US Press Attitude in Times of Wars and Conflicts: The Case of Iraq Wars

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Abstract

This paper examines the recent history of the discourses on wars and conflicts in Iraq and the macro discourses of the representation of Iraq through key historical events in the US press. The aim of the research is to examine both continuity and changes in this representation on the basis of the changes taking place on the international political scene in general and with regard to the involvement of the US in particular. This study examines the discourses of US newspapers during the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) and the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq to see how the themes: *Saddam, Iraqi people, Halabja* are discursively represented in these two wars and whether there is a shift of the US stance toward the themes' coverage. An interdisciplinary framework that combined corpus linguistics with the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to CDA is employed in the research.

The results of the research shed light on how the treatment of the same events and social actors in the US press were different in the different wars: for instance, during the US-led invasion, the Iraqi people (Kurds, Shiites) appeared as worthy victims, a portrayal that fitted in with the propaganda that the war had a humanitarian motive. However, they were never represented in this way during the Iraq-Iran war. Similarly, although Saddam was portrayed negatively in the Iraq-Iran war, he was much more sharply vilified, and demonized during the US-led invasion in relation to crimes that had been committed during the Iraq-Iran war with which he was not connected.

Key words: *Saddam, Iraqi people, Critical Discourse analysis, Halabja, Representation*, corpus linguistics, Iraq, Wars, Newspapers.

Introduction

Iraq has gone through various wars and conflicts in the past few decades. These include the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988), the first Gulf War (1990-1991), the US-led invasion (2003), sectarian violence (2006- 2007) and recently, the conflict with ISIS. The stance of the US and the degree of its involvement in these wars has varied from one war to another. For instance, in the Iraq-Iran war the US was tilted towards Iraq through lifting the restrictions imposed on Iraqi exports and providing intelligence information during the war. Although it did not supply arms to Iraq directly, it supported France in providing military equipment. On the other hand, it rejected all Iran's requests for providing it with the required military parts and equipment (El-Azhary, 2011, p. 95).

However, this stance had changed after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, an action which was condemned unanimously by the UN. After a series of unsuccessful negotiations and Iraq's refusal to withdraw following a deadline set by the UN, a coalition force led by the US launched a massive attack on Iraqi forces in Kuwait, liberating Kuwait. This anti-Iraq stance became even more dramatically obvious after the 9/11 attacks, when the US administration accused Iraq of having a link with al-Qaeda and of harbouring and training al-Qaeda members. This was in addition to the constructed Iraqi threat of WMD (Cox and Stokes, 2018). These claims formed the justification for the US-led invasion of Iraq.

Alongside this development of the US stance, Iraq's image in general and Saddam's image in particular in the media also changed during this long period of wars. For instance, immediately after the Iraq-Iran war (1989), Iraq's army was described as 'the fourth largest in the world', and as being '1 million-strong'. Similarly, following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saddam was represented as the 'butcher of Baghdad', the 'new Hitler', and as the 'Monster Saddam'. This demonized depiction of Saddam remained constant in the press even in the newspapers known for their criticisms of the attacks conducted by US in 1993, 1996, 1998, and 2003 (Keeble, 2004).

Thus, the overall aim of this study is to examine the discourses of the major American newspapers in terms of their coverage of the Iraq-Iran war and the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq with the aim to answer the main research guiding question:

1. What are the main differences in the reporting of Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) and the US-led invasion in 2003 with regard to the coverage of the Saddam, Iraqi people, and Halabja?

1.1 Data and Methodology

1.1.1 Data Selection, Collection and Description: Building a Corpus

The collection and selection of data for the current study were based on four criteria: availability, coverage, specific discourse concentration, and periods of time. The availability criterion was determined by the availability of US newspapers in the LexisNexis[1] database. With regard to the coverage criterion, the 'Major US Newspapers'

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[1] www.nexis.com

(see Table 1) were chosen. The reason behind this selection is that the 'Major US Newspapers' shown in Table 1, according to LexisNexis website, are among the top 50 newspapers in circulation in US[2] as well already being categorized and named under such label in LexisNexis which makes it easy to access and download.

No	Major US Newspapers
1	Daily News (New York)
2	Journal of Commerce
3	Los Angeles Times
4	Newsday (New York)
5	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette
6	St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)
7	Star Tribune (Minneapolis MN)
8	Tampa Bay Times
9	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
10	The Baltimore Sun
11	The Buffalo News (New York)
12	The Christian Science Monitor
13	The Daily Oklahoman (Oklahoma City, OK)
14	The Denver Post
15	The Hartford Courant
16	The New York Post
17	The New York Times
18	The Orange County Register
19	The Philadelphia Daily News (PA)
20	The Philadelphia Inquirer
21	The Tampa Tribune (Florida)
22	The Washington Post
23	USA Today

Table 1: The major US newspapers

With regards to the discourse concentration, the US press discourse of the US- led invasion period under consideration ranged from one week before the war up to and including the 'mission accomplished' announcement by Bush[3]. In addition, discourse relating to the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) was included.

In order to avoid irrelevant documents when compiling the US- led invasion corpora specific query words were developed as follows:

War/Conflict	Key words used
Iraq-Iran	Iraq! OR Saddam Hussein OR Saddam AND Iran! OR Khomeini
US-led Invasion	Iraq! OR Saddam Hussein OR Saddam AND US OR America! OR United States

Table 2: Query words

The exclamation mark (!) acts as a wildcard for searching the word variation because it finds the root of words and all the letters that are added to it. For instance, searching for *Iraq!* will retrieve all the articles that contain *Iraq, Iraqi and Iraqis*. The

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[2] https://www.nexis.com/results/shared/sourceInfo.do?csi=307574
[3] Week 0-Week 7 is the period from 12/03/2003 to 01/05/2003. I numbered the first week '0' to indicate that the war had not yet started, while Week 7 is when Bush announced that the mission had been accomplished.

AND connector is used to look for words that are far apart from one another in the same article, whereas OR is used to find documents that have either or both of the words linked by the connector OR. **Table 3** shows the number of articles retrieved from the query words specified for each period for the US corpora and sub-corpora.

