

The Gulf War with George Bush and Saddam Hussein, King Hussein and President Gorbachev talking back and forth via satellite, accelerated the diplomatic process. More recently, in the early weeks in Yugoslavia, I believe we have an example of the diffusing of a story. The parties and issues they represent were vented almost hourly via the live flyaway satellite uplink CNN had in Slovenia, along with other networks, both in Slovenia, and live from Belgrade. Of course, the presence of live television was not the only factor and perhaps not the major factor, but certainly the continuing public discourse to be seen by all the players across that country and across Europe served as a kind of defusing catalyst. One must think the continued exchange provided hard information, changes of tone and other diplomatic and military nuances.

During the Gulf War run-up, after the 2 August invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, we fielded many requests from heads of state to provide air time so their leader could, in effect, in their inevitable phrase, address the world with always a major speech. Well yes, it sounds like the power and the glory. More often, say in the case of Saddam Hussein, the audience may well have been the Arab world or his own military, and occasionally we were told it was President Bush. Not that we are being snippy in any case. It's just that the address was frequently, to be charitable, self-serving. President Bush, according to his staff, also made not infrequent use of CNN in a similar manner. I am sure the surroundings of some of the presidential pronouncements must have mystified less sophisticated viewers in the Middle East, coming as they did from the golf course at Kennebunkport. One could imagine the circle of plotters in some bunker in Baghdad watching Mr. Bush in a golf shirt in the clubhouse and wondering what had become of the White House.

As an aside, the regular viewers new to US reporting but accustomed to their own government-controlled journalism would call CNN in Atlanta after watching a Wolf Blitzer report from the Pentagon, or Charles Bierbauer from the White House, to complain. They thought our reporters were government spokesmen stating policy rather than providing some interpretive reporting. Blitzer became Mr. Pentagon to them. As a matter of fact, the White House would call us saying "what have you said now because the head of such and such state has just called and doesn't understand why we have changed our position."