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## The framing of Iraq: How newspapers rely on wire services for fact and frame

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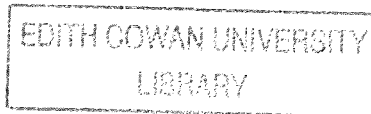
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# The Framing of Iraq

*How newspapers rely on wire*

*Services for fact and frame*



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## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.



## ABSTRACT

Traditional wire service studies have focused on how international events are judged as newsworthy in newsrooms reluctant to devote space to overseas stories. Studies of framing in reports of the same events usually rely on articles by different journalists from different news groups. During the recent Iraq war, however, considerable space was allocated to an overseas event and Australian newspapers relied on articles transmitted by the same wires. Thus the war provides the opportunity not only to look at how Australian newspapers use wire copy but how that copy is framed. This thesis concentrates on instances where wire copy was used by different newspapers and how the articles are framed. It contrasts reliance on wire services by *The Australian* and *The West Australian* in the first three weeks of the war, looks at how Australian papers used individual wire articles and discusses framing of the war in *The West Australian*.

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1/6/04 .

Ruth Callaghan<sup>1</sup>

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b><i>The Framing of Iraq</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>How newspapers rely on wire services for fact and frame</i> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Abstract</i></b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Table of contents</i></b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b><i>Chapter 1 – Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Background to the study</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Statement of the problem .....	8
<b>The questions</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><i>Chapter 2 – Literature Review</i></b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Gatekeeping</b> .....	<b>9</b>
How wire news is selected .....	9
Selection with a news category .....	11
Editing process .....	13
What could cause a newspaper to change a wire story? .....	14
<b>Framing</b> .....	<b>15</b>
What is framing? .....	15
How do frames work? .....	16
Why frame news? .....	18
How can framing be detected? .....	19
Factors in the framing of the recent Iraq war .....	23
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b><i>Chapter 3 – Materials and methodology</i></b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Origin analysis</b> .....	<b>27</b>
The newspapers .....	27
Coding .....	28
Method .....	30
<b>Wire service comparison</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Framing analysis</b> .....	<b>32</b>
Finding frames: .....	32
Frame comparison: .....	33
Textual analysis .....	33
<b><i>Chapter 4 – Findings in The West Australian sample</i></b> .....	<b>34</b>
<b>The Sample</b> .....	<b>34</b>
Wire sources used.....	36
<b>Results</b> .....	<b>37</b>
Lack of attribution .....	39
Episodic versus thematic articles.....	40
<b><i>Chapter 5 – Findings in The Australian sample</i></b> .....	<b>44</b>
<b>The Sample</b> .....	<b>44</b>
Article sources .....	46
<b>Results</b> .....	<b>48</b>
Episodic versus thematic articles.....	51

<b>Chapter 6 – Wire comparison findings.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Examples of wire use.....</b>	<b>54</b>
Bloody battle near Najaf .....	56
‘Hundreds’ of Iraqis die in battle.....	57
US claims 650 enemy killed .....	59
Two hours of death in the sand.....	61
<b>Discussion of the Najaf Series .....</b>	<b>63</b>
The death toll .....	63
Who started the fighting.....	64
How the battle is described.....	65
Credibility of details and sources .....	66
<b>The Checkpoint Series .....</b>	<b>68</b>
Jumpy troops trigger a nightmare on Highway 9 .....	69
A drive straight into death.....	71
Ten die as nerves fail.....	73
Highway 9 horror - women, children die.....	75
<b>Discussion of the Checkpoint Series .....</b>	<b>77</b>
Reliance on a single source.....	77
Presentation of the story.....	79
Family sought US ‘safety’ .....	81
Pregnant woman sees two daughters killed .....	82
Mother saw daughters slaughtered .....	83
A family, a white flag and confusion – and a father left with nothing .....	85
‘I saw the heads of my two little girls come off’ .....	87
<b>Discussion of the Hassan Series .....</b>	<b>89</b>
Who is to blame? .....	89
Prominence in coverage .....	90
<b>The Rescue Series .....</b>	<b>92</b>
Yellow ribbons for Jessica .....	93
Midnight raid rescues teen soldier.....	95
Saving Private Lynch: special forces decoy raid.....	97
Marines grab POW from hospital .....	99
<b>Discussion of the Rescue Series .....</b>	<b>101</b>
Reliance on official comment.....	101
Credibility of sources .....	102
Our hero? .....	103
<b>Chapter 7 – Framing Iraq .....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Finding frames .....</b>	<b>105</b>
List of possible frames .....	106
<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>108</b>
Week one .....	108
Week two .....	111
Week three.....	114
Framing in overall coverage.....	116
Framing on covers of editions .....	118
<b>Textual analysis.....</b>	<b>120</b>
Humanising terminology .....	120
Moralising terminology.....	122
<b>Chapter 8 –Discussion.....</b>	<b>124</b>
Framing of the Iraq war .....	130
Implications and future research .....	130
<b>References .....</b>	<b>132</b>

*Appendix 1*..... 137

    Use of the Evil Iraq frame in an edition cover ..... 137

..... 137

*Appendix 2*..... 138

    Use of the Powerful Heroic frame in an edition cover ..... 138

*Appendix 3*..... 139

    Use of the Dirty Tricks frame in an edition cover ..... 139

## CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

### Background to the study

War is chaos. Newspaper coverage of war is not. Past history has taught newspapers to expect the unexpected, and budget for it in their organisational routines (Berkowitz, 1992; Tuchman, 1973). From the midst of a war zone, a correspondent files an article. He or she may use one source or many in writing the story. Figures and descriptions may come from official sources or from anecdotal reports. The story may be event-driven and based on a series of ‘facts’ (known as an episodic article), or an interpretive, thematic piece that tries to put events in context. Once that story is transmitted by a reporter, however, his or her input virtually ends. If the reporter is working for a news or wire agency, that story may be subedited and changes made before it is transmitted across news wires to thousands of newspapers and news broadcasters worldwide. Wire editors at these news centres watch the wires and select stories from thousands transmitted every day for publication. It is rare that a selected story will be published untouched, however, and it is likely to be subedited a second or more times for a range of reasons before a version of the original story appears in a newspaper.

Journalistic routines during times of conflict have been widely studied (see Berkowitz, 1992; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1973), however the research usually concentrates on the actions of reporters. This study specifically examines the actions of the subeditors, copyeditors and wire editors, who take wire stories and rewrite, edit, shorten, lengthen or combine them to create the product that finally emerges in the paper. Some of those changes are for stylistic reasons, such as to anglicise spelling or cut to length, while others are ideologically driven, such as the removal of an honorific from former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. If this subediting process is successful, it should also be invisible; only when an editor makes a mistake, cuts a story badly or is heavy handed is his or her presence discernable to the reader. Because of this invisibility, it is necessary to study specific cases of editing, tracking them from original story to final product, for the touch of the editors to become apparent.

Study of this area has traditionally been difficult, as it is usually impossible for researchers to gain access to the original filed copy from a reporter. Although wire articles can be obtained in their pre-edited state, it is unusual for individual wire stories to be used by several newspapers at once, so differences in the editing process between newspapers cannot usually be examined in detail.

The war in Iraq offers a rare opportunity to do precisely this. Because of the abundance of space devoted to one running topic, and the use of the same wire stories by several newspapers, the war offers the opportunity for a study to be undertaken of how newspapers change, or frame, prewritten articles transmitted by news wires – and how they frame the coverage of the broader war.

### **Statement of the problem**

It is clear from a cursory examination of coverage during the Iraq war that Australian newspapers used wire services to provide numerous stories about the war. This study seeks to discover the extent of this use in two Australian newspapers, the origins of that wire copy and the style of articles used. It also looks at how the wire copy was used (whether it was shortened or lengthened, edited for stylistic or substantial reasons or combined with other articles before publication) and whether different newspapers treated the same wire copy in different ways. Finally, it explores the frames used by metropolitan daily newspaper *The West Australian* in its war coverage in order to discover how the newspaper framed the war.

