**Assignment Brief**

*Language and conflict*

The reporting of war and conflict features all too commonly in our daily news. Government policies, such as whether or not to send troops into a war zone, can provoke strong public reactions. Images, as is often said, speak more loudly than words – and these, too, can have a really important bearing on public response. What, however, of the language which is used to report conflict? How does this condition our responses?

By looking at the example of international conflict, phrases such as ‘surgical air strikes’ may appear to suggest minimal collateral damage or casualties, but the reality may be rather different. Yet the clinical and targeted image may lead people to support a course of action that they would not otherwise deem acceptable. One can also look at how international events can be ‘spun’ to increase public sense of insecurity, which in turn can make implementation of harder line policies more palatable. This has clear implications for our civil liberties. The media has a pivotal role in reinforcing and reproducing dominant hegemonic discourses, therefore my research additionally examines their role in manufacturing consent.

Studying the use of language in media reporting of conflict and war can be a rewarding focus for an innovative research project. Reading through media reports can be conducted online, often with the ability to trawl back over a number of years or it is possible to review papers over a relatively short period of time, such as fortnight, to examine the language and terminology of reporting. You might even compare media reports in different countries.

**Contacts**

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