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**The Portrayal of the British Army in Selected British Media**

**Radek Richter**

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**Bakalářská práce**

**The Portrayal of the British Army in Selected British Media**

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Bachelor thesis deals with the portrayal of the British Army in selected British newspapers. Its objective is to present and to compare different depictions of the British Army in different British journals. The analysis is made through the mediation of selected articles which are available on the online version of newspapers. Journals are chosen because of their accessibility and because of their political orientation, which covers the whole political spectrum.

The analysis itself is accompanied with the brief history of the British Army covering the era beginning with the end of the Second World War and continuing until the latest events. In this part, the main objective is to emphasize major British wartime periods and to stress important changes in the British Army. It is a historical part which should help the reader to gain some background information about the principal topic of the thesis and to present the recent history of the British Army.

The practical part is dedicated to the analysis of articles published in British newspapers. The most recent articles about the War in Iraq are chosen; in the beginning of this part, there is briefly described the conflict in Iraq. The representatives of journals are *The Guardian* (centre-left, liberal), *The Daily Telegraph* (centre-right, conservative), *The Independent* (centre) and *Daily Mail* (right-wing tabloid). This part is divided into four chapters and each of them is aimed at particular journal and at problems and issues which are much commented on by newspapers. This, as the main part of the thesis, should provide the reader information about the style of writing and about the directing of these newspapers.

The conclusion of the thesis will summarize the comparison of these four newspapers and will express author's evaluation of the analyses of four British newspapers.



## 2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Unclear and muddled post-war period

The British Army and Great Britain itself came out of the Second World War as a winner, together with the United States and the Soviet Union. However, Great Britain was no longer the world number one power; there were another two states which became superpowers – the United States and the Soviet Union. There arises a question if Great Britain is a real winner or just a seeming one. There was a great deal of infrastructure which was now useless and too many soldiers in service. These soldiers were just after the end of the war forced to stay in Germany or in colonies in order to protect the recently established peace.

There were a few more aspects why Great Britain lost its position on the global scale. Many British colonies tried to gain independence and on the other hand, the army numbers were systematically being cut down – right after the end of the war, the British Army forces were comprised of 5.1 million soldiers while until the year 1949 it was reduced to 700,000 men in service. [1] On top of that, the British Army had to participate in the newly established organisations which were the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the United Nations, because Great Britain wanted to play an important role in such organisations. [2] [3] [4]

In the year 1945 a major problem with the officers appeared also, due to the urgent shortage of officers; many non-commissioned officers were made officers overnight without any additional training or schooling. Another thing which was quite closely related to this was the discussion about the abolition of conscription; when the level of the troops was lowered to 700,000 there were opinions that the British Army should have been professionalized completely for the purpose of obtaining a new highly specialized and well trained and equipped army. However, the people themselves were against this abolition; this idea fell rapidly into oblivion. [5]

With the professionalization of the British Army is also linked the question of the duration of conscription. In the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century conscription lasted generally 7 years, while after the end of the war this was reduced to 18 months (with a slight augmentation to 2 years after the breakout of the Korean War); in the year 1952 the full career conscription taking 22 years was enabled and due to this brand new possibility the British Army had to become family friendly, meaning in the matter of the marriage and family life. The leaders of the Army were equally aware of the experience which the British Army gained through the two World Wars; in the beginning of both wars, the Regular Army was able to hold the line (the enemy) for a sufficient time until the national army was created and prepared to participate in the fight. In the atomic age this could be fatal for Great Britain, the enemy offensive could be so massive and swift that there would be no leeway for this creation and the Regular Army would be defeated before. [6]

A few months after the World War II, Great Britain realized that Germany could not be considered as a threat any longer. Germany was not regarded as an enemy; the new enemy and the “only potential aggressor” was the Soviet Union (with its first atomic tests made in 1949). [7] As Great Britain became conscious of that, also the interests of the British Army and of the British Government concerning the question “what is important to protect?” (so that the British Empire is best protected) changed considerably. A new area of a high interest became the Middle East and the whole Mediterranean region; the British Army was supposed to take this region securely into its hands and to create military bases, especially missile and air bases to ensure a good start position in a possible conflict with the Soviet Union. The fact was that there were three issues which were more important than the protection and occupation of Germany and that were the defence of the UK base, the defence of the SLOC (Sea lines of communications) and the already mentioned defence of the Middle East. [8]

The withdrawal of the British Army from Germany was a desired thing among public but there immediately arose problems with the idea of a “satellite republic” represented by Germany. The Soviet could have attacked Germany and Great Britain would be detached from its “buffer zone”. Alongside with it, it is necessary to mention some details about the expectations of the British. The potential war was expected to be an atomic war with the use of air forces and of biologic and mass destruction weapons; simultaneously, was expected not to begin before the years 1956-7, if it would, the British Army would be relatively powerless against the Soviet divisions. The British government stated as the objective the creation of such missile and air bases in the Mediterranean area so that they would be able to attack and destroy Soviet oil wells in the region of Middle East. This should have helped the establishment of the status quo (the Soviet Union should be afraid of these bases) to ensure the ongoing peace. [9]

The British strategists were continuously working on the defence system in Europe including the operation “Speedway” which should have been an organised withdrawal of the British Army forces back from the Western Europe in a very short time. This was because the Soviet Army forces were considered as much stronger and more capable in the majority of aspects. Absolutely concrete predictions about the appearance of the Soviet offensive existed and a large number of things concerning steps and moves of the British Army were scheduled in advance. This all ended (or at least was weakened) by the outbreak of the Korean War, which basically meant certain relocation of these tactic moves away from the European continent. [10]