War	Period	Major US Newspapers Corpora	No of Words
Iran-Iraq War	22/09/1980- 08/08/1988	11160 articles	7.484.773
US-led invasion	12/03/2003- 01/05/2003	11264 articles	9,223,117

Table 3: The number of articles retrieved from the UK and US newspapers

1.1.2 Methodological Approach

The methodology used for this study is the combination of corpus linguistics (CL) and critical discourse analysis represented by Discourse Historical Approach (DHA). With a corpus of over nine million words, it would have been impossible to examine the data manually. Thus, various corpus linguistics tools were used as a method of triangulation to achieve better results. The frequency analysis was used to direct the researcher's attention to particular peaks or plunges in the data that might lead to something of interest. This was followed by the examination of the collocations of the words in question: *Saddam, Halabja and Iraqi people*. The concordance lines of these words were then expanded to enable the researcher to examine the whole context. These three tools served to reduce subjectivity as well as to allow more patterns of interest to be marked up. Similarly, DHA has various strategies that can be employed to answer different research questions. I began by using the CL more quantitatively through deriving frequencies and collocates, as the research progresses the approach became qualitative where the concordances lines (context) of these collocates are looked at in more details to identify Wodak and Meyer's (2016) DHA's predicational, referential and argumentative strategies as well as categorizing the themes according to their semantic meaning to see how the query word under question is talked about and referred to.

1.1.2.1 Software

1.1.2.1.1 WordSmith Tools

The WordSmith Tools software was used in this study simply becasue I am more familiar with it and its functionality than with other tools, and because it allows more searches on different words to be carried out in more than one window. It is described by its developer, Mike Scott, as a "suite of software" and as "a Swiss army knife with its various components…[that] offers a number of different tools for different jobs" (Scott, 2001, p. 47).

Furthermore, WordSmith Tools is "organic software!" (Scott, 2010, p. 4) in the sense that it changes over time. There have been many versions; since the first Version 1.0 launched in 1996. Its developer, Mike Scott, continued changing it to accommodate the needs of users through adding more features and improvements. The current Version is 7.0 . Along with the ongoing updates for this software there is an online step-by-step screenshots guide for each tool with its usage. Together with this guide, there is access to Q & A platforms

designed by the developer on Facebook[4] and Google[+5] open platforms called WordSmith Tools that allow users to interact or ask the developer or other online users questions.

The main reason for using it, however, is, the fact that when I tried other software applications such as Antconc and Wmatrix, owing to the huge amount of data used in this research, they crashed and froze. These applications only really work for corpus files no larger than one million words each (Laviosa *et al.*, 2017). Since my research was using corpora containing millions of words each, WordSmith Tools was the obvious choice, since it can handle up to 20 million words easily.
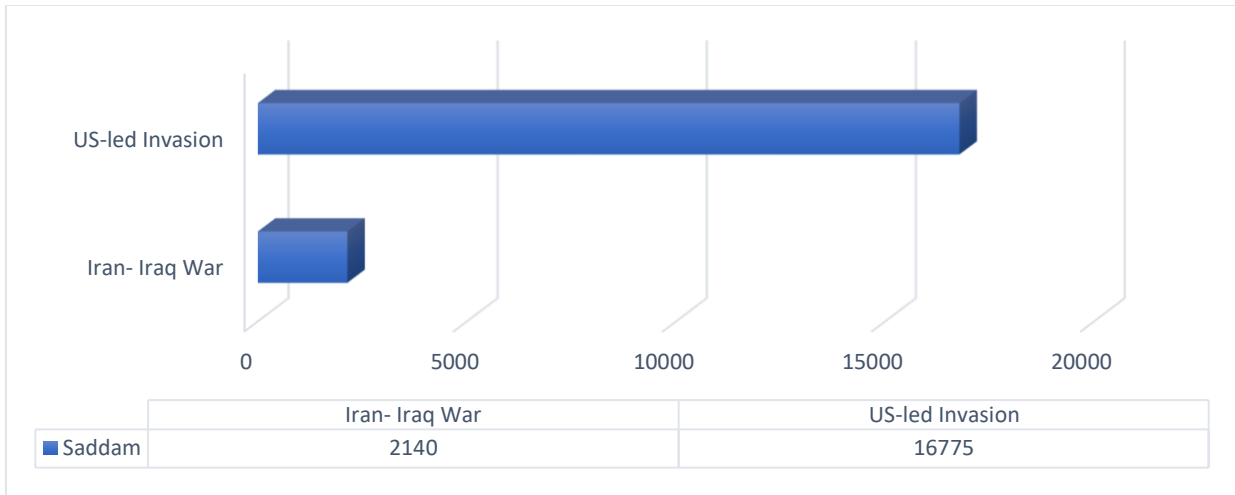
1.2 Analysis

1.2.1 Saddam in the Two Wars

1.2.1.1 Frequency

A simple comparison of the numbers and frequencies of the occurrence of the word Saddam in the two wars (see **Figure 1**.) reveals a significant difference between them, especially if we consider that the Iraq-Iran war lasted for eight years whereas the US-led invasion lasted only around six weeks. The frequency of references to Saddam in the US-led invasion is significantly higher than that in the Iraq-Iran war. The reason for this difference may be attributed to the fact that Saddam was viewed as the focus of the struggle in the build-up phase as well as during the war in the 2003 US-led invasion. Therefore, Iraq as a state was represented by his person. Saddam was the focus of propaganda and he was demonized, represented as possessing WMD, and constructed as being a threat who therefore should be toppled. The discourse on Saddam continued even after he was overthrown and the US was trying to locate his whereabouts. During the Iraq-Iran war, on the other hand, Saddam was not the focus in the American press discourses: the war was between two countries – as opposed to personalities - and the nature of US involvement was different from that in the US-led invasion. In general, the role of the press in that conflict was to report what each side - Iraq or Iran - said about the other.

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[4] https://www.facebook.com/groups/wordsmithtools/
[5] https://groups.google.com/forum/?hl=en&fromgroups#!forum/wordsmithtools

Figure 1 Frequency of references to Saddam

1.2.1.2 Saddam's Voice

Another difference in the reporting of Saddam in the two wars was revealed through examining the degree of access and how much voice Saddam was given in the US press: i.e. Saddam's statements and claims, and the things he said during the build-up to the war and the war itself in the two conflicts under investigation. This was accomplished by sketching words that act as a verb to the subject of Saddam: namely, saying verbs, and by using a sketch engine[6] to provide a summary of categorized collocation, as shown in Table 4.