### **The questions**

**Research Question 1 – How much of newspaper coverage of the Iraq war was drawn from wire services? Did the proportion of wire stories used change during the process of the war? Did the proportion used vary due to newspaper size and resources?**

**Research Question 2 – Did newspapers use the same wire service stories in their coverage of the Iraq War? How did the final appearance of those stories differ?**

**Research Question 3 – What frames were used by *The West Australian* in its coverage of the recent Iraq war?**

## CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

### Gatekeeping

#### How wire news is selected

Much research has been done on the patterns of news selection by wire editors, with researchers leaning towards the theory that news selection is made roughly in proportion to the number of stories received in various categories (Bleske, 1991; Gieber, 1964; Whitney & Becker, 1983). Most studies have been based on the 1950 work of David Manning White, which looked at the choices made by one “gatekeeper,” – a wire editor on a non-metropolitan newspaper with the task of selecting national and international news from news agencies (White, 1950).

White adopted social scientist Kurt Lewin’s terminology of gates to describe the various steps a news item had to pass before publication, and used Lewin’s term gatekeepers, for those involved in the news item’s process. He argued that of all the gatekeepers, his wire editor, dubbed “Mr Gates”, was the “most important gatekeeper of all” (White, 1950). White’s study found his chosen wire editor’s opinions played a major role in story selection, with many articles rejected for what White termed “subjective ... value-judgements based on (Mr Gates’) own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations” (White, 1950).

White’s claim of the primacy of subjective choice in news selection has been disputed by other researchers (Gieber, 1964; Reese & Ballinger, 2001; Stempel, 1985; Whitney & Becker, 1983) as well as by Mr Gates himself (White, 1950, p171). In a broader study, Gieber looked at wire editors at 16 Wisconsin daily newspapers, but found no major differences between them when it came to news selection, as would be expected if personal bias were the determining factor (Gieber, 1964).

Instead, he found editors would take a sample of incoming stories for publication, choosing stories in rough proportion to the number that issued in each category. So predictable were the choices, he argued, that “through testing the editor’s decisions on a group of ‘test’ news items, and by watching his selection for



several days, it was possible to project what he would do on a selected operational day,” (Gieber, 1964).

Whitney and Becker repeated the study with 46 Ohio editors, but asked their editors to simulate the news selection process by choosing stories from pre-prepared files. The authors argued that the overall findings, supporting Gieber’s claims of proportional selection, suggested editors at the wire services, not newspaper editors chose what became news (Whitney & Becker, 1983).

In a gender-oriented follow-up study to White’s Mr Gates, ‘Ms Gates takes over’, Bleske (1991) found that human interest stories, international politics and national politics remained the top three categories of wire stories both transmitted to and chosen by a newspaper wire editor. The use of copy in these categories was reasonably proportional to the amount sent by wire services, although exact proportions were not used. However, Ms Gates, as Mr Gates before her, claimed the category of news story made no difference to her selection. This denial is strongly reminiscent of the findings of Herbert Gans (1979), the newsroom observer who argued most story selectors were so removed from the stories they selected that no attachment to the stories could be formed (Gans, 1979). Ms and Mr Gates also professed not to be driven by ideology or values, although each admitted personal prejudices (Bleske, 1991; White, 1950).

Schudson is another to suggest that personal prejudice is not a major factor, arguing that news selection is the result of organisational bias (Schudson, 1989). The gatekeeper metaphor itself is to blame, he says, as the term “individualises a bureaucratic phenomenon” (Schudson, 1989, p8). He also takes issue with the way the gatekeeper theory depicts those wire stories that pass through the gates. The metaphor considered wire articles as complete and inviolable products that arrived and left the gate “sociologically untouched,” he argued, past a gatekeeper who “simply decides which pieces of prefabricated news will be allowed through the gate”(Schudson, 1989, p9).

Schudson’s point is sound: wire news is like any other news; it is not immune to change, which can sometimes be dramatic. Passing through the gates is no guarantee of eventual publication, and a wire story can be chopped, edited, rewritten, combined with other stories, be added to with updated information or be dropped altogether.

To summarise gatekeeper research, then, is to acknowledge a useful but limited metaphor. While wire editors are recognised as choosing the news from various categories in roughly the same proportions as it is transmitted, there is some question over how much the editors' personal prejudices play a role in the selection process. This is not a quandary solved by referring to the editors themselves: if Mr and Ms Gates are sufficiently self-aware to recognise that they have personal prejudices which they must strive to exclude in story selection (Bleske, 1991), can they be less aware when it comes to denying that news categories play a major part in their choice?

The issue of personal prejudice is pertinent in relation to the selection of wire service copy during the recent Iraq war. Although journalists have been described as consciously abstaining from displaying personal values in their work, and being oblivious to ideology (Gans, 1979), it would be naïve to say journalists were oblivious to ideological issues surrounding Australia's role in the Iraq war. It is possible personal prejudice may have played a greater role than the literature would suggest. Previous research would also seem to suggest that the selection of wire service copy should have taken place on a basis roughly proportional to the size of the categories transmitted, however this rule of thumb is unreliable due to the generic nature of incoming war copy. Stories about a war may have human interest elements, contain issues of national or international politics or reflect disasters, accidents or even economic issues, yet are still classed as stories about a war.

### **Selection with a news category**

If the gatekeeping theory's concept of proportional selection from news categories does not apply in a situation where most news is drawn from a single category, how else can that selection be determined?

Researchers have repeatedly noted the reluctance of newspapers, particularly those in the United States, to run international stories over other wire copy (Horvit, 2003; Layton, 2000). Hargrove and Stempel (2002) argue that some types of international news are more popular than others – at least with readers. Their study gauged reader response to 20 headlines and concluded that readers preferred good news to bad news, and news about ordinary people over news about politics, governments, economics or disasters (Hargrove & Stempel, 2002). A much broader

study, which looked at newspaper publication choices rather than reader preferences, found that within the international subset, stories about combat and political violence were published in a far greater proportion than they were transmitted by the wire services (Horvit, 2003).

Importantly, the Horvit (2003) study also found that bigger newspapers (those with 100,001-250,000 circulations) treated international news differently to newspapers with far smaller circulations, particularly in the choice of in-depth and analytical (thematic) stories or event-driven (episodic) stories. Thematic articles were more likely to be chosen by editors at the big papers than by editors at small or medium papers. Horvit found “the newspapers with the most limited space ran the highest percentage of episodic reports” (Horvit, p7, 2003).

Another issue that may have had an impact on news selection within the war/international news category is credibility. Robertson’s (1998) research into American newsroom reaction to fast-breaking stories regarding the Monica Lewinsky scandal found the use of wire services often left editors uncomfortable. Stories were being rapidly transmitted not just from traditional wire services such as Associated Press, but also from other major newspapers. Much like stories during wartime, the Lewinsky stories were high-impact, compelling, fast-moving and often uncheckable, as they were attributed to anonymous sources (Robertson, 1998).

Problems with accuracy caused more than one newspaper to print information which was later found to be wrong, or even patently untrue. As one editor told Robertson, “for the most part we have a higher set of standards in terms of the use of anonymous sources than we do with wire stories,” (Robertson, 1998, p1). Robertson found that after several newspapers were “burned” by using questionable copy, they relied more on trusted outlets for wire copy, in particular *The New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*, as well as Associated Press. By-lined journalists who made mistakes were flagged and their copy avoided (Robertson, 1998).

It would seem, therefore, that several factors may motivate wire service editors when choosing within categories such as that of war. In the overall coverage of international matters, combat and political violence have been found to be used more than a proportional basis would suggest (Horvit, 2003), which could translate

to a greater interest by wire editors in stories of war fighting, over the drier economic, governmental or political aspects of war.