The British Army had a very broad field of activities; to protect the interests and territories of the British Empire, it was necessary to perform a great number of overseas military operations into various countries and areas (more precisely: between the years 1949 – 1970 it was 35 operations into more than 20 countries). Many of them were rather quick and the objectives were completed in a short period of time; several of them were longer and the British

soldiers had to stay more months than originally intended. These operations especially included those in Malaya, Cyprus, Kenya and Aden in Yemen (not counting the operation in Korea now). During these actions there were still being made certain changes; meanwhile, the number of soldiers often varied and so did the number of officer. In the year 1957, extensive changes arrived in the quantity of officers and non-commissioned officers; 5,000 officers of the rank of Major and higher and 10,000 of non-commissioned officers were suddenly made redundant, which was partly caused by the financial situation of the British Army; all of the above-mentioned overseas operation were extremely expensive. [11]

In the early post-war period, the British Army's objectives and aims appeared to be somewhat confused and disordered; on the one hand, the British Government felt a certain commitment to the Europe and the European continent was equally important for Great Britain as a defence area in case of the Soviet offensive in the direct succession on the World War; on the other hand, the level of importance of the Middle East was equal or higher. The British Army had to take into consideration the stance of the US (the "speedway" plan if the Soviet Union attacks in Europe) and the fact that the situation was as it was and the possible conflict between the Western powers and the Soviet Union would be an atomic one with the enormous use of the air forces and the navy forces on both sides instead of the ground force (it suggests that the bad conditions of the ground forces of the British Army were not the essential problem). At least it was obvious that a badly equipped army formed only from the World War veterans as was the BAOR (the British Army of the Rhine) 555 would not be able to resist the huge number of Soviet divisions for a longer period of time and that this defence would be helpful only as a time gaining operation for the British Army itself. [12]

## 2.2 'Peacekeeping in Northern Ireland'

One of the first crucial issues regarding the British Army in the post-war period was the operation in Northern Ireland – it was a counter-terrorist one as well as a peacekeeping one. After five decades of disturbances in Northern Ireland (including the guerrilla war of independence between IRA and the Royal Army), in the late 1960s, the Irish Republican Army transformed to an organisation with terror tactics only. Before, the IRA performed several actions and attacks such as the firing on the British naval vessel in 1965 or the burning of buses in 1968.

Afterwards, when the riots broke in Belfast and Londonderry in July 1969, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (the police force of the Northern Ireland) asked the British regular troops to be prepared to intervene if needed. The riots continued in August 1969 and it ended with the agreement of deployment of the British forces into the Northern Ireland.

It is important to realize that the regular troops were forced to behave as a kind of police units; they were called up to execute a peacekeeping operation and thus their competences and qualifications were limited. Because it was in the British territory on the British Isles, soldiers were obliged to use as little violence as possible, not to use the open fire but the cases where it was vitally acute (moreover, giving a proper warning before), as the police usually do. [13]

There were at that time two branches of the IRA, these were Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and Official Irish Republican Army (OIRA). Both groups were operating mainly in Belfast and they were cooperating to some degree; their actions and attacks may have not been mutual (PIRA was more active and aggressive than OIRA) but their goals and objectives were common – the leading one was the prevention of the growing Protestant influence in Belfast and in all Northern Ireland, represented by the deployment of the Royal British Army.

PIRA was established in a reaction to the deployment in 1969 and was disbanded in 2005; its offensive against the spread of Protestantism started in 1970 with the burnings of cars and explosions. The fact that changed this campaign was the first member of the British Army killed in action (in February 1971). Thereafter, the British Army started to be more offensive and stated the major goal of this campaign – capture of the people who were responsible for all the violence; capture their arms and explosives and consequent peacekeeping in this unsafe area. What really did not contribute to the popularity of the campaign was the everyday TV broadcasting and the simultaneous US campaign in Vietnam. Especially, people saw the similarity with Vietnam and that is one of the main reasons why about 60% of people wanted the withdrawal of the British troops. [14]

The fighting and attacks continued in the first half of the 1970s, two major incidents occurred – ‘Bloody Sunday’ [15] and ‘Bloody Friday’. [16] ‘Bloody Sunday’ was the first of them; the civil rights demonstration was held in the Londonderry on 30 January 1972 and during the riots the British Army intervened and this unfortunate situation ended with thirteen civilians being shot dead by the soldiers of the British Army. PIRA launched many counteractions in retaliation for this shooting; after several restless months of relentless attacks, a short ceasefire and a truce were proclaimed (the truce in March 1972 lasted 72 hours only). After this short period of ceasefire, the fighting recommenced and on 21 July 1972 ‘Bloody Friday’ took place. This was a sequence of explosions in Northern Ireland, in Belfast; 19 bombs exploded during a little more than one hour killing nine persons and injuring 130. Subsequently, the British government authorized the largest operation which had its objectives in calming the cities in Northern Ireland down and in taking back the areas where only Republicans were allowed to go – so called ‘no go areas’ [17]

The attacks and the fighting continued and in 1974 also England was hit, there were explosions in London and in Birmingham (21 killed civilians during

the biggest of them). Finally, with the year 1976, a slight reassurance, caused partly by the exhaustion of PIRA, came and the whole conflict vaporized slowly. But until the year 2004, there was still the largest garrison of the British Army in the world staying in Northern Ireland. [18]

### **2.3 Swift war on the Falklands Islands**

From 2 April to 14 June 1982, another important issue related to the British Army took place. It was the Falklands War. After the disagreements about the Falklands Islands between Great Britain and Argentina the war started with the deployment of Argentinean forces on 2 April 1982. The plan how to defeat the invaders was approved on 18 April and subsequently in the night on 20 May the British marines (after a lapse of time reinforced by the land forces) landed at San Carlo on the west coast of the Falklands Islands. The war itself did not last a long time and the Argentinians were defeated quite easily (the battle for the capital city – Stanley begun on 11 June and was over on 14 June) and had to leave the Falklands Islands. [19]