	Saddam (Iraq- Iran)	Khomeini (Iraq-Iran)	Saddam (Invasion)	Bush (Invasion)
Saying Verbs	say (222), tell (21), proclaim (7),	speak (12), tell (16),		say (1,096), tell (130), speak (89), ask (60),
	announce (25), urge (17), order (11), warn (12), declare (11), reiterate (9), call (17), express (9),	order (16), call (25), warn (14), urge (13), issue (12), announce (11), authorize (6),	refuse (12),	declare (53), call (87), announce (49), pledge (42), vow (39), address (38),
	accuse (8)			

Table 4 Saddam's Saying Verbs during the Iraq-Iran war and US-led Invasion

From Table 4 above, it is apparent that the US press gave Iran, Iraq, Saddam and Khomeini a voice during the Iraq-Iran war through reporting their actions and citing what they had said, told the press or announced to the public. In the 2003 US-led invasion this did not happen, meaning that Saddam and Iraq remained voiceless and muted. In contrast, Bush was quoted or reported in a vast number of ways, for instance, the verb 'say' is used

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[6] Sketch engine is online software that offers a grammatical and collocational one-page summary in which the collocates are categorized according to their grammatical relations: e.g., a word that acts as the subject of the verb or an object of the verb (Adam Kilgarriff *et al.*, 2014). It can be accessed through https://www.sketchengine.co.uk/

1,096 times in the corpus. The inequality of access to the US press of Saddam and Bush indicates considerable US press bias toward US politics. This privileged and unequal access to the press discourse is part of agenda setting that aims to influence public opinion toward this issue. van Dijk (1996) argues that it is those who have are interviewed, quoted or have access to the news who have the ability to influence the audience (p. 86). Access to the media creates a dominance which in turn can influence the public as it is only those who have access who get their voice heard and as a result influence public opinion (van Dijk, 1995, p. 12). Access to discourse and events of communication can be decided by different patterns of access and can be controlled by powerful social actors through 'setting or selecting time and place, participants, audiences, possible speech acts (such as commands or requests), agendas, topics, choice of language, style, strategies of politeness or deference, and many other properties of text and talk' (van Dijk, 1995, p. 12). These factors determine who writes to whom and under which circumstances, where and why.

1.2.1.3 Saddam and the Use of Chemical Weapons (CWs)

It is worth mentioning that although CWs were used on many occasions during the Iraq-Iran war by Iraq, they were never referred to as weapons of mass destruction as it was used in the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. This is in obvious contrast to the way CWs were referred to (as weapons of mass destruction) both in the build-up to and during the 2003 US-led invasion. Furthermore, Saddam is never collocated with the use of chemical weapons in the Iraq-Iran war corpus. Instead, Iraq, Iraq's and Iraqi were frequent collocates for the CWs. By contrast, when examining the collocates of CWs in the US-led invasion it was found that Saddam appeared forty-eight times as a collocate with CWs and Saddam's occurred seven times. This shows how the war was personalized, with the state being presented as a person during the US-led invasion: the focus was on the person in particular and on Iraq on general, while the Iraq-Iran war was seen to be a conflict between two countries.

1.2.1.4 Saddam's Construction in Iraq-Iran War and the US-led Invasion of Iraq

In general, the US press represented Saddam negatively in its discourse on the Iraq-Iran war. This was done by showing him to be utilizing the historical and religious enmity between the Arabs and the Persians (Iranian) to achieve his war purpose and to urge his people, as well as the Arabs, to rally round him by constructing the war as being religious. Therefore, many references were made focusing on the ethnic strain between Arabs and Persians and evoking the glory of early Islam, symbolized by the Qadisiyya battle. Thus, the war was called 'Saddam's Qadisiyya', in reference to the battle in 636 A.D in which Arabs, under the flag of Islam and led by Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas, defeated the Sasanian Empire and conquered the Persians, led by Rostam b. Farrokh-Hormzod, the Iranian commander. From then on, according to Lewental (2014), Qadisiyya came 'to represent a synecdoche for the conquest of Iran as a whole' (p. 892).

The discourse of Islamizm and Arabizm was also exploited by Saddam and other Iraqis, and Iraq radio, through what Wodak and Reisigl (2001, p. 50) term as

'ethnification', 'linguificatin' and 'religionization' i.e. Self- Othering strategy via Arabic language and the religion of Islam, disassociating Iran from both Islam and Arabism. The religionization was done through Saddam's denouncement of Khomeini's regime as 'a non-Islamic revolution' stripping him from being Muslim. The 'linguificatin' and 'ethnification' strategy was represented in Saddam's statement, quoted in The New York Times September 28, 1980 edition, that 'the Koran was written in Arabic and God destined the Arabs to play a vanguard role in Islam', where he emphasized Iraq's pan-Arabism by showing that the Koran is written in Arabic rather than the Persian language, and rebuts Khomeini's pretensions to world Islamic leadership.

Even more negative was the portrayal of Saddam as having for a long time desired to be a military voice and power in the Gulf, and to take over the role of the Gamal Abdul Nassir and the late Shah of Iran. Saddam was viewed by the US press as having ambitions for regional leadership or Pan-Arabism. This was done through predication, showing Saddam as being, 'a long-time admirer' of Gamal, or to the fact that Saddam 'has long coveted' his (Nasser's) role and through claims that he 'dreams of being the successor of Nasser' and 'regards himself as the new Nasser'.

Along with this negative construction, he is further portrayed as creating a personality cult comparable to the personality cults of Stalin and Kim II, figures who had already been negatively constructed in history.