Readers have also shown a preference for stories about ordinary individuals. Although Gans (1979) repeatedly has stressed how little journalists are aware of their audiences, White (1950) and Bleske (1991) noted that human interest stories topped both the news categories transmitted by wire services and chosen by their respective gatekeepers. This could suggest that in the broader set of war stories, those about individual people or with human interest aspects may be of more interest to wire editors as well as readers. Horvit's (2003) finding that thematic stories may be of more interest to bigger newspapers than those with smaller circulations may be a factor in story choice within the war category.

Finally, the issue of credibility could also be a major factor in the choice of war copy by wire editors. Just as Robertson's (1998) editors shunned by-lined journalists and wire service agencies that ran incorrect or patently false information, it is likely that newspaper wire editors chose copy based on the perceived credibility of the authors.

### **Editing process**

As this review is interested not just in the writing of news stories, but how they are treated, it is worth briefly describing that process. The choice of news story, while obviously important in the consideration of how Australian newspapers framed the Iraq war, is not the end of the story. As noted by a newspaper subeditor in the Australian Broadcasting Authority's study of sources and news, gatekeepers are "just a cog in the wheel" at most newspapers, as "every story we publish maybe goes through six, seven hands and at each checking function, the person views (it) as virgin text" (Australian Broadcasting Authority, 2001, p147).

While no newsroom model is universally adopted by Australian newspapers, wire editors (one or more) commonly select news and may edit some of it, although copy-editing may be done by several other subeditors before the news is copy-checked and laid out. At that point, it may be checked again, either by the chief subeditor or other senior subeditors before it is finally sent to print (Australian Broadcasting Authority, 2001). A story selected by a wire editor may be changed

dramatically before publication. Depending on the size of the “news hole” it could be shortened, or lengthened by the addition of extra text. The story itself could be edited for grammatical reasons, for style reasons (such as changing a soft news story to a hard news story) or be combined with other stories.

### **What could cause a newspaper to change a wire story?**

As previously noted, the issues of credibility and veracity are important to wire editors, but so is the constant theme of timeliness. In a 24-hour war, new developments may make even a recently written and transmitted story obsolete, or at least require it to be updated. Sometimes the same event can also yield dramatically different reports, as was noted by Fleeson in her study of civilian casualty reporting in Afghanistan (Fleeson, 2002). Wire editors must often choose between these various accounts (White, 1950) or combine bits of information from all three to get to something approximating the truth.

There is also the issue of audience reaction. A survey looking at the sales of British newspapers during the recent war found that anti-war broadsheets performed better than their pro-war or ambivalent peers, while anti-war tabloids did less well than their rivals (“Paper wars,” 2003) the conclusion drawn was that the respective audiences differed in their stance to the war. Tabloid readers were more supportive of military action, which they wanted to see reflected in their chosen newspaper, and broadsheet readers tended to oppose the war (“Paper wars,” 2003).

A similar comment on audience reaction was noted by Knightley (2000) in relation to previous conflicts, in particular the 1991 Gulf War. The American news audience was aware that news from the Gulf was being censored and “almost 80 per cent thought that this was a good idea. In fact, nearly 60 per cent thought that the authorities should exert more control over the coverage of the war” (Knightley, 2000, p492). A survey of Britons found most believed war reporting “should always emphasise the British side. And if there were a British mistake that caused the war to go badly, more than half those questioned for the study felt that this mistake should never be reported, or only after the war was over” (Knightley, 2000, p525).

Certainly many correspondents in the recent war noted a stark difference between the war they saw, and what was seen by audiences on television (Kurtz,

2003; Laforet, 2003; Lamb, 2003; Martz, 2003; Potter, 2003). At least one veteran reporter found himself under fire from readers for presenting an “unbalanced” view of the war, with some suggesting he watch more positive stories shown by FOX News to get a better perspective. “Because they did not see (what I saw) on TV, it was not happening. And it did not fit their view of the war” (Martz, 2003).

It is entirely possible, then, that newspaper articles on the war were changed to reflect the type of news the audience wanted to see – one that eliminated mistakes and was in favour of the coalition troops. Detecting such changes, however, requires more than the previous literature can provide; it would require individual stories to be analysed to see if newspapers covered the same event more or less positively than other publications. It is worth mentioning that the single biggest reason for change to articles may be the least interesting one—the scarcity of space. This ever-present limiter is noted in all previous wire editor studies (see White, 1950; Gieber, 1964 etc.) but researchers tend to give it little importance.

## **Framing**

Although the metaphor “framing” was coined in the 1970s to describe classifications and labels that defined events (see Gans, 1979, Reese, 2001, et al.), the use of the term varies between researchers (Maher, 2001). Framing primarily offers a starting point for analysing news articles – rather than offering explanations inherent in the theoretical position – but this section will look at the framing paradigm and consider whether it can be usefully applied to coverage of the recent Iraq war.

### **What is framing?**

Reese (2001) offers a working definition of framing which is useful to this particular study and his italics are included: “Frames are *organising principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world” (Reese, 2001, p11). The definition expresses Reese’s

argument that frames are used to organise information into useful groupings, that these groupings are recognised as useful by others and that they maintain their usefulness over a period of time. He also argues that a frame “is revealed in symbolic forms of expression” (Reese, 2001, p12) such as through key words or phrases or visual devices and impose patterns on the world. In short, frames are ways of organising and expressing the world; they seek to convey meaning.

It should be noted that Reese’s definition is not the only one. Durham (2001) describes framing “as a social process that enables society to function ... an exercise in the construction of meaning (which) codifies some social experiences or voices into discrete units of social meaning recognised as frames” (Durham, 2001).

Tankard (2001) adds to the definition by drawing a distinction between framing and “the old objectivity and bias paradigm,” (Tankard, 2001, p96). He argues that framing is more sophisticated, adding “the possibilities of additional, more complex, emotional responses and also adds a cognitive dimension (beliefs about objects as well as attitudes)” (Tankard, 2001, p96). Framing accepts that text can define a situation and set the terms of a debate.

For the purposes of this thesis, Reese’s definition is perhaps the most workable, providing a starting point for what to look for when trying to detect frames. It allows the reader to ask if an article is organised around one particular idea, which transcends the text itself. It also gives clues as to how to detect this idea, suggesting it can be found through symbolic terms or devices that lend the idea power to structure reality.

### **How do frames work?**

Framing is both an action and a description (Reese, 2001), describing both the method of selectively viewing information, as well as the result of that selectivity. As such, framing can take place at multiple levels and by a range of groups (Miller & Riechert, 2001; Reese, 2001; Tankard, 2001).

Researchers from a range of communications fields recognise that journalists select information and organise it, rather than simply regurgitating it (Gans, 1979, Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, et al.). Framing theorists argue that frames are one way

journalists can accomplish this narrowing of information. Reese (2001) uses a protest march analogy to show how frames shape journalists' perspectives:

"If a protest march ... is framed as a confrontation between police and marchers, the protesters' critique of society may not be part of the story – not because there wasn't room for it, but because it was not defined as relevant," (Reese, 2001, p11).

Framing can also take place in the editing process. How and why are some things grouped together in a single story, while other events or information stand alone? Why is more space and explanation given to some details over others? These types of questions can be addressed through the framing paradigm.

McCombs and Ghanem argue that framing is an offshoot of agenda-setting theory – an idea that is relatively unpopular – however they offer a useful distinction between framing that is inherently due to production and presentation and that due to the "attributes of the objects being presented" (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001, p71). The former style of framing might be seen in the choice to run a football story on a front page, for example, thus giving it a particular weight and importance that has nothing to with the article's content. Maher (2001) opposes moves to combine framing and agenda-setting, arguing that any similarities are the result of the many definitions applied to the framing paradigm. Despite this, he also highlights the production aspects of framing, such as the choices made by editors to use some pictures and not others and journalists' selection of some information over others (Maher, 2001).

