

WHEN PATRIOTISM AND COMPASSION CLASH WITH MEDIA PLURALISM

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The US media has sometimes been quicker than Bush to call for war. During key moments, like Bush's 20 September address to the Congress and the Nation, patriotic attitudes have often prevailed amongst columnists over journalists' critical role.

Here it comes again: on the TV screen the Boeing 747 once more approaches the World Trade Centre, strangely close, like last time, so close, and then it again crashes into one of the "Twin Towers". The other tower is already in flames, after the first Boeing 747 exploded into it some 20 minutes previously. It's just a few hours since all that happened, but on CNN, the planes have already crashed several times: adding together all the American channels' news during a single night, the Boeing 747 might have been crashing into the towers a million times.

OBSESSIVE REPETITION

Psychologists have raised the point that repeated and regular broadcasts of such violent scenes might provoke various forms of stress and trauma for some viewers: "Mental health experts say that witnessing such carnage on television, particularly if it is viewed repeatedly, can exacerbate, or in rare cases even cause, a diagnosable mental disorder," wrote Sandra G. Boodman in the daily *Washington Post* (18 September). Some have also mentioned the consequences those events might have on the entire American society. But the atmosphere of patriotism of compassion created and/or reinforced by the repeated showing of these images may have had traumatic consequences in the media field too, by severely limiting, if

not completely suppressing, plurality of media opinion in the weeks following the attacks. This phenomenon appears to have particularly affected mainstream American media, and, to a lesser and shorter extent, that in Western European.

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as people endlessly fell from the towers, as buildings burnt before repeatedly crumbling down, the task of printing newspapers the next morning appeared rather arduous. It was no longer a question of announcing what had happened, said Ann Marie Lipinski, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, in a September 19 interview with the Canadian newspaper *La Presse*. "It was a question of us telling what impact the news had had on the country". And, beside long and somehow detailed coverage of the rescue operations on the sites where the attacks took place -Washington and New York- some gave a striking illustration of how much Lipinski's approach could be vain: to try to

identify a precise "impact" in a country probably still in total disarray. But despite the foreseeable highly emotional state of the public's mind, the *Washington Post* and *ABC News* did not hesitate in conducting an opinion poll on the same day the events took place. On the basis of the poll results, they declared that Americans were "Willing to Go to War" on the evening of the 11 September. "The overwhelming majority of Americans are willing to risk war to hunt down and punish the terrorist groups that plotted Tuesday's

deadly attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Centre (*Washington Post*, September 11). In the same article, the results showed that: "Nine in 10 -94 percent- supported taking military action against the groups or nations responsible for the attacks. More than eight in 10 favoured military strikes if they led to war". A young man of 20, Todd Nielbing of Portland, was quoted as saying: "I would support a complete slaughter. If we got into a war, that's fine. You have to do what you have to do". Furthermore, according to the authors, "the survey also found that 84 percent supported taking military action against any countries that assisted or harboured the terrorists, a view

echoed by President Bush in his speech to the nation that the United States <will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed those acts and those who harbour them>". Rather than "echoing" the President's view, the *Washington Post*, by using this last sentence out of context was in fact anticipating future official policy (in his original speech, Bush actually stated that: "I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.") At the time of the "poll's" publication, the President had been talking about "bringing" the authors "to justice", not of undertaking military action against foreign countries. In the President's address to the Nation, that evening, the term "war" was pronounced only once by George Bush, in the expression "war against terrorism": "America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world and we stand together to win the war against terrorism."

PRESS QUICKER THAN BUSH

In neither of the two other public announcements he made on 11 September (from Sarasota, Florida and from Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana) had George Bush used the word "war". He sounded rather factual during his first public appearance that day stating that, "Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Centre in an apparent terrorist attack on our country. I have spoken to the vice president, to the governor of New York, to the director of the FBI, and I've ordered that the full resources of the federal government go to help the victims and their families and to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act. Terrorism

against our nation will not stand (...)." The second statement was not any more inflammatory towards the authors of the attacks ("Make no mistake: the United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts"), and the army was mentioned only from a security point of view ("Our military at home and around the world is on high-alert status and we have taken the necessary security precautions to continue the functions of your government. We have been in touch with the leaders of Congress and with world leaders to assure them that we will do whatever is necessary to protect America and Americans.")