On the other hand, during the US-led invasion, the negative representation and devaluation of Saddam in the US press became even stronger, in terms of the frequency of his name and the strength of the negative attributes. This is despite the short period (seven weeks) of the conflict compared to the Iraq-Iran war, which lasted eight years. Saddam was the focus in the build-up to the war as well as during the invasion. He was consistently constructed as representing the evil camp in the good-evil binary. He was criminalized in the press, which recalled his past wrongdoings, assigning him negative attributes. The criminalization is achieved through the collocates of crime-related nature as 'genocidal', 'murderer', 'murderous', 'thug', 'brutality', 'torture', 'savagery', 'his many crimes', 'his gang', 'his two murderous sons', 'exterminated by Saddam', 'slaughtered by Saddam', 'persecuted by Saddam', 'atrocities committed by Saddam'. Also, The criminalization was also realized through what Fowler (1991, p. 85) calls an 'over-lexicalization' strategy , in which the excessive use of quasi- synonymous words is employed. The criminal actions attributed to Saddam were therefore referred to repeatedly in the press discourse, with synonymous or near-synonymous lexicals, whether in the form of verbs, nouns or adjectives, being used as in example 1. These collocates can either be found appearing one after another in a single sentence, paragraph or article, or in different articles in different newspapers – this has a cumulative effect, creating an association between Saddam and criminal or demonic acts in the reader's mind.

1. The men **had been jailed**, **beaten** and **had their houses burned** to the ground under Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's **brutal** regime.

The Washington Post March 21, 2003 Friday

The criminalization of Saddam was also constructed by linking him to the actions of other individuals. Saddam was seen as being responsible for things those around him had done. This is what Wodak and Reisigl (2001, p. 53) term 'relationalization' and

sociativization', i.e. the construction of individuals based on their relations/association to each other. Example terms include; 'militia', 'paramilitary', 'forces', 'Paramilitaries', 'squads', 'thugs', 'loyalist(s)', 'jihadists', 'mujahid', 'bodyguards', 'followers', 'sympathizers', 'his brutal regime', 'his most brutal henchman', 'a brutal cousin of Saddam Hussein', 'Saddam's brutal loyalists the Fedayeen', 'his thug sons Uday and Qusay', 'his thugs, 'Saddam's henchmen torture children', 'his cousin'. Some of these collocates have an obviously negative, crime-related meaning when their literal meaning is examined. 'Thugs', for instance, is defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary as 'a man who acts violently, especially to commit a crime', and 'henchman' is defined as 'someone who does unpleasant or illegal things for a powerful person'.

The vilification included comparing Saddam with well-known brutal figures such as Hitler, Stalin and Mao, who had already acquired a bad reputation in the minds of the public. The simplest method of doing this was by quoting people who had referred to Saddam as Hitler. e.g. 'the Hitler of the 21st century', or as 'a modern-day Hitler', 'he is as dangerous as Hitler was', 'We are dealing with Hitler revisited' and 'Hitler No. 2'. Justifications for the analogy included the claims that Saddam had read books about these figures, alleged similarities between the crimes they had committed, and similarities in their appearance and charisma. Moreover, the history of Saddam's wrongdoings was brought back to the surface to serve the propaganda purpose, and his past was linked to the present to show that he was still a real threat that needed to be confronted. Saddam was also constructed as being an imminent threat to the neighbouring countries, America and the rest of the world because of his alleged possession of WMDs.

Furthermore, part of demonizing Saddam in the US-led invasion build-up was linking him with Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda to construct him as an imminent threat. Erasing the differences between Iraq/Saddam and al Qaeda and attempts to link them by highlighting their wrongdoings, their presumed similarities, and the hypothetical connections between them was one of the important strategies used in the US press. Iraq/Saddam and al Qaeda were painted in a single brushstroke and constructed as being a united enemy of the US. This hypothetical connection was one of the main justifications for the US invasion. Linking Iraq to the war on terror against al Qaeda that was already in progress meant that there was no need to present further argument in favour of attacking Iraq. Table 5 shows the number of times Saddam and Iraq occur as strong collocates with the following entries: Qaeda, Osama, terrorists, terrorist, terrorism and terror.

Word	Collocates with Saddam	Collocate with Iraq	Occurrence in the whole corpora
Qaeda	30	45	1091
Osama	36	9	447
Terrorists	20	47	1209
Terrorist	26	105	2584
Terrorism	36	130	2434
Terror	28	56	1218

Table 5: The Collocates of the Link to Al Qaeda

The link between al Qaeda and Iraq/Saddam was elaborated further through references to the role each played in complementing the other, as Hodges (2011, p. 79) states. Thus,

whereas Saddam was seen to play the supporting role of 'harbouring', 'supporting', 'contributing', 'giving intelligence', or 'training and sponsoring', al Qaeda played the role of recipient or beneficiary of Saddam's support, as seen in the following examples:

2. Bush says Saddam is **harboring** "Al Qaeda terrorists inside Iraq."

Daily News (New York) March 20, 2003, Thursday

3. Washington has accused Saddam of **supporting** terrorism.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri) March 14, 2003 Friday

4. Conroy, 30, of Apalachin, N.Y., reminded the soldiers of what happened Sept. 11, 2001, and told them Saddam "**contributes** to terrorism directly and indirectly, and that's why we're here."

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution March 19, 2003 Wednesday

5. I believe that the many indirect links -- such as **intelligence contacts, and agreements and training** between Osama bin Laden's group and Saddam Hussein's government -- are too numerous to dismiss.

1.3 Halabja

1.3.1 Context

Halabja is located in the northern Iraqi region of Kurdistan about ten miles from the Iranian border. The total population was 40,000 in 1988; however, this number was increased by the influx of 20,000 displaced Kurds from neighbouring villages fleeing the war (Kelly, 2008, p. 33). The region has been controlled by the Peshmerga (Kurdish fighters) for almost thirty years, along with some active parties: e.g., socialists, communists and others. In addition to these, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) of Jalal Talabani and the pro-Iranian Islamic Movement Party both had local strength in the area (Watch, 1993, pp. 102-103). The strategic importance of Halabja lies in its location, which is about seven miles east of the Darbandikhan Dam, which controls the water supply for the Iraqi capital, Baghdad (Yildiz, 2007, pp. 27- 28; Marr, 2012, p. 199). By seizing Halabja, the Iranians were attempting to put pressure on the Iraqi government by gaining control of the two largest hydroelectric dams that supplied Iraq with a significant proportion of its electricity (Razoux, 2015).

