) and objects (the World Trade Centre, the statue of Saddam Hussein pulled down in 2003), such that social life and events become meaningful in particular ways. A political discourse shapes and is shaped by other political, economic, and social processes, and the analyst must identify the 'articulations' produced in this relation. Where a news discourse relates to the production of news, political discourse relates to attempts to produce political outcomes: to define problems in such a way as to legitimate particular solutions that serve certain interests (Howarth et al., 2000). To return to our analysis of CNN's coverage of the opening phase of the 2003 Iraq war, for instance, we highlight two political discourses vying for dominance in the framing of the war. The first is 'democratic imperialism', the political discourse of the Coalition leaders and their supporters who sought to create democracy overseas in order to safeguard homeland security. The second is 'assertive multilateralism', the political discourse of those seeking to identify and address problems in international society through multilateral institutions such as the UN and NATO. We argue in Chapter 4 that the norms and practices of television news discourse, such as reliance on officials and the need for a dramatic media event, operated in this instance to elevate the democratic imperialist discourse and discount assertive multilateralism. Multilateralists such as Hans Blix, the UN weapons inspector, appeared on CNN to contest the definition of the problem as 'Saddam Hussein defies weapons inspectors'. For him it was not so straightforward a case. But this did not fit the narrative of a media event that CNN was organising and the interviewer dismisses his point of view as irrelevant.[8] Thus, a news discourse reinforced one political discourse at the expense of another.

To summarise, we have introduced working definitions of security, terror, and discourse that will inform our analysis. We have emphasised the different types of security, the communicative nature of terrorism, and specified how we can distinguish between different types of discourse. It is now time to lay out our main argument.

Our Argument: modulation plus renewal equals crisis

If, following Cottle (2006), news is mediatised, with media built into and constitutive of terror events such that the events cannot be considered to exist without their media dimension, then ontologically speaking, we can point to an *interaction order* composed of both what appears in news media and what happens beyond the media text – 'out there' in the world. What happens on-screen is inseparable from off-screen events, but more and more, it is the case that off-screen events become inseparable from media representations of those events.

We borrow the concept of 'interaction order' from that developed by Erving Goffman (1971/1972: 15) for whom it concerns, 'the conditions and constraints placed upon the manner in which ends are sought or activity carried out and with patterned adaptions associated with these pursuings' rather than 'the choice of ends or the manner in which these ends may be integrated into a single system of activity'. The micro-social or interaction order that is the principal domain investigated in what follows is television news. It is this that constitutes our unit of analysis.

Developments in this interaction order point to a crisis of news discourse. By crisis we refer at a most basic level to a situation in which news fails to deliver on its promise to provide credible, reliable information about security events (in particular). Nowhere is this better exemplified than by the collective self-examination by US journalists in the wake of the 2003 Iraq war and the lack of WMD in Iraq (Massing, 2004; Fenton, 2005), and comparisons with the reporting of US journalists to those in other countries (*Columbia Journalism Review*, 2004; Lehman, 2004). Questions were raised concerning journalists' failure to scrutinise the Bush Administration's case for war and justifications based on the threat of Saddam Hussein using WMD or offering WMD to terrorists. Most notable was the *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller's reliance on dubious sources for information about Saddam Hussein's regime.

But there is nothing new in pointing out that journalists sometimes fail to provide accurate or reliable information or fail to elucidate a story's context or examine the motives and history of its participants (cf. Philo and Berry, 2004; Wolfsfeld, 2004). We intend to draw attention