It looked as a simple victory but 255 British soldiers lost their lives. Some speculations about the course of the war appeared and these doubts and uncertainty were boosted by the rejecting stance of the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry denied any failing during this short war; nonetheless, some pieces of evidence existed. As an example could be mentioned the problems with the equipment of the British soldiers; instead of being equipped with an appropriate military vehicles to be movable, the soldiers should have been transported by helicopters only. These Chinook helicopters were lost during the transportation on the ship and just one piece left; thus, the British soldier were forced to be moving by foot. Afterwards, the personal rifles and insufficient firepower of the British soldier were remarkable. The British were still using the semi-automatic rifle (or self-loading rifle) instead of the full-automatic rifle (or assault rifle), which is lighter and more effective and was already designed before the Falklands War but was not yet being produced – this war was the impulse to accelerate its production. [20]

The operations during the Falklands war were led and controlled well and the government headed by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cooperated on a high level with the Army's leaders. As a result, quick and suitable decisions were made. Interesting is the unpreparedness of some of the units that had been sent to the campaign; initially it was meant that only one unit – a carefully chosen one – should have been able to solve all the problems and needs in action with the support of the special forces such as Royal Marines commandos and the paratroopers of the SAS regiment (Special Air Service). [21] Thereafter, other units of the British Army had to be thrown into fight, but these units were originally not prepared for it and some of them were, for example, complemented with the guards that were at that time performing their ceremonial duties in London. That is why these soldiers were not the most convenient ones. The cooperation between individual branches of the British Army – the Royal Navy and the Royal Army (land forces) in this case – was also an often discussed question; one year before the Falklands war, the government disbanded the group of officers and administrators who were occupied by this issue. On the contrary, the Falklands war demonstrated that this cooperation is absolutely crucial for the operations and actions of this type and a similar establishment was recreated in order to improve the collaboration. [22]

## **2.4 Army innovations in the Gulf War**

The Gulf War was the first war from the Second World War where military vehicles and all of the Army's military equipment were used in some measure; the earlier campaigns, i.e. the Falklands war and the Northern Ireland operations could be called 'small wars', suggesting that they were not the real wars in comparison with, for example, the two World Wars. For that reason, there was a concern about the ability of the British Army to fight once more in a large-scale war conflict; military experts were not able to declare if these 'small wars' were a sort of appropriate preparation for the British Army. Another fact is that the British Army and especially the British Army of the



Rhine were expected to fight in a major war against the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, but after the end of the Cold War a new period of disarming and lowering the number of men in arms arrived. This necessarily had an impact on the subsequent Gulf War. [23]

Operation Granby – the Gulf War – took place in 1990 – 1991. As it was the first large-scale war since the Second World War, various newly adopted elements and pieces of machinery were used. It was for the first time when the satellite navigation was used and this played quite an important role, the management of the war, especially during the night fights in the desert, was easier indeed. As mentioned before, some new types of machinery were used; first, the Challenger tank [24] (See Appendix 1) was a new main tank of the armoured forces and its appearance was fair, then it was the Warrior infantry vehicle [25] (See Appendix 2) which as well proved quite efficient during the fights; on the contrary, the attack helicopter Westland Lynx [26] (See Appendix 3) did not demonstrate a good performance. A new personal military vehicle caused a difficulty because of its petrol engine; all the vehicles were generally diesel, so it made some complications. In general, it could be said that the equipment of the British Army was on a high level, higher level than the level of some other European countries, but in comparison with the US Army, it was obvious that the British had still a great task before them. [27]

Concerning the manpower, British soldiers at this time proved as very skilled and high-quality servicemen and servicewomen. They were praised in Britain and it was considered that the imperfection in the equipment and new technologies was compensated with abilities of soldiers. Paradoxical, the readiness of the British Army was again relatively low and the soldiers who all the time patrolled in Germany and waited for the potential Soviet offensive were not at all prepared for the fight in these conditions and under these circumstances. The point that probably salvaged the situation was the ability of the British soldiers to undergo successfully an additional training (in Canada and in Germany) in a very short time. And the last thing is the transportation;

the transportation of soldiers, material, vehicles etc. seemed to be very poor and it was the weakest segment of the whole operation Granby. [28]

## **2.5 War in Iraq (operation TELIC)**

Operation TELIC was the British part of a common intervention into Iraq. The whole operation was under the leadership of the United States; the British Army was given its own objectives to be completed. It was the southern part of Iraq together with the city of Basra. In this area, the operation of a multinational army was led by the British Army. [29]

The Operation started on 20 March 2003 [30] and the leaders of the British Army, which was a joint army of the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and the British Ground forces, [31] had the same goals as the US Army had, at least in this first period of the operation. Firstly, they wanted to eliminate the Saddam Hussein's regime; afterwards, they wanted to disarm the Iraqi Army in order to prevent them from using the mass destruction weapons (there had been held long discussion about their alleged existence). The opening period of the campaign lasted two months approximately and was followed by the phase of reconstruction and slow and gradual withdrawal of the British troops while returning the power in the hands of the new Iraqi Army of the new regime. [32]

Operation TELIC was the largest operation for the United Kingdom since Operation Granby (Gulf War), regarding the number of soldiers deployed. The highest number of the troops was reached in the beginning of the campaign; in the first two months, there were 46,000 servicemen and servicewomen in the southern Iraq. [33] Since May 2003, the number of soldiers decreased every year ending with the last 150, staying in Iraq after 30 April 2009 [34] (which was the official end of fighting for the British Army [35]) as the members of an advisory and training team for the Iraqi Army. In the period after the first weeks of combat, the British Army started to prepare the Iraqi soldiers for rule of their country; some of the Iraqi soldiers experienced a military training in Great

Britain. The forces of the United Kingdom contributed to the creation of the Iraqi Navy and to the development of the Iraqi Army. [36] The final withdrawal of the last 170 troops staying in Iraq took place on 22 May 2011; army representatives said that the Iraqi Navy was created and trained successfully and therefore, there was no reason why the British troops should have stayed any longer in Iraq. [37] The number of losses during these six years climbed onto 179 deaths [38], either killed in action or deceased during an accident or due to an illness.