During the Iraq-Iran war, Iranian troops made secret reconnaissance visits to Halabja. In early March, Iraqi intelligence reported that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the Peshmerga had begun to assemble near Halabja in a build-up for a full-scale attack, with Iranian forces shelling the town of Sayed Sadeq. On March 13, Iran officially announced the launch of a new joint offensive with the PUK, Peshmerga and Pasdaran (Watch, 1993, p. 103). The next day, a second attack was also coordinated, and Iran claimed that it had seized twelve miles of Sulaymaniyah. On March 16, Iran announced that its forces had advanced to the Darbandikhan Lake, and now controlled 800 square km of land inside Iraq as well as seizing Halabja. During the three days of the offensive, Halabja had been shelled heavily from the hills by the Iranian forces leading the Iraqi military to pull back from their posts, which fell one after another.

In the early morning of March 16, 1988, the Iraqi counterattack began, first with conventional air strikes and artillery shelling. Trying to protect themselves, most families in Halabja built shelters close to their homes. Some went into the government shelters (Razoux, 2015, pp. 438-9). The attack involved the use of napalm and phosphorus, which caused huge walls of fire in some parts of the city. Soon, a lethal cocktail of chemicals had spread over the city. This was followed by continuous shelling for several hours. Some of the people made it to the Iranian border. Others who had been directly exposed to the gas either died or suffered from the symptoms (Watch, 1993, pp. 102-103). The massacre's toll is estimated at between 3,000 and 5,000 dead and about 10,000 wounded (Razoux, 2015, pp. 438-9).

1.3.2 Halabja Reporting in the Two Wars

In the Iraq-Iran war, the reporting of Halabja gassing in the US press in the early stages of the attack was limited to conveying the Iraqi and Iranian statements about the attack. Their statements involved accusation, assertion, charges, and claims. These statements were expressed through the use of collocates such as *accuse, assert, charge, say, claim* and *report* and their form variations. Although the US press did not express its stance towards Iraq's use of chemical weapons, however, in later stages, illustrating and listing sources and details that back up and support the story of Iraq's use of the weapons helped to give more weight to the Iranian version and the claims regarding the story. Therefore, reporting Iran's invitations to the UN to investigate the situation, taking Western correspondents by Iran to Halabja to see the casualties, sending casualties to European and American hospitals to prove the charges, as well as citing Iraqi prisoners' and survivors' testimonies give credibility to Iran and confirm Iraq's use of such weapons.

In addition, the context of the Halabja gassing was provided as well as Iraq's motive to use the chemical weapons is explained in the US press in terms of Iraq defending itself against Iranian offensives when capturing Iraqi cities or strategic locations in Iraq. This pattern is constructed using phrases such as 'to prevent a further advance', 'an effort to halt the Iranian advance', 'to blunt Iranian assaults on Arab lands' and 'to repel a thrust along the southern front by Iranian forces.'

Fifteen years later, the history of Halabja was resurfaced in the US press and was referred to on many occasions during the build-up to the 2003 US-led invasion along with other arguments – in particular those relating to WMD and the need for a humanitarian intervention – for the purpose of demonstrating that Saddam had a history of mass murder, having killed thousands of men, women and children, and that he is capable of any crime and that he would not hesitate to use such weapons against anyone - even his own people. On these basis, Halabja gassing is used repeatedly as a precedent in the 2003 war build- up narrative. In this regards, Walton (1996) argues that the precedence argument is a 'species of case-based reasoning where citing a particular case is used to argue for changing an existing rule, or adding a new rule to supplement existing rules' (p. 94). Therefore, Halabja was used in this particular time to promote and aid in demonization of Iraq in general and Saddam in particular.

6. During a 1988 revolt, **Hussein's forces attacked villagers from Halabja**, on the eastern side of the autonomous zone near the Iranian border, with chemical weapons. Thousands of people died.

The Washington Post March 29, 2003 Saturday

7. The war also showed how vicious the dictator could be when desperate: **In 1988 he allegedly ordered poison gas dumped on the Kurdish town of Halabja to punish militants** there who were helping Iran. At least 5,000 are said to have perished in the attack.

Philadelphia Inquirer March 20, 2003 Thursday

In the above US press accounts the Halabja genocide has been reduced to only Saddam gassing his own people killing more than 5,000 Kurdish civilians. However, many other relevant details of the context are omitted. The gassing of Halabja was a fact, as was the killing of thousands of innocent civilians. However, these facts were favourable aspects to capitalize and report since they suited the requirements of the war propaganda and they come in line with the demonization of Saddam that was carried out before the 2003 US-led invasion was launched. The fact that Halabja was the scene of fighting between Iraqi forces on the one side and Iranian forces aided by Kurdish guerrillas who attempted to capture a strategic area inside Iraq on the other were unfavourable facts, unsuited to the war propaganda. Therefore, these facts were dropped off and the press only selected the facts that adds up to the criminalization of Saddam[7]. Below are more concordances lines in Table 6 that shows how the US press foregrounded this particular piece of context and constructing it as merely Saddam gassing his own people in this particular time of the US build- up to the war.

used poison gas against	his own people	."He is a brutal dictator.
Hussein had used **chemical weapons** "against	his own people	,"adding, "He is down
used **chemical weapons** against	his own people	and executed thousands
used **chemical weapons** against	his own people	, professed a desire to
Hussein is a very, very bad guy who has **gassed**	his own people	and is a threat
Iraq's dictator A leader who has **gassed**	his own people	and used torture
dictator who invades his neighbors and **gasses**	his own people	.
"This person has used [**chemical weapons**] on	his own population	,has used it previously,

Table 6: The use of CWs in the past

Everything that supports or serves the interest of making the justification to go war with Iraq has been foregrounded and drawn upon. One of strategies that was viewed to serve the justification of the invasion is recalling the accounts of victims of the Halabja genocide, either by quoting them or by interviewing people who had a close connection to them. As shown in examples 8 and 9, the victims' accounts illustrate the horrific moments the victims went through in detail. Johnson-Cartee (2004, p. 272) argues that such dramatic representations of individual stories attract audiences as they are very persuasive and it is

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[7] Although there was no justification for Saddam's action, the point I am making here is that the public were not given all the facts about the situation by the press.

believed that exemplars that 'are vivid, emotionally engaging, and attention inviting will have superior accessibility or memorability'.