Many newspapers were quicker to evoke war or at least the atmosphere of war. For *The Los Angeles Times* reported, "The greatest challenge any American president can face is war - and George W.

New York and Washington. The North American Air Defence Command, which had seemed to many a relic of the cold war, adopted a posture of heightened alert and suddenly seemed relevant".

COMPULSIVE BOMBING

But the President had been overtaken in his rhetoric, and not only in the sole use of the word "war". On 16 September he provoked doubts, fear and anger amongst NATO states and Muslim countries by using the expression "Dead or alive" (referring to the capture of Osama Bin Laden), and "the Crusade between evil and good" (referring to American reactions to the attacks in New York and Washington). But compared to editorials published a few days earlier, his speeches appeared pretty innocuous. "America's col-

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Bush, who won the presidency at a moment of peace and prosperity, is abruptly facing a sterner test than anyone expected (...) But the real test of the new president's leadership will arrive in the weeks to come: Can he unify the nation in grief and anger? Can he choose an effective military response? And can he find ways to prevent another attack from occurring?" The *New York Times* observed that "As Washington struggled to regain a sense of equilibrium, with warplanes and heavily armed helicopters crossing overhead, past and present national security officials earnestly debated the possibility of a Congressional declaration of war - but against precisely whom, and in what exact circumstances? Warships were manoeuvring to protect

umnists, some of them at least, are ready to go to war," wrote *Washington Post's* media analyst Howard Kurtz on 13 September. He quoted *The Nation's* editor, David Corn, "The press has always been a harbour for warmongers. It's a knee-jerk, spasmodic reaction: We gotta bomb someone. We gotta feel good. We gotta show them we can't be pushed around." Among the "armchair warriors" cited by Kurtz, Steve Dunleavy of the *New York Post* was perhaps the most straightforward: "The response to this unimaginable 21st century Pearl Harbor should be as simple as it is swift - kill the bastards. No, I don't mean hunt them, arrest them, extradite them and prosecute them in a court of law. I mean a far quicker and neater form of retribution for

this cabal of cowards. A gunshot between the eyes, blow them to smithereens, poison them if you have to (...) Train assassins (we've done it before), hire mercenaries, put a couple of million bucks up for bounty hunters to get them dead or alive, preferably dead. As for cities or countries that host these worms, bomb them into basketball courts." Only a few days after Steve Dunleavy's remarks George Bush used the expression "dead or alive" for the first time: "Speaking with unusually raw intensity, President George W. Bush said Monday that he wanted the militant Islamic leader Osama bin Laden brought to justice "dead or alive", wrote the *International Herald Tribune* on 18 September.

VIOLATE SOVEREIGNTY

With less emotion than the *New York Post's* columnist, *National Review's* Dave Koper defended the idea of violating the principle of State sovereignty, and called the authors of the attacks "war criminals", before any war had been officially declared: "To prevent future attacks, the perpetrators of Tuesday's infamies must be utterly destroyed, even if that means infringing the territorial sovereignty of nations which harbour these war criminals". According to a report of the NGO Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), "*New York Daily News* columnist A. M. Rosenthal, formerly the executive editor of the *New York Times* (...)" in a column on 14 September, called for "an ultimatum [to] be delivered to at least six countries - Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria and Sudan- giving them three days to hand over documents and information related to weapons of mass destruction and terrorist organisations. Rosenthal warned that "in the three days the terrorists were considering the American ultimatum, the residents of the countries would be urged 24 hours

a day by the U.S. to flee the capital and major cities, because they would be bombed to the ground beginning the fourth day".

Fox News Channel journalist Bill O'Reilly declared on 17 September, during the channel's most popular broadcast, that if the Afghan government did not extradite Osama bin Laden to the U.S., "the U.S. should bomb the Afghan infrastructure to rubble - the airport, the power plants, their water facilities, and the roads"

Regarding TV stations, the same FAIR report quoted *Fox News Channel's* journalist Bill O'Reilly, who declared on 17 September, during the most channel's popular broadcast, that if the Afghan government did not extradite Osama bin Laden to the U.S., "the U.S. should bomb the Afghan infrastructure to rubble - the airport, the power plants, their water facilities, and the roads". O'Reilly went on to say: "This is a very primitive country. And taking out their ability to exist day to day will not be hard. Remember, the people of any country are ultimately responsible for the government they have. The Germans were responsible for Hitler. The Afghans are responsible for the Talibans. We should not target civilians. But if they don't rise up against this criminal government, they starve". On the same channel, anchorman Jon Scott told Wolfgang Ischinger, the German ambassador to the United States: "We look forward to working with your country in wiping out these terrorists." (mentioned in the *International Herald Tribune*, 21 September).