Reese (2001) argues the choice to present a story as episodic or thematic is another framing decision, as "the episodic, or 'anecdotal', story offers compelling stories of concrete events and individuals, which find a more ready cognitive reception than the more accurate, perhaps, but duller thematic, 'baseline' story," (Reese, 2001, p12). He cites the types of questions that might arise in the framing process, both for reporters and those at higher editorial levels when he asks:

"... What were the choices available for the story, what were the structured tendencies to produce stories containing a balance of certain views? What were the rules working to screen out particular



perspectives? ... The media structure creates certain kinds of frames routinely and excludes much of what doesn't fit." (Reese, 2001, p17)

Finally, Wolfsfeld (1997) notes there are many depths to framing, with the deepest cultural frames potentially stretching for thousands of years. However, he argues that "the news media's professional focus on events means that they usually employ the shallowest level of frames," while those trying to frame the debate for the media "attempt to communicate on a deeper level" (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p33).

### **Why frame news?**

Just as in the field of agenda-setting, there is division between researchers and practitioners as to if and why framing takes place. Researchers have long claimed that newspapers deliberately adopt stances that can be described as biases, agendas, prejudices or frames. White (1950) argues the existence of agendas within newspapers is obvious, and:

"... one has only to read the Washington stories from two newspapers whose general editorial attitudes differ widely on such an issue as federal aid to education to realise from the beginning of the process the 'gatekeepers' are playing an important role" (White, 1950)

Other researchers have noted that journalists and editors consistently deny using agendas or deliberately framing news (see Gans, 1979, Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, et al.). Smith (1997), himself a journalist, describes most framing as taking place reflexively, linking the choices made to frame a story to news instinct (S. Smith, 1997). Pavlik (2001) also describes framing as a newsroom custom, one usually defined in terms of finding an angle in a story (Pavlik, 2001). Wolfsfeld (1997) is critical of constructionist thinking that separates the actual event from the framing process, arguing:

"journalists focus on events; the events serve as the initial stimulus for the entire story-building process .... Editors and reporters all come with certain predispositions and expectations that clearly influence the way they process information, but their reactions are also affected by the nature of the information they confront."

(Wolfsfeld, 1997, p35)

In contrast, Pan and Kosicki (2001) see framing as a strategic action, and “an ideological contest ... in which participants manoeuvre strategically to achieve their political and communicative objectives” (Pan and Kosicki, 2001, p40). The authors see the contest as effectively judged by the media, which choose to accept one set of terms over another. Tankard (2001) supports this position, arguing “news framing can eliminate voices and weaken arguments ... the media can frame issues in ways that favour a particular side without showing an explicit bias, and ... defining the terms of a debate takes one a long way toward winning it” (Tankard, 2001, p96).

It is worth noting that Tankard also takes a stronger position on the role of the media in deliberate framing than several other researchers (Pan & Kosicki, 2001; S. Smith, 1997) by arguing that media framing “can be likened to the magician’s sleight of hand – attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point,” (Tankard, 2001, p97). This analogy, which may be overstating the case, suggests journalists and editors set out to manipulate either the audience or the facts. Entman (1991) is another who argues that framing can be a conscious act by news organisations, which “shape their reports to elicit favourable reactions from readers and viewers,” (Entman, 1991, p7). He believes that in fast-breaking news, journalists are encouraged by pre-existing expectations and official descriptions “to perceive, process and report ... information about the event” in ways that support certain frames (Entman, 1991, p8).

Gitlin (1980) claims the homogeneity of news staff produces a common approach to the world which in turn leads to a similarity in emphasis on news themes. While frames are “largely unspoken and unacknowledged” by the media, he says, they “organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports” (Gitlin, 1980, p7).

### **How can framing be detected?**

There are many different approaches taken to detecting frames and framing; for the purposes of this review, it is worth concentrating on a few, including purely qualitative textual analysis, keyword correlations and the list of frames approach.

Fuglsang (2001), in his study of media coverage of motorcycle gangs, argues framing is shown through media reliance on stereotypes of “badass attitude, black leather jackets, heavy boots and denim jeans” (Fuglsang, 2001, p185) – stereotypes which he argues have barely changed in 50 years. What he calls the myth of deviant motorcycle clubs is used by media to illustrate a hazy line between good and evil (Fuglsang, 2001). Fuglsang’s evidence for this assertion is purely qualitative – he cites a range of articles and their coverage of motorcycle gangs dating from reports of a bikers’ weekend in 1947. Although the articles he cites are good examples of the dominant and enduring “menace to society” frame, the study gives no idea of the prevalence of this coverage, whether it waxed or waned over the years or whether use of the frame was consistent across publications.

Tankard (2001) advocates a far more empirical approach to framing, arguing that qualitative, text-analysis approaches by individual researchers “make frame identification a rather subjective process,” (Tankard, 2001, p98). Instead, he urges researchers to take quantitative approaches. Tankard and Israel’s (1997) study relies on Entman’s (1993) model which argues frames “define problems ... diagnose causes ... make moral judgements ... and suggest remedies” (Entman, 1993, p52). The authors used this model to identify what they call an “Atrocity” frame at work in a public relation’s firm campaign over Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Their application of the model was as follows:

1. Definition of the problem – Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.
  2. Cause of the problem – Iraqi aggression, more particularly Saddam Hussein.
  3. Moral judgements – atrocities by Iraqis, with particular focus on the story of babies being removed from incubators. Comparisons of Saddam Hussein with Adolph Hitler.
  4. Remedies – military action by the US and its allies against Iraq
- (Tankard & Israel, 1997, p4).

The authors then carried out Lexis-Nexis searches to determine the use of the baby incubator story in major newspapers. Tankard and Israel (1997) also assessed the existence of a Holocaust frame during coverage of the 1992 Bosnian war, by looking for correlations between the use of the word ‘Serb’ and other keywords. The

authors' finding was that the frequency of stories using the terms "concentration camp" and "Serb" together peaked in the same month in which a public relations campaign that also used these terms was launched (Tankard & Israel, 1997).

There are problems with a keyword-search approach, however. The Bosnian war study noted the correlation between the use of the words in articles and the public relations campaign which also used the words. However, such a quantitative study says nothing about whether one thing caused the other thing. For one thing, use of the words had pre-existed in news media for some time (Tankard & Israel, 1997). Similarly, counting instances of usage makes context problematic. The study counted anti-Serb editorials alleging the existence of concentration camps alongside an article saying US intelligence sources had been unable to confirm such camps existed (Tankard & Israel, 1997). The many contexts in which words can be used put the usefulness of purely quantitative keyword searches in doubt.

Entman (1991) also conducted a keyword search in his study contrasting coverage of the KAL and Iran Air incidents, looking at words such as "attack" and "tragedy" and considering moralising and humanising terminology (Entman, 1991, p18). However, his study was less interested in the number of occurrences of particular words than how they were used. Keywords and phrases were of interest not only because they had been used, but because of the people who had used them; Entman noted, for example, those occasions when a term implying American guilt in the Iran Air shooting was from a source considered legitimate (American or Allied), or illegitimate (Iranian or Soviet) (Entman; 1991). This further level of analysis of a keyword search helps avoid the lack of context inherent in purely quantitative studies.

Tankard (2001) discusses other, broader approaches to quantitative frame analysis, including a "list of frames" approach designed to identify a range of frames that could be present in a particular area under examination. He identifies 11 framing mechanisms for detecting framing, including headlines, subheadings, photographs, captions, leads to stories, enlarged quotes, source selection and final paragraphs (Tankard, 2001, p101). The steps he recommends are to:

- 1 Make the range of possible frames explicit
2. Put the various possible frames in a manifest list

3. Develop keywords, catchphrases and symbols to help detect each frame
4. Use the frames in the list as categories in a content analysis
5. Get coders to code articles or other kinds of content into these categories.

(Tankard, 2001, p102).