8. International human rights groups say more than 100,000 Kurds were killed by Iraqi government forces in the late 1980s. Most **notorious** was the 1988 nerve and mustard gas attack that killed more than 5,000 people in the Kurdish town of Halabja. **"My brother . . . my husband's brother," said Nasrin Dewana, 52, counting on her fingers the men missing from her family. "They've all been killed. "We've all been damaged by Saddam.**"

The Washington Post April 10, 2003 Thursday

9. "The poor man was 28 years old," she says. Michael says she still suffers aftereffects from the gassing: trembling in her hands, damaged lungs that cause her to wake up gasping for air and -- worst of all, she says -- nightmares. **"I can't get rid of the pictures I have in my head."** That attack was merely an early, crude experiment. Over the next year, the Iraqi army learned to make its gas attacks more lethal.

The Washington Post April 9, 2003 Wednesday

1.3.3 Iraqi people/ People of Iraq Coverage in the Two Wars

From Figure 2. below, it is apparent that there is a big difference in the frequencies of *Iraqi people* in the Iraq-Iran war and the US-led invasion; the Iraqi people phrase was used far more during the US-led invasion than in the Iraq-Iran war, despite the fact that the Iraq-Iran war lasted for eight years, compared with the seven weeks of the US-led invasion. More importantly, the revealed semantic motifs of the Iraqi people were employed differently in the two wars, and that depended on the stance of the US press in relation to the war as well as on the US involvement in the wars.

	iraq-Iran war	US-led invsion
Iraqi people	43	1612
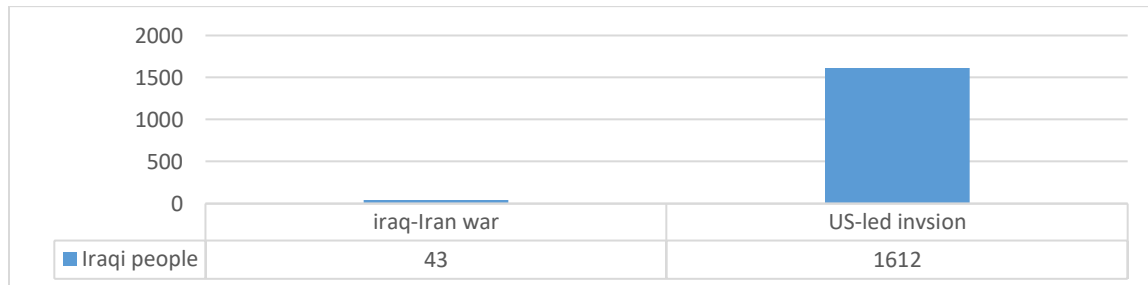
Figure 2: The frequency of Iraqi people in two wars

The Iraqi people were constructed as a key player in the Iraq-Iran war from the Iraqi side as well as the Iranian side, as the two countries were racing their discourse toward the Iraqi people. On Saddam's side, Saddam used national, historical and religious discourse to urge them to continue fighting against Iran. On Iran's side, the discourse was a religious one that was also used to urge the Iraqi people to revolt and topple Saddam.

On the other hand, although the Iraq-Iran war harvested the life of millions of Iraqi people and Iranian alike, the Iraqi people were only become worthy to save in the US-led

invasion build-up narrative. The discourse surrounding the build-up to the war and the invasion period is that of humanizing the war through the use of the humanitarian discourse. The discourses of humanitarian and human rights were used to justify the case for the invasion, emphasizing the moral basis of the intervention along with the themes of WMD and the threat of Saddam.

The Iraqi people were reported extensively in the build-up phase as well as after the invasion, as shown from the frequency in Figure 2. In this regard, Herman and Chomsky (1988) attributed such attention to people in times of conflict as being part of the propaganda system, through depicting 'people abused in enemy states as worthy victims, whereas those treated with equal or greater severity by its own government or clients will be unworthy' (p. 34). In the same vein, Johnson-Cartee (2004) maintains that 'for the average person, simply the appearance in the news of a person, object, or public act is enough to lead to the conclusion that the person, object, or public act must be important' (p. 234). This explains the frequent use of the phrases Iraqi people and people of Iraq in the press, as well as the interviewing of Iraqi victims who were in exile or reiterating their stories.

Therefore, they are expressed in predicational terms as being victimized, and detailed and dramatic accounts of the suffering inflicted on the them were provided, accusing the Iraqi regime of killing, and torturing his people, including the use of biological and chemical weapons against the Kurds in Halabja and the repression of the Shiite uprising after the 1991 Gulf War. This victimization strategy was manifested through the use of collocates such as suffer, killed, executed, exterminated and crushed.

10. In his State of the Union speech, Bush promises to liberate the Iraqi people and catalogues what happens to Saddam's enemies: **"electric shock, burning with hot irons, dripping acid on the skin, mutilation with electric drills, cutting out tongues and rape. If this is not evil, then evil has no meaning."**

Daily News (New York) March 20, 2003, Thursday

Furthermore, from the day the United States decided to engage in a war with Iraq, the violation of the human rights of the enemy state (Iraq) became one of justifications for war, along with the threat of Saddam, through his supposed possession of WMD and his links to al Qaeda, and the Iraqi people became worthy victims. Therefore, the damage, suffering and abuse inflicted on the victims were highlighted by US officials and by the press reliance on the elite sources they had in the government. In this regard, Zollmann (2017, p. 67) argues that when the Western elite decides to intervene in the affairs of another state, this is first advocated and communicated through the media by journalists, human rights activists, or by policy makers. The media then acts as an instrument for shaming the enemy states by using the statements of government spokesmen or those of other allied groups to shame them. Therefore, the news press published stories that portrayed the victimization of the Iraqi people and that criminalized the Saddam regime, both in reporting the accounts of officials or those of the victims.

Having capitalized on the crimes committed against the worthy victims, the need for taking an action comes into play towards such human rights violations where an

indignation is usually produced by the news press which could include, as elaborated by Zollmann (2017, p. 69), statements suggesting military policies, sanctions, investigations and/or criminal proceedings as well as outrage, concern and mourning. Therefore, the liberation of the Iraqi people was articulated in the US press, whether by officials and non-officials, as being one of the war objectives.