Generally speaking, the major news networks in the US certainly played an important role in creating and maintaining a state of emergency atmosphere, whether by incorporating "screen icons of waving American flags" (*International Herald Tribune*, 21 September), like *CNN*, *Fox News Channel* and *MSNBC*, or by having journalists wearing a badge of the American flag, like *Fox News Channel* (mentioned in the French newspaper *Le Monde*, 24 September). The slogans put on the screens of some major news channels - "America United" on *Fox News Channel*, "America under Attack", "America's new war" on *CNN*- may all have contributed to leaving "No room for dissent in <America United>", as the title of a report from New York published in the British *Guardian Weekly* commented (20-26 September): "There has been little focus on Barbara Lee, the California congresswoman who cast the only vote against giving the president carte blanche to retaliate.

UNEASY DISSENT VOICES

Mary McGrory, a long-time dissident, reported in the *Washington Post* that journalists who have asked sceptical questions have been "inundated with furious calls calling them a disgrace to their profession and even traitors". Having originally accused Bush of flunking his test, she herself now felt obliged to pay tribute to the president, saying that if he lacked eloquence on the day of the attacks, he "more than made up for it" at the memorial service". That might have been a compliment, but the editorials in mainstream American newspapers the day after George W. Bush addressed Congress on 20 September can be considered real praise.

CNN's Judy Woodruff was probably referring to the generally emotional atmosphere and the

“support for everything representing the US” that the mass media had helped to create. Or maybe she was only talking about the media’s lack of professional will to adopt a critical attitude towards official institutions at that particular time. In any case, she rightly anticipated before the president’s appearance that: “Whatever the president says tonight will be well-received.” Her counterpart at CBS, Bob Schieffer, confirmed: “Whatever President Bush says, he is going to be wildly cheered.” (both quoted by Howard Kurtz, in the *Washington Post*, 21 September).

BUSH’ SPEECH

That night, George Bush repeated that military retaliation was to come: “And tonight a few miles from the damaged Pentagon, I have a message for our military: Be ready. I have called the armed forces to alert, and there is a reason. The hour is coming when America will act, and you will make us proud.” He also named those responsible for the attacks on New York and Washington: “The

evidence we have gathered all point to a collection to loosely affiliated terrorist organisations known as al Qaeda. They are some of the murderers indicted for bombing American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya and responsible for bombing the USS Cole.” He warned the Taliban: “By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder. And tonight the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban. Deliver to United States authorities all of the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land”, and sent them an ultimatum: “Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating. These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate”.

The president also warned the whole international community: “We will pursue nations that provide aid or a safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region

now has a decision to make: either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”. He claimed that America’s present policy represented universal and absolute values: “This is the world’s fight. This is civilisation’s fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom. We ask every nation to join us. We will ask and we will need the help of police forces, intelligence services and banking systems around the world.” And he let it be known that God was on America’s side: “The course of this conflict is not known, yet its outcome is certain. Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty, have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them”.

The next morning, George Bush was literally praised to the skies by some columnists for his intervention, who failed to critically address the way the American administration was responding to the events of 11 September - as one could expect from journalists in a well and long established democracy - but who instead acted like White

The Kosovo Crisis: A Case Study for the Role of the Media

Published in 2000 and edited by Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman, the collective book on “Degraded Capability: the Media and the Kosovo Crisis”, dedicates a large space on how the media in different countries addressed the Kosovo crisis in early 1999. The chapters devoted to the US, Russian, German and British media offer a particularly striking illustration on how mainstream media, in a democratic political system, can appear dramatically influenced when addressing an international issue by domestic political orientations and by their own governments’ political position and interests. The chapters on the US media, ch. 9: *Following Washington’s Script: The United States Media and Kosovo*, by Seth Ackerman and Jim Naureckas; and chap. 10: *CNN: Selling Nato’s War Globally*, by Edward S. Herman and David Peterson - lead one to conclude that the compliance mainstream American media demonstrated towards the official White House policy during the weeks following 11 September might have much deeper roots than the emotion provoked by the terrorists attacks. Those roots might lie in the role the US media wants to play in society.