The whole Operation is taken as a considerable success; the US Army forces and the British Army alongside the other Coalition partners reached all the objectives stated in mere four weeks since the deployment and the beginning of the intervention. This relatively surpassed the expectations of the Government in the United Kingdom and the quantity of casualties was taken as reasonable as well. The distance of 3,400 miles, covered by the British Army during the first ten weeks after the crossing of the Iraqi border, is considered as a significant deed. A new tank Challenger II proved successful and the capability of the soldiers to transform rapidly from fighting to keeping peace and maintaining the situation was also appreciated. Except these achievements, there is one truth, which soils the honour of Operation TELIC slightly; the key problem is the alleged existence of the weapons of mass destruction, which have never been found. [39]

The overall attainment of the operation and the quality of the soldiers in both, fighting and peacekeeping, could not be overridden by the unsuccessful searching for the mass destruction weapons or by the hobbling supplying, which appeared during the swift advancement of forces. The number of positive results and achievements is higher and that is why the Government considers Operation TELIC as a successful one. [40]

### **3 PORTRAYAL IN THE GUARDIAN**

*The Guardian* (and *The Observer*, its sister paper) which is of the centre-left orientation, identically as the Government of Tony Blair, who is responsible for sending the British troops to Iraq together with the US troops, is expected to present certain pro-war ideas and opinions and this is something which is true and could be found in the articles. On the contrary, there occurred some contrary points of view as well and it could be explained by the general public opinion, which was predominantly against the Iraq war. In the following parts, there will be discussed articles of both origins and sides.

#### **3.1 Ambiguity of articles**

As an example of this contradiction of articles could be mentioned an article proudly reporting about the ceremony held to honour and to commemorate the British soldiers, who lost their lives during the war in Iraq. This ceremony was attended by the Queen and by the Prime Minister Gordon Brown. [41] On the contrary, to illustrate the dissatisfaction with the result of the war, there was published an article about a British lieutenant who served two turns in the Iraq war. He described his feelings several years after and expressed his opinion on the situation in Iraq. He admitted that he had destroyed all the evidence of his activity in the war due to the poor situation of Iraqi civilians and that he could not even imagine a confrontation with some people of Iraq due to the responsibility for their pain that he felt. [42]

#### **3.2 Relationship with the civilians**

There was described enthusiasm of the Iraqi civilians as well as the distaste or opposition to the intervention. Certain development of the mood of the civilians was quite apparent according to the date of publishing of the articles.

### **3.2.1 Original unpopularity**

Firstly, there was a visible aversion to the British soldiers, which was the result of the previous Gulf war and its ending. The British left suddenly together with the Americans and the people had to abide the regime of Saddam Hussein, which lasted further, and this regime brought them a great deal of suffering and pain. This feeling stayed in the Iraqi civilians and that is the reason why there could be seen this unwillingness to co-operate. The British soldiers were unwanted and felt signs of hatred everywhere; the soldiers experienced the feeling of being useless and hated instead of being celebrated for the liberation of the tyrannized civilians, as they probably had expected. In order to arouse a positive opinion in the civilians, the British started to distribute leaflets informing that they are against the Hussein's regime and not against the people. [43] Tony Blair was surprised and tried to change the opinion of the civilians by some promises and assurances. *The Guardian* reflects this fact in its article:

*He directed his appeal particularly at the Shia Muslims who make up 60 per cent of Iraq's 24 million people. 'This time we will not let you down,' he pledged solemnly. But it is naive to expect mere words to erase the bitter legacy of the past. [44]*

### **3.2.2 Positive change of the public opinion**

Afterwards, the paper reflected the changeover and wrote about the transforming situation in Iraq; the civilians and local anti-regime activists had realized that the British soldiers were there to rid them of Hussein definitively and that they did not need to be afraid to help them. As the situation changed, the British servicemen and servicewomen started to feel like an army of liberators; soldiers were contented and happier to see the civilians welcoming them and helping them. The journal reported several of these situations and found the problems only in disarming the activists; responses of this type were not exceptions – the brigadier asked the militant who welcomed the troops to lay down their weapons and the militant answered:

*"We are on your side. This will take time. There are some family feuds and we still think we need these weapons but they will not be pointed at any of your soldiers."* [45]

Except these disarming troubles, the turnover of the mood of the Iraqi civilians was visible everywhere and *The Guardian* gives a large number of examples to prove this fact. For example, the same brigadier, mentioned above, further said:

*"I think they recognise that over the last 24 hours, the regime has gone from the area. They are now obviously keen to know those who are replacing the regime, albeit for a short time. Their concerns are the ones we would expect - water, food, electricity - about which we will make a survey as soon as we have peace and security,"* [46]

### **3.3 Criticism of the army from inside and outside**

The British Army was criticized for various reasons and these critics were different. There were cases when the army was lambasted from inside; to demonstrate this fact, there were published articles in which a former soldier, who was at that time already dismissed from the service, spoke about his displeasure. He told that he doubted about the reasons for the British intervention. He thought finally that the real objective of the mission was not to liberate the repressed people in Iraq but simply to eliminate Saddam Hussein. [47]

The criticism which came from outside was about the hidden brutality of the British Army. The southern part of Iraq with the city of Basra was considered to be less susceptible to bomb and other attacks of the local militants because of the majority of Shia population living there; this automatically depreciated the pieces of evidence that the British Army is less brutal than the US Army because it was natural that in the US sector were more accidents and attacks executed by the pro-Hussein activists. In the part of the country belonging under the control of the US Army, there was more Sunni population which was generally supporting Hussein's regime. [48]

### 3.4 Role of the family and family fear

Not even *The Guardian* could omit the topic of the families whose members (sons, fathers etc.) were deployed to Iraq. This was always the problem and the paper portrayed it in its article. The article informed about the women in the area of Aldershot (a city in which a large percentage of population is connected to the army); this women said that they were whole days monitoring the information about the war and expressed their desire – they wanted their husbands back at home:

*"We made Tony Blair prime minister, but who the hell made him god?" asks Charlotte Keeble, a former army radio operator, with her toddler, Hope. Her husband left seven weeks ago with the 4 General Support Medical Regiment. [49]*

An unemployed builder living in the same city expressed his opinion:

*"The US have got enough forces of their own and Blair is just kissing Bush's arse. Even though it has started, I want it stopped." [50]*

### 3.5 Cancer threat for the Iraqis

*The Observer* in its article wrote about another problem related to the fights in Iraq. The catastrophe of using the Depleted uranium shells against enemy machinery happened; these shells caused a raising number of the radioactivity level and therefore, it increased the cancer danger for the public. The Iraqi civilians were warned but according to the article they did not respect the alert perfectly and the concerns about the radioactivity augmented. Further in the article, there are described also cancer problems of the soldiers of other countries:

*France, Spain and Italy claim soldiers who served in Bosnia and Kosovo, where DU shells were used by Nato, have contracted cancers. (DU – Depleted uranium) [51]*

### **3.6 Abusing, bullying and violence in army**

The journal informs about the abuse and violent behaviour in the British Army as well. This does not mean only the Iraqis who were being abused by the British servicemen, but also the British soldiers who were abused or were treated violently by other soldiers. There were described many cases of sexual abuse under various circumstances and a considerable attention was drawn to that situation and to this problem of the British Army.

#### **3.6.1 Detainees to become the target of abusing and violence**

The abusing of the Iraqis, who had been captured during the major period of fight, is fairly common in connection with the US Army, but the situation is similar with the British Army. The paper criticized the situation and the leaders of the army; certain precaution was wanted by public. The leaders claimed that abusing and violent behaviour in service was not a common and complex problem and that these cases were simply exceptions. They contended, perpetrators were always being penalized according to the law without any dispensation. On the other hand, captives were being abused by soldiers who were depressed and disgusted by the conflict and by the incessant fear of civilians because everyone could be rapidly revealed as an enemy or a suicide attacker.

The case of the three soldiers abusing or bullying their detainees was described and not endorsed by *The Guardian*. [52] Allegedly, the British soldiers forced them to do some sexually oriented activities and it was confirmed that these detainees were forced at least to do cleanup for the British serviceman. Another article was published one day after and was about the same case suggesting that the commander of these three soldiers helped them by destroying the evidence. [53] These articles appear rather agree with the guilty of the soldiers, who were finally sentenced to a certain time of prison. [54]



Other articles bring the information about the sexual practice of the soldiers who are staying in London and who filmed their sexual intercourse with one woman right in the barracks. [55] This (and abusing of the Iraqis, mentioned above) is something that seriously devalued the reputation of the British Army and its popularity with public. [56]

### **3.6.2 *Abusing and bullying inside the British Army***

The abusing and bullying among the servicemen and servicewomen was a topic much commented on by the paper (to be more precise, by *The Observer*, which is the Sunday version of *The Guardian*). *The Observer* described the situation of people who had been abused and pointed out the poorly set manners in the Army. The paper also reported on the high level of usage of alcohol and gave it as one possible reason why a teenage soldier could be abused by an older one while being observed by the others. The journal stressed that this is not only a single case, declaring that there were more. What could be seen in an article of such type were also certain subjectivity and the disillusionment with the situation and with the subsequent position of the abused or bullied soldiers. [57]

## 4 PORTRAYAL IN THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

In contrast to *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph* is a centre-right oriented newspaper and tends to be read by the people of conservative opinions. However, the Conservative Party was pro-war alongside with the Labour Party, this paper was criticising it. There were published articles which proved this. As an example of this, it could be mentioned immediately an article about the opinion of a member of the House of Lords. In the article, the Labour peer confirmed that nowadays, he is convinced that the whole idea of the war was a bad one; he talks about the mistake he made, when he was pro-war in the year 2003. [58] This demonstrates the tendency of the paper to show the war in a bad light. On the other hand, it has to be said that *The Daily Telegraph* is a serious press and that is the reason why the spectrum of the articles concerning the Iraq War is very broad and also objective enough.

### 4.1 Article series

The paper often published articles about British soldiers killed in action or during some accident while being deployed to Iraq. These articles were sometimes published in instalments and the reader could find them in a row, for several consequent days. Some examples of that will be mentioned.

#### 4.1.1 *Angry families of soldiers*

*The Daily Telegraph* brought information about a soldier from Glasgow who had been killed in the city of Basra during a roadside bomb explosion. The journal said that according to the family of the dead soldier, he was not prepared for the service on the frontline and that he was deployed for the mission after three months of training. [59] The following day, another article about this unfortunate story was published. This article informed of the situation which followed; the soldier's mother complained strongly about the death of her son. More exactly, she attacked Tony Blair with a statement that these young soldiers did not get appropriate training before being sent to Iraq and that they are just numbers for him and his Government. She added that

another thing which made her really upset was the fact that nobody was able to communicate this unhappy message to her:

*"This is not our war, my son has died in their war over oil and they haven't even taken the trouble of picking up the phone to say they're sorry for our loss."* [60]

## **4.2 Six military policemen killed**

Another situation, which was much commented on by the paper, was incident, when six members of the British military police were shot dead. Article, in which this was mentioned for the first time, informed about another shooting in Iraq as well and stressed that the number of casualties in both British and US army was growing, although the fights had been officially ended. It was strange that this conflict happened in an area which is usually calm and not so dangerous; furthermore, the oddity of the situation on the police station is highlighted by the journal; if there were six British servicemen, it would be expected that there would be two times more Iraqi policemen. Despite that no Iraqi troops were wounded or killed. [61]