11. "We have chosen to confront terror and tyranny," said U.S. Rep. Todd Akin, R-Town and Country, one of several speakers. "**We have chosen** to give the greatest gift of **freedom to the Iraqi people**."

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri) March 29, 2003 Saturday

12. **of course our aim** is to rid Iraq of weapons of mass destruction and make our world more secure, the justice of our cause lies in the **liberation of the Iraqi people**. And to them we say: We will **liberate you**. The day of your freedom draws near.

The New York Times March 28, 2003 Friday

13. "**Our goal is** to defend the American people, and to eliminate Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and to **liberate the Iraqi people**," Mr. Rumsfeld said during a Pentagon news briefing and defining the overall goal of the war.

The New York Times March 22, 2003 Saturday

Furthermore, the war was presented, in relation to liberation, as a 'black and white' affair, in that an 'either/or' position was presented, whereas in reality there were more than two options that could exist. Pirie (2015, p. 19) calls this the 'fallacy of bifurcation'. In this fallacy, only restricted choices are to be made, and it is used to squeeze out other options. Thus, in the example below, Iraqi soldiers and officers were given only two options: either survive or die; be on the wrong side and 'die fighting for a doomed regime' or be on the righteous side, stand with the liberators and survive and help their own people.

14. "The Iraqi soldiers and officers must ask themselves if they want to die fighting for a doomed regime or do they want to survive, help the Iraqi people in the liberation of their country and play a role in a new, free Iraq," he said. The Bush administration has been urging Saddam's generals for months to overthrow him, offering amnesty for war crimes if they lay down their arms.

Daily News (New York) March 21, 2003, Friday

On the other hand, in example 14 the US soldiers were pictured as heroes who cared about the Iraqi people and were prepared to sacrifice their own lives to liberate and save them. If the fate of the Iraqi soldiers is compared with that of the American soldiers, it appears that if an Iraqi soldier dies, he died 'fighting for a doomed regime', whereas the American soldiers who went to their deaths 'didn't die in vain', and in fact their names will go down in history because they liberated the Iraqi people.

15. Rincon, a native of Colombia, has just been awarded U.S. citizenship in posthumous gratitude for his sacrifice. **He and other soldiers gave their most**

precious possession to give the Iraqi people and the people of the United States an enormous opportunity.

<div align="right">*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution April 10, 2003 Thursday*</div>

16. Brown was one of three soldiers who died along with two reporters last week when an Iraqi missile slammed into the Tactical Operations Center of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team south of Baghdad. **"He didn't die in vain. He didn't die without a purpose. He died for the liberation of the Iraqi people,"** said Capt. Ron Cooper, task force chaplain.

<div align="right">*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution April 12, 2003 Saturday*</div>

In addition, the press portrayed the American soldiers as caring and humane, in that even during the course of the war they were benevolent and treated the Iraqi people respectfully. In the following extract this can be seen in the use of the word 'fixate', as well as in the reference to the sandwich which was given to the boy by another soldier, representing them in a good way.

17. Mrs. Miller, who regards the war as a "moral and just" effort to protect American national security and liberate the Iraqi people, **fixates on a little boy who was eating a sandwich** -- she imagined it to be peanut butter and jelly -- **given him by a soldier**. "His face," she said, "was just rapturous." Mrs. Miller has a long history with the military.

<div align="right">*The New York Times April 5, 2003 Saturday*</div>

The construction of the American soldiers as heroes, in the above examples, conforms to Hankings' (Browne and Fishwick, 1983, pp. 269-270) archetype of heroism. The first criterion is that the hero must come from 'outside the society in which he operates'. The above extracts show that the American soldiers are operating in a distant country for the sake of liberating and freeing the Iraqi people from suffering. The second criterion is that the hero must show asceticism and morality, as in the case of the American soldiers, who are constructed as not looking for wealth or material gain, but are ready to sacrifice themselves. This is evident in the following example: 'He and other soldiers gave their most precious possession to give the Iraqi people and the people of the United States an enormous opportunity'. Furthermore, as seen in example 18, the fourth criterion is that 'the hero exhibits compassion for the society of which he is not really a part' (Hankins, 1983, p. 269). Lastly, they must be fighting evil; in the case of the American soldiers, they are depicted as being motivated by the inherent desire to do good.

One aspect of the liberation theme is the continuity of the positive representation of 'Our' side and the negative representation of 'their' side, through drawing on the differences between 'The West' on the one hand, constructing Westerners as civilizers, and the Middle East in general and Iraq in particular on the other, constructing them as uncivilized and lacking in freedom and democracy. Therefore, in examples 18 and 19 America is constructed as a free country while Iraq is not, and the purpose of the invasion is seen as being to give the Iraqi people some of the freedom American people have that the Iraqis had only dreamed of.

18. "It's about time," said Irving Levine, 71, who lived in Battery Park City for 21 years and spent a year displaced from his home. "We've been ready for it for a while. I think our soldiers are prepared, **we'll go in quickly and give the Iraqi people maybe some of the freedom that we have**," he said.

The New York Post March 20, 2003, Thursday

19. "This is about giving the Iraqi people **the kind of freedom they can only dream of**," said Ann Yarko, a 19-year-old FSU student from Orlando.

St. Petersburg Times (Florida) March 21, 2003 Friday

The Iraqi people were also constructed as being beneficiaries of the help in a more concrete way, in that the wealth of the country was to be used for their benefit through the use of the Iraqi oil, resources, assets, welfare for the benefit of the Iraqi people, using collocates such as 'belong', 'belongs', 'asset', 'assets', 'interests', 'resource', 'resources', 'wealth', 'welfare' and 'treasures' as shown in the Table 7.