In March 1999, the failure of the so-called Rambouillet Agreement” (Rambouillet is a small place outside Paris where the talks took place) was the last attempt to try to solve the Kosovo crisis by negotiation. March 24 marked the first of a 78-day NATO military intervention against Yugoslavia that ended with the signing, on 9 June, in Kumanovo (in Macedonia, on the border with Yugoslavia) of an agreement between NATO and the Yugoslav Army’s commanders. Everyone recalls that, by signing this agreement the Yugoslav Army agreed to withdraw from Kosovo, and to let NATO soldiers take over. But what is rarely mentioned is the result that Yugoslavia - although military defeated after having sustained more than two months of bombings - obtained at a political level: NATO was not allowed to move across the whole Yugoslav federation territory as American negotiators had demanded during the Rambouillet talks. In fact, this demand -the right for NATO to move throughout all of Yugoslavia- which formed part of an Annex of the general draft Agreement on Kosovo, had then provoked a refusal by Yugoslavia, which nevertheless declared its readiness to consider an international presence in Kosovo itself, provided it would not be NATO, but rather the United Nations (UN) or the

see next page

House insiders; focusing on the president's "performance" as if they were Public Relations advisers. Under the title "Strong Words", the *Los Angeles Times* (21 September) claimed that "President Bush Thursday evening gave the speech Americans and the world needed to hear. He balanced between tough talk and restraint, telling America and the international audience that the fight against terrorism will be long and complex - and ultimately successful. <Whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done,> he declared". Not only was the *Los Angeles Times* apparently in a position to judge what "the world needed to hear", but the columnist also proved to be a confirmed specialist of the structure of the White House administration: "Looking at home, Bush announced a new-Cabinet-level position for domestic defence. Given the deadly gaps in security and intelligence so glaring last week, there is a clear need to coordinate the work of many agencies. If the new office can accomplish this, it will be

worth creating. If it becomes just another layer bureaucracy, it will not". In one word, there are some doubts that the president knows what he is doing by creating a "new-Cabinet-level position for domestic defence", but the same president just has to say to "the world" that "justice will be done", that is enough to consider it a fact that the "fights against terrorism" will be "ultimately successful".

NO THIRD WORLD WAR

Inspired also by Public Relations science, the well-respected *New York Times* ("A Clear Message: 'I Will Not Relent'", 21 September) offers its readers an interpretation of why George Bush, during its intervention, "refrained from talking about World War III": "perhaps, because many Europeans are made uneasy by too much war talk. They would prefer to define what lies ahead as an international police action". Instead of commenting on the reasons Europeans might have to take such a stance, the editorial continues on the form of the speech: "It was a solemn

moment, fraught with drama and charged with history (...) Tremendous public support for the president was reflected in the warmth of the reception he received on Capitol Hill. Mr Bush rose to the occasion, finding at times the eloquence that has eluded him so often in the past. But he must still find a way to satisfy the desire of many Americans for a dramatic early retaliation while keeping apprehensive European and Middle Eastern allies on board". Former United States ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke, is quoted as saying that the challenge George Bush will be facing in the months ahead "is channelling the public's emotions in a clear direction, because Americans are confused and, in many cases, scared". But, explains the columnist of the *New York Times*, "confusion may have resulted in part because Mr Bush (...) at times sounded like the Rambo figure so feared by many Europeans (...), at times seemed attuned to Middle Eastern sensitivities (...), once described the anti-terrorism struggle as a crusade,

Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Having given Yugoslavia an ultimatum, the Americans then decided to start the bombing operations.