Another article reports that it was discovered that these six soldiers were killed by a mob. Subsequently, an Iraqi doctor claimed that three of them were repeatedly shot in the head. But according to him, it did not mean that all the people in the city were against the British; on the other hand, it was known that the citizens in this area were rather against Hussein's regime. In order to settle the situation, some leaflets with encouraging message (reporting that despite this tragedy, the British still would like to secure the area) were thrown out of a helicopter. [62]

Afterwards, an article published a few days later stated that the murderers of six British servicemen must be found and made responsible for their crime. There was written that the reason for the killing of these six people was a demonstration held a few days earlier. During this demonstration, British soldiers were forced to use their weapons to secure themselves and the

demonstration had a violent ending. There were also mentions of dead bodies, which had been transported to Britain and had been buried during a memorial ceremony. [63]

Later, the investigators were told that the thing which made the Iraqi people annoyed were the weapons searches. This was the reason for the demonstration. The British Army answered by firing plastic bullets in the mob, but the response of the Iraqi was much tougher. This was the possible answer on the question why this happened, which was presented in another article which was covering also the funeral of the dead soldiers (a member of the Royal Family was present as well). [64]

The last thing to be mentioned about this topic was the article informing about Tony Blair sending a letter to one of the soldiers' father. In this letter, the Prime Minister said thing about the exemplary service of this man's son; further, Tony Blair justified the war itself and necessity of it. Nonetheless, the man criticized the Prime Minister for not saying any apology for his son's death at all. [65]

### **4.3 Iraq War stories**

At present, the paper is publishing a sequence of articles named Iraq War stories. These articles are mainly quoting British and American soldiers talking about their stories from Iraq. The articles of this type appear much interesting but could be considered as more subjective than the rest. A personal narration of a soldier forms the majority of each article.

For example, in one article, a Sergeant Major told the journal about his first fight experience, which was very swift and surprising:

*"The next day we rolled into al Zubayr and that was when we began to take fire from enemy rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). I remember the driver saying 'this seems very quiet' and about ten seconds later an Iraqi jumped out in front of us with an RPG and fired it. [66]*

In another one, a British soldier narrated about the preparation for the intervention itself; he described a long period of time that they had been forced to spend in Kuwait. During that time, soldiers were studying the weather and the climate of the whole area in order to be well prepared for the invasion and for the following hard conditions. After that, he described the situation when the British soldiers met with the US and the better conditions and equipment which the US Marines had. He finished his evidence with depicting the beginning of the attack, his feelings and impressions:

*When the crossing point came, I turned to my Staff Sergeant next to me and wished him good luck. We drove across a military bridge laid by the Sappers across the huge ditch that ran along the border, I peered down into the 30ft deep anti-tank trench and thought to myself 'welcome to Iraq'; reflecting that we were maybe 24 hours ahead of any other British Unit. [67]*

#### **4.4 Unwillingness to participate in the fight**

Another interesting topic which was commented on by the paper was the situation of two soldiers who, allegedly, refused to fight against the Iraqi. They reasoned by saying that the fight against Iraq would certainly include killing of innocent civilians. They were sent back to Britain and other context was quite unclear. Because the topic was delicate, no more details were published and the situation trickled away. [68]

## 5 PORTRAYAL IN THE INDEPENDENT

*The Independent*, as a centre-oriented newspaper, published interesting articles about the war in Iraq. Articles were generally written in an impartial style with opinions of both sides; however, the paper criticized quite openly several facts about the war. The first one was the abusing of Iraqi civilians and the second one was the terrible performance of light-armoured army vehicles, which, unnecessarily, cost many lives of British soldiers. According to that, the following chapter will be dedicated to these two topics and to the reflection of them. It has to be said that the part involving *the Independent* could be slightly skewed because the articles were available since 2010 only; nonetheless, articles concerning different topics and different views were chosen to minimize this distortion.

### 5.1 Abuse of civilians and captives

*The Independent* brought information about abuses, maltreatment and unjustified killing of Iraqi detainees and civilians by British soldiers, in the first five years of the conflict. There were various cases which were commented on by the journal.

#### 5.1.1 Inquiries of abuse cases

The number of inquiries which had to be judged by the court was very high. There were more than one hundred cases. This was something which led the High Court to demand the uniting of all the cases together. This demand was absolutely justified because the hearing of them separately would last probably for a decade and it would cost tens of millions of pounds. The Ministry of Defence was always unwilling to give to the court complete evidence needed and that was the reason why new cases appeared subsequently. [69]

There emerged more particular cases of abuse, which were commented on more than others; these were the cases which had witnesses and which were investigated, before this wave of inquiries begun. As an example could be mentioned the case of Al-Sweady; this was a 19-year-old Iraqi who was killed

under unclear circumstances in 2004. His father said later that, when he found the body of his son, there were visible some marks of torture. Further, he changed his statement several times, which made his testimony somewhat open to doubt. [70] Afterwards, there was published an article informing about an 8-year-old girl who was killed by a British soldier. Witnesses said that the soldier fired into a mob without any warning; the Ministry of Defence answered reversely. In the same article, there was a critique of the Ministry of Defence as well; it was criticized for the impunity of British troops. [71]

### **5.1.2 Particular testimonies**

It was noticeable from the articles that the Ministry of Defence was unwilling to acknowledge its mistake and to admit that British troops were abusing Iraqi civilians and detainees. In an article, there was another victim of the torture of abusing; he described the harm he had to stand, but the Ministry of Defence refused these allegations by saying that these are only allegations. [72] On the other hand, there was an article with a testimony of a former officer of the British Army; in his statement, he said that in the detainee camp he served in, the torture was present. The captives were forced to kneel on the ground in the sun, their hands handcuffed and heads covered with plastic bags. [73]

Another article stated that a military doctor was accused of negligence and disregard to a detainee severely beaten by the British soldiers. Baha Mousa, who subsequently died of the impact of beating, was allegedly not served enough attention of the doctor. The army doctor refused the accusation and said that he took all steps according to the rules. [74]