Iraq's *natural resources* are used for the *benefit* of their owners,	*the Iraqi people.*
U.S. officials say *the reserves* will be used to *benefit*	*the Iraqi people.*
an additional $600 million in *Iraqi assets* for a fund for "*the benefit and welfare* of	*the Iraqi people.*"
Bush has pledged that *Iraq's oil* would be used solely for the benefit of	*"the Iraqi people."*
by proposing for the first time that *Iraq's oil revenues* be placed in a U.N.-supervised trust fund during the conflict 2*for the benefit* of	*the Iraqi people.*"
the United States and allies have clear authority "to use and enjoy the profits of *property owned* by Iraq" for the benefit of	*the Iraqi people.*
repeatedly pledged that *Iraq's oil wealth* will be used exclusively to benefit	*the Iraqi people.*
officials have said they plan to use any seized *assets* "*for the benefit* and welfare of	*the Iraqi people.*"
additional $600 million in *frozen Iraqi assets* and turn it over to a new American-controlled fund intended for "the benefit and *welfare* of	*the Iraqi people.*"
"The *oil revenues* of Iraq, now, for the first time in decades will be dedicated to the *welfare* of	*the Iraqi people*
we have secured the southern *oil fields* and *facilities*, and so protected *that resource and wealth* for	*the Iraqi people*
Military forces also will "secure *Iraq's oil fields* and *resources*, which belong to	*the Iraqi people,*
any U.S. occupation force would serve only as a temporary guardian protecting the *interests* of	*the Iraqi people --*
to try to do it as quickly as possible and with minimum destruction to *infrastructure*, to *the resources and assets* of the Iraqi people and with an emphasis on protecting the *assets*	*of the Iraqi people.*"

Table 7: Concordance lines of Iraqi people as beneficiaries

Another salient pattern that was apparent in the data was that of empowering the Iraqi people in the post-Saddam government, with promises being given that the people would have a role to play and a certain amount of choice in deciding on the type of government they would have, using collocates such as *administer, choose, chosen, decide, determine, govern,* governed, government, running, secure, sovereignty, rule and run. Some of these collocates are shown in the table below.

It will be *run* by you,	*the people of Iraq."*	
Iraqis, not U.S., to *rule*	*The people of Iraq*	will *choose* their future government
Soon, the good and gifted	*people of Iraq*	will be free to *choose* their leaders
remains unchanged. "	*The Iraqi people*	will *administer* Iraq."
"As freedom takes hold in Iraq,	*the Iraqi people*	will *choose* their own leaders and their government,"
service until a permanent government can be *chosen* by	*the Iraqi people.*	
	The Iraqi people	will *decide* who's on the Iraqi -- the interim authority.
would not promote any potential leader but would let	*the Iraqi people*	*decide.*
Schroeder said, "That will only be the case if	*the Iraqi people*	can *decide,* themselves, on political and economic
Britain to support it and guide it - but not control it.	*The Iraqi people*	will *determine* their own future.
"The overriding objective must be to enable the	*Iraqi people*	to take charge of their own destiny,"
humanitarian relief and create conditions that would enable	*the Iraqi people*	to "*govern* themselves."
We're saying the future of Iraq should be governed by the	*Iraqi people."*	
"The key is that Iraq, in the end, should be *governed* by	*the Iraqi people*	," Blair said
come when the coalition has "set up the conditions where	*the Iraqi people*	can *establish* their own government
helping to construct a democratic government by and for	*the Iraqi people.*	
"Forget it. From day one, we have said	*the Iraqi people*	are capable of *running* their own country."
United States will move as "soon as possible" after toppling Iraqi President Saddam Hussein "to secure *sovereignty* for	*the Iraqi people*	

Table 8 The empowerment Iraqi people

Conclusion

The main goal of the current study was to examine the way themes (Saddam, Halabja and Iraqi people) were reported in the two wars and whether there is a shift in their reporting in the US press. With regard to the coverage of Saddam, the frequency of references to Saddam and the number of collocates was much higher during the US-led invasion than during the Iraq-Iran war. Furthermore, the role of the press during the latter conflict in relation to Saddam was to report what each side - Iraq and Iraq - said about the other; this was done to show the nature of the war and how each side perceived it. The predicational and referential strategies used by the press in the Iraq-Iran war were negative: Saddam was

represented as espousing the idea of Pan-Arabism as well as creating his own personality cult and using the Islamist and Arabist discourse to continue the war. However, these strategies are much less negative than those used during the US-led invasion and in the build-up period to this war, when Saddam was characterized by and associated with a discourse of demonization and criminalization as well as being seen as posing a threat that had to be confronted. The history of the Iraq-Iran war was also used during the 2003 conflict to show that Saddam had a history of attacking his neighbours.

Similarly, during the Iraq-Iran war Saddam was never collocated with the Halabja gassing; by contrast, 15 years after the incident, during the reporting of the US-led invasion, Saddam was linked and collocated with Halabja. This type of reporting, together with the selective shaming campaign and the demonization of Saddam, contributed to manufacturing general consent for organizing and going to war against Iraq in 2003; this is indicative of the fact that the US press agenda was in line with that of the country's administration.

The analysis of the reporting of Halabja presented in this study has also shown how different the treatments of Halabja was different in the Iraq-Iran war and the US-led invasion in which it shows how journalist practices were not maintained in the US press in the two wars in a way that facilitated directly or indirectly in propagating and communicating what the US officials wanted to say to the public and as a result facilitating the 2003 US-led invasion. This is done through the emphasis on the crimes, violence and the human rights violation that were committed by Saddam's regime during Iraq-Iran war, 15 years later, which was not reported and given such importance at the time. The aim of recalling the Halabja history was for the sake of investing and using these events in the present time to demonize Saddam and to mobilize the public, and as a result justify the invasion. In fact, these events were even more negatively constructed during the build-up to the 2003 US-led invasion than they had been at the time they took place. Similarly, the use of the victim accounts were only acted as a means to an end, i.e. the invasion, rather than an end itself. What is more, the construction of CWs was not the same in the two wars: although Iraq used CWs on many occasions against Iran and the Kurds in the Iraq-Iran war, these weapons were never referred to as weapons of mass destruction and never collocated with Saddam which was quite the opposite in the US-led invasion when the CWs were referred to as WMDs and Saddam was collocated with WMDs and CWs. This shows the fact that the use of such terminology is deliberate, with an ideological nature that comes in line with US administrative propaganda.

Similarly, the Iraqi people were also seen as being worthy victims in order to serve the propaganda purpose of giving the war a just cause. Therefore, they were seen as people who had been victimized and who had suffered and therefore needed to be liberated. They were also constructed as being beneficiaries of the liberation and of the resources and wealth of Iraq after the liberation, whereas in the Iraq-Iraq war they were not paid attention and there were only few mentions of them as showed in their frequency.

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