While this approach allows framing researchers to start with a list of frames that can then be found and counted in a particular set of texts, it may produce high levels of disagreement when the set is given to several people to code. Studies using the list of frames approach found different coders had high levels of disagreement when given several frames to find, with agreement rising as the number of frames was reduced to two counter-frames, such as “*generally favourable to abortion* and “*generally unfavourable*” (Tankard, 2001).

Bantimaroudis and Ban (2001) adopt a joint qualitative-quantitative approach in their study of coverage of the 1991 crisis in Somalia. The qualitative assessment involved the authors identifying regularly recurring themes and phrases, such as “warlords” or “factions” and “humanitarian operation” or “military operation” (Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001, p178). The authors then undertook a quantitative study of the use of these terms, using Lexis-Nexis to count the number of times the terms appeared over a three year period. The authors concluded that the frames identified by the researchers as salient occurred in both European and American newspapers and appeared of equal importance to both media. They also identified that frames used to describe the crisis changed over time, such as the decline of the use of the word ‘humanitarian’ (Bantimaroudis & Ban, 2001).

Although the Bantimaroudis and Ban (2001) study faces some of the problems in that by Tankard and Israel (1997) – stories referring to a humanitarian crisis, for example, would be counted alongside stories using the word in other senses – it appears to offer a better model than either a purely quantitative or qualitative study for examining frames in news coverage of long-running events. The combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis allows individual articles to be analysed in detail, while also providing an overview of more persistent frames.

As Reese (2001) argues, "... frames are of greatest interest to the extent they add up to something bigger than an individual story," (Reese, 2001, p13).

Finally, Wolfsfeld (1997) offers a useful, if simplistic, method of detecting frames, particularly in conflict stories. He recommends that those who would find the frames that journalists use should try to think like journalists themselves. Thus he suggests that three questions be posed: "How did we cover this conflict in the past? What is the most newsworthy part of this conflict? Who are the good guys?" (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p49). Although he cautions that editors or reporters may never consciously ask these questions when covering conflicts, he argues "they behave *as if they were* asking these questions" [*italics added*] (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p49). Thus it could be expected that the coverage of the first Gulf War might be a major factor in the framing of the second, that the most newsworthy elements of the conflict will be important, no matter whose "side" they support and that the decision as to just who are the good guys would play a major role in the framing of a given article.

### **Factors in the framing of the recent Iraq war**

If Wolfsfeld (1997) is right, and the way a conflict has been covered in the past is an essential part of the framing cycle, then it is worth briefly touching on what impact the coverage of the first Gulf War might have on the coverage of the second. It has been noted widely that in the initial conflict, Western journalists had only limited access to information, with almost all details provided by US officials (Knightley, 2000; Nohrstedt, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Reporters were "denied access to anything not available through routine briefings and press pools, which were accompanied at all times by military handlers. All stories were reviewed by military public information specialists," (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p135).

This denial of access and information had grated on the media, with Wolfsfeld (1997) noting that journalists were frustrated at the time by the situation, but powerless to change it, and that "their anger hardly diminished after the war was over, when many discovered how many stories they had gotten wrong" (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p134). In the latest Iraq war, however, this model of central control of information changed, with the Pentagon's decision to "embed" hundreds of journalists from several countries, sending them to a type of boot camp before

allowing them to accompany military units (Kurtz, 2003; Shafir, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Wilcock, 2003).

Commentators are divided on whether the embedded system was a success for media freedom or another tool of propaganda. On the one hand, many stories that could be construed as negative to the US and Coalition were reported by embedded journalists, including some which would have been impossible to get if the journalists had not been accompanying the troops (Kurtz, 2003; Ricchiardi, 2003; Shafir, 2003; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Wilcock, 2003). However, there is no consensus on the issue of whether that access translated into better reporting of events; instead, there are complaints of inappropriate closeness between media and military (Kurtz, 2003; Shafir, 2003; Wilcock, 2003) and falsification of image and event (Dow, 2003; Lamb, 2003). Some commentators argue that the embedded system was simply another way of ensuring the media framed the war in the way that officials wanted, with:

“the embeds out in the desert ... put there ... to record a great, heart-warming story of rapid advance: Normandy-style cheering crowds, surrendering or fleeing Republican Guards – and the spectacular demise of Saddam. All in a glorious PR week that would see Baghdad taken, peace protesters silenced, [French President Jaques] Chirac humiliated and the world made a safer place for triumphal rhetoric” (Preston, 2003).

What the system did do, however, was throw open the doors to reporters trying to frame the conflict. Instead of a limited exposure to information, and an environment in which frames were set by above, each isolated reporter struggled to put the war into context. The result was “an avalanche from the front” as the media dealt with “hundreds of stories from hundreds of war correspondents in Iraq” (Gay, 2003). While media commentators do not use the word “framing” in describing their coverage, they use terminology that is essentially the same but more in keeping with their profession. New York Times writer R.W. Apple argued that the fact that the American public believed a swift victory to be likely, was partly due to the way the war was being reported. “Any large-scale conflict can be viewed through several lenses, with subtly different results,” he wrote (Apple, 2003). New York Observer writer Jason Gay said that with each new report from the front came a:

“new, contradictory theory. We are conquering. We are not conquering. We are not conquering as fast as we'd expected. The troops are confident. The troops are nervous ... There are reports of American heroes. There are reports of American casualties. There are angry Iraqis. There are happy Iraqis” (Gay, 2003).

In these “theories” emerge examples of rapidly applied frames; just as Entman (1991) predicted, journalists were using a mix of their pre-existing expectations and official descriptions to frame the war.

One other factor that must be considered when assessing the framing of Iraq by Australian newspapers is Australia's role in the Coalition of the Willing, the name given to the group of nations that sided with the US in the war. In the first Gulf conflict, a similar Coalition opposed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Membership of this Coalition was found to have influenced media groups into showing increased support for troops or the action itself (Iyengar & Simon, 1993; Knightley, 2000; Nohrstedt, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 1997). In the recent conflict, however, support for Australia's involvement was less unequivocal than in the 1991 war, raising the question of whether the influence on the media of Coalition membership may have lessened. Wolfsfeld (1997) argues that the success of the American Congress in enlisting so many nations to the US cause in the first Gulf War guaranteed that the US position (and officially generated frames) would be widely heard and legitimised, as “... the fact that there were so many countries joining the American campaign against Iraq ensured a more unified reception by the world media”. (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p185). However he also argues that “a less united political front would have inevitably led to a less consistent media front” (Wolfsfeld, 1997, p185). It seems likely, therefore, that the less united political front which existed in the recent war would have lessened any assumption of legitimacy given to official frames generated by the US and military.

### **Conclusion**

Although considerable work has been done on the use of wire copy by editors, it has tended to follow the gatekeeping theory pioneered in the middle of last century. Although this model has its uses, particularly when looking at how newspapers choose



copy on a range of news subjects, it is less useful when considering how copy in a single category is selected. It is possible, however, when looking at less publicised findings of early research that some trends within the international news set will emerge. Human interest stories have been noted as favourites not only of wire services, but of the wire editors selecting them (Bleske, 1991; White, 1950).

Audiences have shown their interest in stories about individuals and ordinary people, (Hargrove & Stempel, 2002) which may be reflected in editorial choices. Still, some researchers believe the power in story choice lies not with the wire editors at a newspaper, but with the wire services themselves (Whitney & Becker, 1983).

Once the stories have been selected, the literature also provides some clues as to how and why wire stories might be changed. Credibility of the agency and source has been cited as a recurrent issue (Robertson, 2000). There is also considerable audience data suggesting that stories which "back our boys" are more well received than those critical of the troops or war progress (Knightley, 2000; "Paper wars," 2003). Each of these issues could cause editors to recast or rewrite stories.

Framing theory provides a greater insight into ideological and strategic reasons behind editing of stories. Stakeholders involved with the news event use framing as they jostle to have their voice heard (Pan and Kosicki, 2001; Reese, 2001); journalists use frames to organise, exclude or highlight some pieces of information over others (Gitlin, 1980; Reese, 2001; Tankard, 2001; et al.) and editors use framing when they organise the position and presentation of the news (Reese, 2001; McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Frames can be deep, cultural beliefs or they can be shallow and adjustable to changing events (Entman, 1991; Wolfsfeld, 1997).