### **5.1.3 Change in investigation**

As a result of the inquiries, the Royal Military Police was replaced by the Royal Navy Police as an investigator of these cases. This was done because the Royal Military Police could be considered as biased by the public. [75] In 2011, there was an article reporting that a hundred of Iraqis had won their inquiries. It was stated that the Government failed to protect the human rights

of Iraqi civilians and detainees. [76] One reason why all this torture and abusing happened could be the six members of the Royal Military Police killed in the Basra suburb. The case of these six men was described more in detail in one of the preceding chapters. [77]

## **5.2 British final withdrawal**

The paper further brought information about the final withdrawal of the troops, which stayed in Iraq after the major withdrawal in 2009. After this year, about 150 soldiers of the Royal Navy stayed in Iraq in order to train the newly established Iraqi Navy. This was made in the year 2011, when the training ended finally. The Iraqi Navy was prepared for its mission – the protection of their oil terminals outside the Gulf – and the British troops were free to go home. [78] In the following article, there was stated that still several British servicemen remained in Iraq, but their role was just a consultative one. Afterwards, in this article were said and recapitulated the major events and numbers of the whole operation. [79]

## **5.3 Problematic light-armoured Land Rover**

### **5.3.1 Roadside bombs**

Another topic, which was quite frequently discussed in articles of the journal, was (and still is) the poor performance of the British Army patrol vehicle. The Land Rover was a vehicle originally designed and prepared for the conflict in Northern Ireland; it is obvious that since that time, the vehicle became outdated and especially its armour was absolutely insufficient for the campaign in Iraq as well as for the campaign in Afghanistan. [80] There is described a case, when a woman had her husband deployed to Northern Ireland, where he met Land Rovers; then, her son, who was deployed to Iraq, was killed by a roadside bomb while driving the same Land Rover:

*“I'm absolutely disgusted. I knew about Snatches (Land Rovers) before Philip died because his father was in the Army – he was in Northern Ireland, and they weren't allowed out in a Snatch because of roadside bombs.” [81]*



This topic was present in more articles, for example, in the one informing about the first woman soldier killed in Iraq. This service woman was killed by a roadside bomb together with three other soldiers in their Land Rover:

*The use of the Snatch Land Rover, a lightly-armoured vehicle in which at least 37 British soldiers have died in Iraq and Afghanistan, has been controversial. Their vulnerability to roadside bombs and other explosives has led some soldiers to call them "mobile coffins". [82]*

### **5.3.2 Missing body armour**

In the following article (as well as in the last mentioned) there was described a shortage of equipment. The article claimed that soldiers were sent to Iraq without the appropriate body armour (or even without the sufficient training completed). The Ministry of Defence answered that it was impossible to wait until all the equipment needed would be delivered; the operation had to start in time. [83]

### **5.3.3 No vehicle to replace Land Rover**

Something that was connected to it was the critique of the MPs to the Ministry of Defence. They were dissatisfied with the spending of the Ministry; the Ministry had a goal – to equip the British Army with a new vehicle, which would be more resistant to the attacks. They spend much money, but there was no visible result, no armoured vehicle to replace the outdated Land Rover. [84]

## 6 PORTRAYAL IN DAILY MAIL

*Daily Mail*, as a tabloid newspaper, published articles with a small story inside and expressed many opinions in every article. There were often written articles about stories of killed soldiers and their families being devastated by this fact. On the other hand, the spectrum of the topics chosen by the journal is the same as the spectrums of serious newspapers; the portrayal which the reader obtains is quite similar.

### 6.1 Preparations for the deployment

The journal published several pre-war articles, which brought information about the situation of British troops in Kuwait, which were waiting for the deployment to Iraq. There were speculations about adverse conditions in Kuwait, which the British Army faced. In the article was stated that a soldier called home and told his parents about the lack of food; he said that they were getting one meal per day only. This information was commented by the Defence minister as exceptional. [85] In another article, this problem was developed further. It suggested that soldiers had to be sent to Iraq as soon as possible because it would be unfeasible to hold them in Kuwait much longer. [86]

On the day of the invasion into Iraq, the paper wrote about the message which was sent to the British troops by the British Queen. She wished success and safety to soldiers:

*"May your mission be swift and decisive, your courage steady and true, and your conduct in the highest traditions of your service both in waging war and bringing peace," she said.*

*"My thoughts are with you all, and with your families and friends who wait at home for news and pray for your safe return." [87]*

## **6.2 First British fatalities in Iraq**

An article informing about the first soldier killed in Iraq [88] was published alongside with some statements of the soldier's family and friends. This article was further describing also the second British soldier to be killed in Iraq; however, suggesting that these two soldiers were already the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> British fatality in Iraq (the remaining soldiers died during a collision of two helicopters and two of them were killed by "friendly fire" of the US forces). [89] The first soldier to be killed died while trying to calm down a rioting mob. Later it appeared that he was killed by "friendly fire" as well. His patrol stopped to secure the situation and, subsequently, he was attacked by a man throwing rocks on him. Another soldier wanted to shoot the man from a machinegun in the vehicle, but was not trained and informed completely how to use the weapon and killed his fellow. Afterwards, it was investigated that if this killed sergeant had a body-armour, he would survive. He had not his body-armour because of the shortage of the equipment in the beginning of the campaign. [90]

## **6.3 Leaflets to facilitate the war**

Another interesting topic commented on by the newspaper were leaflets carried by the soldiers immediately from the commencement of the war. These leaflets probably played an important role in facilitating the operation. Leaflets were intended to make the Iraqi soldiers surrender or to persuade them to do that. They were written in Arabic and were secondarily distributed in order to calm Iraqi civilians down and to prevent them from a mass flight; it meant to stay home and safe (especially in the much populous metropolitan area of the city of Basra). [91] On the following day, another article informed about the surrender of the whole division of the Iraqi Army. But it was an important division, which has crucial objectives. It was a powerful and well equipped division, which was designated for securing the area around Basra. In this area, there was the majority of shia population, which was generally more

opposed to the Hussein's regime and more expected to cooperate with the coalition forces:

*The division also was important to Saddam Hussein's government for keeping Shiite Muslims - the majority in southern Iraq - from rebelling against Saddam's largely Sunni government. [92]*

#### **6.4 Withdrawal wanted**

A number of articles have been published reporting on the wish of the public to have "their boys" back in Britain. As revealed by these articles, Tony Blair found himself under pressure of many Britons. This dissatisfaction of people grew stronger when the number of British fatalities in Iraq reached one hundred, said the paper. This was the point when the public opinion finally unified. The death of the 100<sup>th</sup> soldier was described:

*The milestone that Tony Blair dreaded came when married father-of-three Corporal Gordon Pritchard was blown up by a terrorist bomb in the southern port of Umm Qasr. His children are all under five. [93]*

When Tony Blair satisfied the public will and decided to withdraw 1,600 troops, he was criticized constantly. There were arguments that he promised to withdraw about 3,000 soldiers and it would be only a half and that the soldiers who would be sent home would be sent to Afghanistan, afterwards. [94]

#### **6.5 Women's role**

There was published an interesting article about the role of women in the British Army. In the article, it was said that the number of serving women in Iraq was the highest in history and that women were able to and allowed to cope with the majority of positions in army, including the positions in the front line. There are in fact only two branches where women cannot be employed. These are the submarine crew (due to medical reasons) and the military chaplaincy. [95]

## **6.6 Telephone threats**

The last problem to be commented on in this chapter is the attack of insurgents on the wives of British soldier. These insurgents somehow gained the telephone numbers of wives and family members of soldiers at that time deployed in Iraq. Their wives, family members and friends were threatened, for example, with the death of the soldier involved. There were proofs that there were many of these cases. How the insurgents got the telephone numbers is unclear, but probably, they used some modern technology and acquired the numbers from soldiers' telephones. [96]

## 7 CONCLUSION

The key objective of this thesis was to compare and to analyse different portrayals of the British Army in different articles published in different British newspapers. For the practical part, approximately twenty articles were selected from each journal. These articles were chosen to demonstrate as well as possible all the important aspects of British press concerning the War in Iraq. It is important to add that articles published in The Independent could maybe skew the portrayal slightly because there were available articles since 2010 only.

Interesting and repetitive themes were described in this second part. Articles of the same focus were put together to express certain development of the issue. Topics of articles appeared repeatedly in all newspapers; that is why some articles, which were chosen for the thesis, were subsequently left out of the analysis.

The analysis itself, which covered four chapters of the main part of the work, showed that the differences in single newspapers are not serious and that all these four journals express themselves in their articles quite in a similar way. On the one hand, there were topics like abusing of Iraqis, or the problematic performance of outdated Land Rover, which were criticized in all of them; on the other hand, in many articles, there were present opinions that an overwhelming majority of Britons were very proud of British soldiers. This was also an important topic which was mingled in many articles; if these articles were interpreting points of view of soldiers' family members, or of an ordinary British, these were almost always against the whole idea of deployment of British soldier into Iraq. In more simple words, the British wanted their soldiers back at home; they felt that the people in the head of the country were responsible for these killed soldiers and wanted to see them back in Great Britain as soon as possible.

In general terms, the only remarkable difference could be seen in *Daily Mail*, which is caused by the fact that it is a tabloid newspaper. In articles of this journal, there were visible the aspects of aiming more on the story of individual than directing on the problem in more general way. There were always many reported speeches and many statements of people involved in the particular case. However, this was not something which could influence the reader as much that he would gain absolutely skewed information about the event; this was something which made the article more emotive and more subjective.

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## 10 ABSTRACT

The key objective of the thesis is to show the view of the British Army in the British press. The work consists of the historical part and of the analysis of articles published in British newspapers.

The first chapter of the main body describes selected events and campaigns concerning the British Army. Important events of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are chosen according to their relation to the British Army.

In following four chapters, newspaper articles are analysed and findings are evaluated and accompanied with commentaries. Each chapter is dedicated to one particular journal and contains an overview of articles aiming different topics in order to gain certain objective portrayal. The most common themes are analysed in detail.

Finally, findings are summarized in the conclusion. The most important issues, which occurred in articles, are further described.

## 11 RESUMÉ

Stěžejním cílem bakalářské práce je ukázat obraz britské armády v britském tisku. Práce se skládá z historické části a z analýzy článků, které byly publikovány v britských denících.

První kapitola hlavní části práce popisuje vybrané události a vybraná tažení, které se týkají britské armády. Jsou vybrány důležité události druhé poloviny 20. století podle toho, jak se týkají britské armády.

V následujících čtyřech kapitolách jsou analyzovány novinové články, poznatky jsou vyhodnocovány a doprovázeny komentáři. Každá z kapitol je zaměřena na jednu konkrétní noviny a obsahuje průřez článků zaměřený na různá témata za účelem získání objektivního obrazu. Nejdůležitější témata jsou detailně rozebrána.

Poznatky jsou nakonec shrnuty v závěru. Zásadní témata, která se objevila v článcích, jsou dále popsána.

## 12 APPENDICES

### Appendix 1



(<http://www.finestdaily.com/news/tech/e-camouflage-will-make-tanks-stealthy.html/attachment/british-challenger-tank>)



([http://www.military-today.com/tanks/challenger\\_1.htm](http://www.military-today.com/tanks/challenger_1.htm))

## Appendix 2



(<http://www.themanager.com/articles/students-to-compete-in-warrior-engineering-challenge/>)



(<http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/Kuwait-Upgrading-its-Desert-Warriors-05613/>)

### Appendix 3



([http://www.military-today.com/helicopters/westland\\_lynx\\_images.htm](http://www.military-today.com/helicopters/westland_lynx_images.htm))



(<http://www.airpowerworld.info/helicopters/westland-lynx-hma-8.htm>)