In this chapter we are concerned with identifying normative shifts within media discourse rather than probing the causal link to changes in public attitudes directly. One can, however, safely assume that fewer citizens have direct access to information about foreign countries than they have about events in their own country. The news media do therefore play an important role in shaping citizens’ and, to a certain extent, also decision-makers’ perceptions of what happens in the international arena, why an event or development is important, and to what extent an evolving crisis makes some kind of collective political action necessary (Page 2000). It has been argued in more detail in Chapter 2 that crises revolving around Western interventions abroad since the end of the Cold War have brought about a change in strategic norms as expressed in public discourse. More specifically, we will examine empirically media debates about the use of force in three cases of Western military interventions between 1995 and 1999, namely Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. By looking at the differences between these countries, as well as over time, we hope to better understand whether and to what degree societal strategic norms in Europe have converged.

The impact of post-Cold War crises on press debates

Journalists normally reflect, or at least are aware of, the norms and beliefs of their audiences. If they are foreign correspondents, they are usually among the first to realise that what they see, hear and learn may pose a

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1 This chapter has been co-authored with Adrian Zdrada of the Polish Institute of International Affairs, Warsaw. A more detailed treatment of the Iraq case has been published in *European Security* (Meyer and Zdrada 2006).
challenge to these norms and that action is called for that may be incompatible with established national thinking and behaviour about the use of force. It has been argued in more detail in Chapter 2 that the news media can publicise and frame humanitarian and security crises in a way that allows discrepant information to overcome public awareness thresholds, to mobilise debates between existing and new interpretations of collective norms and to establish new dominant norms underpinned by new 'lessons learned'. This kind of mechanism has been called mediatised crisis learning and can affect all four of the strategic norms outlined in the previous section. The guiding question for this chapter is thus whether instances of mediatised crises surrounding armed interventions abroad have induced collective learning regarding strategic norms in different national settings. The second, even more important question is whether the outcomes of such normative learning resulted in national strategic norms becoming more similar over time.

The underlying rationale for investigating this second question is the argument advanced often implicitly in some of the writing in security studies that certain countries are more prone to change their strategic norms than others given new challenges. These countries are seen as learners and norm importers in two main respects: first, the predominantly pacific, introvert, self-defence-minded governments and societies such as Germany are seen to have become more activist, extrovert and or even militarist in the pursuit of security interests and the defence of values; secondly, the more activist but also more Atlanticist countries such as Great Britain increasingly perceive that decision-making power and capabilities in defence and security should be pooled and shared within the EU framework, and that the use of force ought to be legitimised domestically and internationally, and that certain ends may be off-limits, has justifications for the use of force.

We will probe these questions by looking at the impact of three cases of Western intervention – Bosnia in 1995, Kosovo in 1999 and Iraq in 2003 – in the four countries at the centre of this study – Britain, Germany, France and Poland. The expectation is that the Bosnia crisis has led to a reassessment of the legitimate goals for the use of force with regard to human rights, a deep disappointment over the ability of Europeans to act in security and defence matters, and a discussion over how one can use force. The Kosovo crisis posed the dilemma of using force for humanitarian protection in even clearer terms than in the case of Bosnia, but also raised concerns among Europeans over the way in which the campaign was conducted by the US/NATO and the lack of UN authorisation. Finally, the case of Iraq was most relevant in terms of shifting European attitudes vis-à-vis the United States, but also raised serious questions over the need for domestic and international authorisation, as well as the legitimacy of using force.