However existing literature cannot provide one vital part of the picture when looking at the coverage of the recent Iraq war in Australia: just what frames were used? To answer this question requires analysis of what stories were selected, where they came from, what changes were made to them, how the changes were made and what frames were evident in their final form.

## CHAPTER 3 – MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The study has several aims – to assess the extent of wire service use in *The West Australian* and *The Australian* newspapers, the source of that wire copy and whether the copy was episodic or thematic in nature; to determine how the wire copy was used (whether it was shortened or lengthened, edited for stylistic or substantial reasons or combined with other articles before publication); whether different newspapers treated the same wire copy in different ways; and what frames were used in the articles that appeared in one of the sources.

In order to examine so many questions, the studied period is limited to articles published in the three week period of March 19, when United States and allied troops first entered Iraq, to April 10, the day after the fall of Baghdad. This period was widely referred to at the time as “the war” with the suggestion that it had if not ended with Baghdad’s fall, at least wound down. Since that time, however, ongoing conflict involving the post-war occupation has led to the first three weeks being referred to as a stage of the war, or, by commentators such as US pollsters Zogby International, the “Mission Accomplished phase of the war” in reference to a speech on May 1, 2003 by US President George Bush conducted in front of a banner bearing the slogan (Hall, 2003). For the purposes of this study, it is useful to refer to the three weeks as “the war”.

The study has three stages: an origin analysis of articles published in *The West Australian* and *The Australian*; a wire use comparison, considering the use of wire sources in the compilation of specific articles; and a framing analysis, looking at how *The West Australian* framed the war.

### Origin analysis

#### The newspapers

The number of discrete stories on the Iraq War covered by *The West Australian* and *The Australian* was examined over a three-week period. The study concentrated on each paper’s dedicated war coverage and was limited to articles that ran in ‘wraparound sections’ (extra pages devoted to the topic that were used to

enclose the normal daily newspaper), special afternoon editions published to cover the war, and or war sections (the devotion of a series of pages under a strap line or headline naming the topic). An example of the latter might be “Countdown to war” used as a strap line by *The West Australian* across the top of pages on March 19, or *The Australian’s* March 19 strap “Final countdown”.

The two newspapers were selected in order to get a varied example of newspaper practice in Australia. *The Australian* is a national daily with a circulation of 126,000 Monday to Friday and 291,000 on Saturdays (Fairfax, 2004). It also has strong links to overseas publications, particularly other Murdoch newspapers, and is part of a national stable of News Ltd newspapers, which means articles written for one News Ltd publication are often able to be reproduced by another. As noted by Putnis et al (2000), *The Australian* is considered an elite publication with considerable resources. During the period examined, *The Australian* had five correspondents (reporters and photographers) stationed in the war zone, and several more at overseas bureaus in Europe and the United States.

*The West Australian*, in contrast, lacks the resources of the national flagship publications. The metropolitan daily is unique in Australia as it is not part of a major newspaper house. The newspaper is owned by a publicly listed company – WA Newspapers Ltd – which has institutions, including banks and superannuation funds, as its major shareholders. The newspaper does have some affiliation with the Fairfax publications *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, and can run syndicated articles produced by those publications, but lacks any overseas correspondents of its own. It has a circulation of around 376,000 on Saturdays and around 201,000 each day Monday to Friday (Fairfax, 2004).

### **Coding**

The newspapers were each examined to determine the number of discrete articles that appeared during the studied period. For the purposes of the study, ‘article’ was defined as any extensive passage of text published to deliver information relating to the war conflict. The definition included text-based graphics, lists of quotes or transcripts, and exceptional picture captions that extend beyond ordinary descriptions into expansive explanations of events. The definition did not include routine, brief picture captions that served only to identify those in the

photographs, individual headlines, even those disassociated from a story, or house advertisements, such as those encouraging readers to send messages of support to Australian troops.

The articles were each coded with a reduced form of the criteria used by the Putnis et al (2000) study. That study used 26 variables in coding; this study used just four: date published, source, length and form of article (whether it played a major role on the page, a minor role or in between) and type of coverage (whether the article was episodic or event-driven or a thematic, interpretative article).

**Authorship:** To determine authorship, wire services were listed by name, along with three other codes used for article sources: “mix”, “own correspondent” and “not stated”. “Mix” was used where several sources were used, except when the first or second source was an own correspondent, in which case they were coded “own correspondent”. *The Australian* which tended to give bylines to articles, even when not written in-house, often listed several authors as well as wire services. In order to ensure that an article was not classified “mix” inadvertently (such as when a byline was used and the bylined reporter’s agency listed separately), *The Australian’s* articles were coded by first, second and third author as well.

The term “own correspondent” was also used to describe columnists who were not employees of other media organisations and who had been engaged by the newspaper to comment on the war. In instances where no source was noted by a newspaper; these articles were coded “not stated”.

**Length:** Stories were also coded by length, using coding similar to that required by the international Cooperative Study of Foreign News and International News Flow in the 1990s, (Sreberny & Stevenson, 1997). For the purposes of this study, which involved a broadsheet and a tabloid, it was not considered practical to compare story lengths between the newspapers, as even minor articles in *The Australian* often had more words than significant pieces in *The West Australian*. Instead, two systems were used to reflect the relative size of the newspapers.

At *The West Australian*, major articles were classed as those that ‘led’ a page, usually the article carrying the largest font size headline and having 500-plus words. Minor articles were articles such as ‘briefs’, short stories of usually 250 words or fewer. Mid-range articles were classed “medium”, and were usually second or third

in importance on a page of between 250 and 500 words in length. Several text-based graphics that extended to one or two pages of *The West Australian* were coded “major” due to their size, although they had fewer words than other articles in this category.

In *The Australian* sample, articles were classed as “small”, “medium”, “large”, “extra large” and “extremely large”. Most articles leading a page were coded “large”, although in a few cases, almost a full broadsheet page was devoted to one story, making it an “extra large” article. There were also a small number of articles and graphics which took one or two broadsheet pages; these were classed “extremely large”.

**Type of coverage:** Finally, articles were examined to determine whether the article was mainly thematic and interpretive, or mainly episodic and event-driven. The proposal for the Cooperative Study of Foreign News and International News Flow used the terms event story and process story and described the difference as follows:

“(An event story) answers the questions Who? What? When? Where? Process stories may use a specific event as a link to a broader description of social, economic, or political conditions, background, or explanation, or they may be independent of specific events ... they are often written in the present tense – “This is how things ARE” – while event stories are usually written in the past tense” (Sreberny & Stevenson, 1997)

## **Method**

**The two newspaper article sets were examined to establish:**

1. The number of articles were run on the war during the period
2. The authorship or origin of those articles
3. Whether those articles were episodic or thematic
4. The size of the articles used.

The resulting information was then analysed to determine:

5. Whether the use of wire articles in percentage terms changed during the course of the war.
6. What percentage of articles were thematic, or interpretative pieces, and what percentage episodic or event-driven, and whether the use of the styles changed over time.
7. Whether there were any trends in the use of articles of a particular origin or authorship.

### **Wire service comparison**

Once the use of wire articles in the coverage of the Iraq War had been established, it was necessary to determine *how* those articles had been used. For example, if an article on the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch by correspondents from *The Washington Post* was used in *The West Australian*, was it also used in *The Australian*? If so, was it used in its entirety in either newspaper? How was it shortened, edited or combined with other information? This analysis involved sentence-by-sentence examination of individual articles against a base text, as well as against each other.