To illustrate the process of "diplomatic rewriting" undertaken by American journalists to unilaterally support the US government's position, Ackerman and Naureckas take the example of the *New York Times*. At the end of the first Rambouillet talk, so the author says, the *New York Times'* correspondent "went on to note that Yugoslavia (...) had shown some flexibility on the main sticking point: the nature of an international presence force to implement a settlement in Kosovo", as confirmed in this extract of a *New York Times* article: "Already, the Serbian president, Milan Milutinovic, has said that, when negotiations resume on March 15, the Serbs are ready to discuss <an international presence in Kosovo> to carry out political arrangements of any agreement. And other Serbs have floated ideas that include leavening Western forces with lots of Russians." However, after the American ultimatum to Yugoslavia failed, the same correspondent would have completely forgotten about what he wrote one month earlier. Then, giving an account of the last few meetings between the two sides, according to Ackerman and Naureckas, the correspondent wrote an article that "was full of quotes from US officials asserting Belgrade's obstinacy, charging that Milosevic had refused <every opportunity> to avoid Nato bombing: that Milosevic stubbornly <can't agree to a foreign force on Yugoslav soil because of history or politics or whatever>: and that <if there had been any sign of compromise> the officials <probably wouldn't be on the way to the airport right now". Hours earlier this report had been written, "the Serbian leadership reaffirmed its earlier position (...) in a series of parliamentary resolutions. These rejected the Rambouillet document, mainly because it envisioned the occupation of Kosovo by 28'000 Nato soldiers who would have the right to move throughout all of Yugoslavia."

According to Herman and Peterson (chapter 10: *CNN: Selling Nato's War Globally*) *CNN* played a more active pro-war role: "CNN's journalists not only followed Nato's agenda and failed to ask critical questions, they also served as salespersons and promoters of the Nato war. Time and again they pressed Nato officials toward violent responses to Serb brutalities and unwillingness to negotiate, with Nato allegations on these latter points taken at face value".

despite the anti-Muslim overtones that phrase has had for hundreds of years." "But confusion may be inevitable," writes the *New York Times*: "Americans have had relatively little direct experience with terrorism, unlike the British, who have struggled for decades with the Irish Republican Army, and the Spanish, who have fought the Basque separatist group E.T.A for many years. And Americans expect quick or at least clear-cut victories."

CANNOT BE BETTER

The *Chicago Tribune* (21 September) greeted the president's "call to arms", who, "in his extraordinarily moving address to Congress Thursday night (...) gave comfort to a grieving nation and firmly established his case for America's first war of the 21st Century. His bearing, and his message, could not have been more resolute." But whatever "grieving" the nation might be doing at the moment, "the American people have sent a clear message to the president: They are with him, and they are patient." In the midst of such unanimous opinion, the columnist evokes nevertheless a "report of disagreement in the Bush administration", which concern the question "about how fast and how far to go with a response." The columnist has an answer: "It will do the U.S. no good to rush into missile strikes against the wrong enemy -or lash out, say, at Iraq. The U.S. won the Gulf War because it cornered and crushed a clearly defined enemy with the help of a broad-based international coalition. The same precision and support are required now." Anyway, concludes the editorial: "Make no mistake, a furious American response is inevitable. It will not be an act of vengeance, it won't be an act of retribution. It will be a defence of this nation, which has been attacked and has suffered more

than 6'000 casualties. As America methodically prepares its answer, those responsible for the terrible losses of Sept. 11 can contemplate

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what is to come". For the *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 September), "It was a strong speech that struck all the right tones". "<Freedom and fear are at war>, Bush told Congress, and there is no question the nation supports him on his basic mission. We certainly do." "There is no more noble cause than the eradication of terrorism," wrote the *San Francisco Chronicle* in its conclusion. The reader is not told why it was not declared before the 11 September.

The *New York Post* chose to illustrate Bush's speech, with a selection of extracts:

From Bush's speech: "I will not yield. I will not rest. I will not relent in waging this struggle in waging this struggle for the freedom and security of the American people".

New York Post's comment:

"It was Bush at his finest. Representing America, at its finest."

From Bush's speech: "From this day onward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile enemy."

New York Post's comment:

"They'd better be digging foxholes in Damascus, Baghdad and Tehran today."

From Bush's speech:

"I have a message for our military: Be ready. The hour is coming when America will act - and you will make us proud."

New York Post's comment:

"Indeed they will".