To do this, a number of “events” in the war were selected, based on their common reporting by a number of newspapers. These formed what was termed “series” in order to summarise the set of articles on the events. Thus, a number of articles about a single battle, which might include different information from different wire articles, are classed together to enable easier comparison of copy. The articles chosen for this analysis were selected for their ability to illustrate the editing process. The criteria considered included

1. Were several wire services used to put together a single article?
2. Were any wire reports used by more than one newspaper?
3. Was the event interesting or significant in the context of war coverage?
4. Was there any obvious sign of editing?

The articles in each series were then examined to determine the sources of the information included. This involved tracing back phrases, sentences and even individual words to wire copy used to compile the articles. Usually, the original wire copy could be found through a combination of searches using Factiva and online databases, although in a few cases, copy which appears to have been drawn from a wire service cannot be traced to its original author. In each series, published articles were deconstructed to highlight which wire articles were used and when, and to illustrate passages where copy editors rewrote or added passages. Changes to wire copy were highlighted as well, to illustrate whether editing was done for stylistic reasons, or to serve another purpose.

### **Framing analysis**

The final stage of this study was a framing analysis, which was limited to articles published in *The West Australian*. This analysis also had a number of methodological stages. Firstly, a range of potential frames were ascertained. Secondly, the entire set of articles that appeared in *The West Australian* was searched to determine the prevalence of these frames. Finally, a keyword analysis was undertaken to assess the use of a number of terms and phrases that could be indicative of framing.

#### **Finding frames:**

The process of detecting frames used a combination of methodologies, drawing on Tankard and Israel (1997), Entman (1991) and Tankard (2001). A rough sample of articles from all stages of the war was briefly examined using the method applied in a study of public relations messages during the first Gulf War by Tankard and Israel (1997). This process, based on Entman (1991), asked what problems the articles raised, what cause was given for those problems, what moral judgements were made (if any) and what remedies were suggested. Where Tankard and Israel (1997) used the method to examine the entire set of messages in a public relations campaign, this study applied it to individual articles, and a list of possible frames was compiled. Following Tankard's (2001) "list of frames" approach, words and phrases were identified to assist in detecting frames.

### **Frame comparison:**

These frames became 16 categories for the framing analysis, and the 522 articles that appeared in *The West Australian* during the examined period were coded into these categories. As previously noted, detecting frames under the “list of frames” approach includes awareness of framing mechanisms such as headlines, photographs, leads and quotes (Tankard, 2001, p101), so these were included in the examination process. In order to gain an accurate picture of how each edition framed the war, frames used in dominant photographs were included if the frame was obvious, even if the photograph and accompanying article had different frames. The cover of the edition, usually a single, full-page photograph and headline, was given particular attention. It is worth noting that in a very small number of cases, no frame could be detected, usually as the article was too brief. In other articles, more than one frame was found to be at work. In these cases, up to two frames were listed if both were seen as vying for dominance in the article.

### **Textual analysis**

Beyond these broad frames, there was also a search for terminology that could further shed light on the frames used by Australian newspapers. Following the method outlined by Entman (1991) a search was made for the use of humanising and moralising terminology. Attempts to describe both the Iraqi people and the Coalition and US soldiers were noted and humanising terms such as “victim” and “tragic” or “tragedy” were examined. A search was also made for moralising terms, such as “liberate”, “liberation” and “liberator”, and “aggression” and “aggressor”. “liberate”, “aggressor” and “hero/heroine”. A general search was also made, noting instances of terms that humanised either the Iraqis or the US and Coalition.



## CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS IN *THE WEST AUSTRALIAN* SAMPLE

### The Sample

In order to discover how a metropolitan daily newspaper – without the resources of a national flagship publication – covered international events, it was decided to examine *The West Australian's* coverage of the 2003 Iraq war. The metropolitan daily is unique in Australia as it is not part of a major newspaper house. The newspaper is owned by a publicly listed company – WA Newspapers Ltd – which has institutions, including banks and superannuation funds, as its major shareholders. The newspaper does have some affiliation with Fairfax publications *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and can run syndicated articles produced by those publications, but it lacks any overseas correspondents of its own. It has a circulation of around 390,000 on Saturdays and around 220,000 each day Monday to Friday (Fairfax, 2004).

Copies of *The West Australian* from March 19 – the day the war officially began - to April 10 – the day after the fall of Baghdad – were examined and the individual articles coded and counted. This period featured 20 days of publication. The set was extended to include special afternoon editions published on Thursday, March 20 and Friday, March 21, taking the total number of editions examined to 22. The afternoon editions (headlined “First strike,” on March 20, and “Invasion,” on March 21) had 9 pages and 12 pages respectively devoted to war coverage. A summary of the pages devoted to war coverage by *The West Australian* can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1 – Pages devoted to war coverage March 19-April 10**

Date	Type of coverage	Pages
March 19	War section	9
March 20 (am)	War section	9
March 20 (pm)	Special afternoon edition	9
March 21 (am)	Wraparound	24
March 21 (pm)	Special afternoon edition	12
March 22	Wraparound	16
March 23	Sunday – no paper	0
March 24	Wraparound	12
March 25	Wraparound	12
March 26	Wraparound	12
March 27	Wraparound	12
March 28	Wraparound	12
March 29	Wraparound	12
March 30	Sunday – no paper	0
March 31	Wraparound	12
April 1	Wraparound	12
April 2	War section	8
April 3	War section	6
April 4	War section	7
April 5	War section	6
April 6	Sunday – no paper	0
April 7	War section	7
April 8	Wraparound	8
April 9	War section	7
April 10	War section	6

As Table 1 shows, the 22 examined newspapers were divided into three categories representing periods of time – the seven-day period from Wednesday, March 19, until Tuesday, March 24 (a period covering eight editions, including the special afternoon editions); the eight-day period from Wednesday March 26 to Wednesday April 2 (covering seven editions); and the eight-day period from Thursday April 3 to Thursday April 10 (seven editions).

### **Wire sources used**

The study found thirteen wire and news agency sources were used in the attribution of articles. These were: Associated Press (AP); Australian Associated Press (AAP); Agence France Presse (AFP); Baltimore Sun; Dallas Morning News; Fairfax; Knight Ridder Tribune; Los Angeles Times; Newsday; Press Association; Reuters; the Telegraph Group, London; Washington Post. Of these sources, AP, AAP, AFP, Press Association and Reuters are traditional news wires, existing to disseminate news to publications and broadcasters. Knight Ridder Tribune acts both as a newspaper owner in the United States and as a news agency. Fairfax refers to articles taken from *The Sydney Morning Herald* or *The Age* newspapers, with which *The West Australian* has syndication links. *The Baltimore Sun*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Newsday*, *Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* are American publications that release articles through the Los Angeles Times/Washington Post wire service to newspapers that subscribe to the service. The Telegraph Group, London, is the coding name given to the publisher of *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Sunday Telegraph*. Like the American newspapers, these articles are disseminated through the Telegraph wire service.

Three other codes were used for the article sources: “mix”, “own correspondent” and “not stated”. “Mix” was used where several sources were used, except when the first or second source was an own correspondent, in which case they were coded “own correspondent”. Own correspondent was also used to describe columnists who were not employees of other media organisations who had been engaged by the newspaper to comment on the war. In many instances no source was noted by the newspaper; these articles were coded “not stated”.

## Results

Of the 522 articles published during the period examined, just 22 per cent are unequivocally written by the newspaper's own correspondents. The remainder are divided between attributed articles from wire services – which accounts for 41.2 per cent of articles – and articles lacking any attribution. It was found the “not stated” category accounts for a surprisingly large 36.8 per cent of all articles published.

Attributed wire articles are drawn from 13 wire services, the most dominant individual sources being Washington Post (with 6.9 per cent of total articles), Los Angeles Times (4.8 per cent), Reuters and Associated Press (each with 4.6 per cent of total articles), the Telegraph Group, London (4.4 per cent) and Agence France Presse (4.2 per cent). Together these sources are responsible for 29.5 per cent of all coverage during the examined period – making them more influential on coverage than the newspaper's own correspondents.