Reading the popular *USA Today* on 21 September, George Bush might have sensed what infallibility means: "President Bush pointedly

defined the only acceptable response Thursday (...) As difficult as that objective will be, there is no other reasonable option. To aim lower would be to repeat the mistakes that invited last week's terror attacks".

UNDERSTANDABLE SHOCK

Although one can easily understand the shock provoked by the attacks of 11 September, and consider it normal that journalists are not immune to such emotions, the consequences for the information field of the majority of journalists behaving first as "patriots", and then as professionals, should nevertheless be discussed.

However deep the emotions and the patriotic feeling of media workers, a lot of important questions remained unanswered for any observer wishing for a more general understanding of the events having taking place in New York and Washington and the reaction by the US government. Mainstream American media probably proved more fascinating to read and listen during the weeks following the attacks, for what it did not say and report, and for what it did not question, rather than for what it did actually echo. Dissenting voices, if they existed, were so light in the mainstream media that they never, during September, covered the noise of the coming battle. First of all the necessity of a military response was not discussed. Not how many troops had to be sent, how

many missiles fired, or bombers sent: but if all of that had really to be undertaken. The public has been flooded with words like "justice" and the empty expression "Infinite Justice", without the legality of the actions announced by the US government being seriously discussed. Editorials that mentioned, "Americans have had relatively little direct experience with terrorism, unlike the British, who have struggled for decades with the Irish Republican Army, and the Spanish, who have fought the Basque separatist group E.T.A for many years", could have provided a space for some of those who were willing to talk.

LEGALITY QUESTIONED

They could have published the opinion of Judge Balthazar Garzón, who, as a Spanish magistrate, could be considered an expert both of "terrorism" and "justice". Not only has his country been regularly confronted by terrorist actions for decades, but it also obtained the extradition of the former dictator Augusto Pinochet from Great Britain in 1998. In a contribution published first in the Spanish daily *El País*, and then reprinted in the French *Le Monde* under the title "The only answer to terrorism", Garzón claimed that: "The answer that I want and, I am convinced, that the American people and the civilised world wants as well, provided that it is explained well and rigorously, is of course not a military one." Referring to the official White House declaration concerning the

alleged guilt of Bin Laden, he commented: "To say: <I have the evidence, but I will not make them public because I cannot harm my sources of information>, is not acceptable. No! It is, simply, illegal (...) legality is preached at the same time as it is not taken into consideration, for the simple reason that the danger represented by the terrorist organisation has to be brought to an end immediately".

American mainstream media did not pay a lot of attention to such analyses. Neither did they anticipate questions that could have arose among their audience. Some readers or spectators, for example, may have heard once about the legal attempts to have Henry A. Kissinger, the former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State under President Richard Nixon, indicted for human right abuses, notably for being allegedly partly responsible for the terror implemented in Chile after the assassination of President Salvador Allende on 11 September, 1973. Considering the US's example as jurisprudence, Chile might therefore be tempted to claim to be in possession of evidence of Kissinger's guilt, declare itself willing to bring him to justice "dead or alive", and threaten those who "harbor" him with sharing his fate.

What general conclusions could be made on the US attitude, in terms of functioning of the institutions, in functioning of the international justice? How one could un-

derstand that a country so thirsty for justice, to the point to declare it "infinite" ("Operation Infinite Justice" was the code name of the military deployment in September) still did not ratify the Treaty on the International Criminal Court (the President Clinton signed it before to leave the office, but the US Congress still has not ratified it)? Those questions would arise in the mind of anyone regularly following international news, and trying to understand the sense of those events. But the fact is that there were little if no attempts made by the main US media to explain to those who were not in the same emotional state of mind as the direct witnesses to the tragedy why they should support an immediate military response.

On 12 September, one only after the tragedy in the United States, the daily *La Tercera*, based in Santiago de Chile chose to comment on "The consequences of the <Yankee> Arrogance". As brutal as it might sound for such a moment, this title might give an idea of the grievances some Latin American probably have towards the US for its past support to brutal dictatorship in various countries. The incidents of the 11 September could have been the opportunity to open a debate on that question in the American society, and the media could have taken the lead in starting the discussion. In turning all their attention to the "only possible" stand their government had taken, they prefer to ignore the debate than to open it.