Interestingly, Fairfax articles account as an individual wire service source for just three of the articles published in the examined period – despite the syndication links *The West Australian* has with Fairfax stable papers *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Fairfax correspondent in Baghdad Paul McGeough (a former chief-of-staff at *The West Australian*) is by-lined on four occasions (in two cases, Fairfax articles are combined with other wire services and thus are coded ‘mix’). He is mentioned in the body of articles on three occasions, including once as a correspondent for *The West Australian* without Fairfax receiving attribution.

There is also extensive use of articles that are compiled using more than one wire service or news agency. Articles coded ‘mix’ made up 6.9 per cent of the total coverage. This is important as it suggests these articles underwent changes between transmission by a wire service and publication. Table 2 summarises the use of wire articles and sources, in raw article numbers.

**Table 2 – Number of stories published and wire source**

Source	Mar 19- 25 <sup>a</sup>	Mar 26-Apr 2	Apr 3-10	Total	%
Total wire <sup>b</sup>	85	77	53	215	41.19
Not Stated	94	61	37	192	36.78
Own	65	39	11	115	22.03
W.Post	14	14	8	36	6.90
Mix	12	14	10	36	6.90
LA Times	10	9	6	25	4.79
AP	10	6	8	24	4.60
Reuters	10	7	7	24	4.60
Telegraph	9	7	7	23	4.41
AFP	11	10	1	22	4.21
AAP	4	6	1	11	2.11
KRT	1	1	3	5	0.96
PA	1	1	1	3	0.57
Fairfax	2	1	0	3	0.57
B.Sun	1	0	0	1	0.19
D.M.N.	0	1	0	1	0.19
Newsday	0	0	1	1	0.19
<b>Total</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100.00</b>

a) Period includes afternoon editions on March 20 and March 21

b) "Total wire" is sum of all attributed wire stories including mix category

As can be seen, is a distinct shift in the use of wire copy during the period examined. In week one, unattributed articles (the not stated category) account for 34.8 per cent of articles, compared to 26.6 per cent produced by the newspaper's own correspondents and 38.5 per cent to an attributed wire service. By week two, the percentage of own correspondent articles has slipped to 22 per cent, with attributed

wire articles making up 43.5 per cent of articles published. By the fall of Baghdad in the third week, own correspondent articles make up just 10.9 per cent of articles published. More than half the articles published in this third week (52.5 per cent) are attributed wire service articles. The Washington Post and Los Angeles times are the most used individual services, followed by Associated Press and Reuters. Combined wire articles – the mix category – also grow in proportional importance over the course of the war.

These results suggest that as the war progresses, there is increasing dependence on wire services to supply information about the war. Many early articles written by the newspaper's own correspondents relate to anti-war protests in Australia or statements by Australian politicians about the rationale for war. As the war progresses, more articles are drawn directly from events in Iraq or comments from officials in the US, and this shift can be seen in the increasing use of attributed wire service articles.

### **Lack of attribution**

So attributed wire service copy accounts for almost twice as much of *The West Australian's* coverage of the Iraq War as the newspaper's own correspondents, and the proportional use of wire stories increases as the war goes on, but what of the unattributed articles? Although 41.1 per cent of the articles in the not stated category are classed as minor in size (under 250 words), the category cannot be dismissed merely as unattributed briefs. Over the total period examined, 62 major articles lack any attribution – 11.9 per cent – which raises questions about why attribution is non-existent on articles felt to be important enough to warrant such space.

This lack of attribution has been raised before as a problem for the authors of articles. In a submission to the House of Representatives Select Committee into Print Media, the Australian Centre of Investigative Journalism noted that in the exchange of articles between syndicated newspapers and wire services, "Many journalists are expressing concern that their stories are being published in distant publications without attribution and with substantial changes made without reference back to the author" (Submission to the House of Representatives Select Committee on Print Media, 1991).

This lack of attribution also poses a problem for readers. A study into the coverage of the 1991 Gulf War found US media groups were “unequivocally positive to US policy and to the Coalition, while being more unreservedly negative to Iraq than media from the other countries” (Nohrstedt, 2000, p.207). The author argued that the “dominant position of the US media in the transnational news exchange” (Nohrstedt, 2000, p.181) made dissemination of the US pro-military action position likely. Wolfsfeld (1997) argued similarly that frames put forward by the US Government in the first Gulf war were readily accepted as legitimate by media in countries joined in the Coalition against Iraq, partially because of their close links with the US (Wolfsfeld, 1997). It is possible that if readers of *The West Australian* were made aware of the origin of these unattributed articles, that source would be taken into account when they decided how much weight to place on an article’s information. However, this sort of judgement is impossible if attribution is denied. In *The West Australian* case, the dominant attributed wire articles were predominantly from US media sources (including the Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, and Associated Press). The source of the unattributed articles can only be guessed at. By not attributing more than one in every three articles, readers are not given necessary information about the source – and possible political bias – of these articles.

### **Episodic versus thematic articles**

Of the 522 articles published during the examined period, episodic articles (345) outnumber thematic articles (177) by almost two to one, with the difference greatest towards the end of the ground war. In the first week, 150 episodic articles are published to 94 thematic articles (61.5 per cent episodic). In week two, there are 119 episodic articles to 58 thematic (67.2 per cent episodic), and in week three there are 76 episodic to 25 thematic (75.2 per cent episodic). Overall, 66.1 per cent of all articles are episodic.

Thematic articles do outnumber episodic in some of the early examined editions. The 24-page morning edition of March 21 features 26 episodic articles to 28 thematic articles. On March 22, there are 16 episodic articles to 20 thematic articles, and on March 24, there are 10 episodic to 12 thematic. In contrast, there are 14 episodic articles to a single thematic article on April 9, and ten episodic articles to

one thematic article on April 10. Why the shift? It is possible that the earlier editions are seeking to put the embryonic war into some sort of context and there may have been a limited number of 'events' taking place that could give rise to episodic articles. Alternatively, the extensive space devoted to the war in its early days may play a factor. As noted previously, Horvit (2003) found episodic articles were used more often than thematic articles by newspapers that had little space to devote to international affairs. As the space devoted to coverage diminished, it is possible editors chose to run event-driven articles over the longer thematic pieces.

Although the authors of the thematic articles vary, clear patterns emerge. Articles from Los Angeles Times, Telegraph Group, London and Washington Post are more likely to be thematic than episodic. In contrast, Agence France Presse, Associated Press and Reuters articles are more likely to be episodic than thematic. Table 3 summarises the forms of articles used.



**Table 3 – Forms of articles used and wire source**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Episodic</b>	<b>Thematic</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage episodic</b>
Own	88	27	115	76.5
Not Stated	143	49	192	74.5
Mix	24	12	36	66.7
AFP	19	3	22	86.4
AP	20	4	24	83.3
Reuters	17	7	24	70.8
AAP	7	4	11	63.6
W.Post	12	24	36	33.3
Fairfax	1	2	3	33.3
PA	1	2	3	33.3
LA Times	7	18	25	28
Telegraph	5	18	23	21.7
KRT	1	4	5	20
B.Sun	0	1	1	0
D.M.N.	0	1	1	0
Newsday	0	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>66</b>

Articles by the newspaper's own correspondents are three times as likely to be episodic as thematic, with the newspaper relying heavily on wire services for interpretive pieces. Although some samples are so small as to make the results untrustworthy, it can be concluded that certain wire services are used more for thematic pieces than others, however, with the thematic style dominating articles taken from The Telegraph group, The Los Angeles Times and, to a lesser extent, The Washington Post. In contrast, wire services AAP, AP, Reuters and AFP are used

mainly as providers of episodic articles. Overall, episodic articles are responsible for two-thirds of the coverage.

The space devoted to thematic articles is greater than their raw numbers would suggest, however. Although thematic articles make up just a third of the total articles published, they also account for 42.5 per cent of the 224 major articles published during the period. In contrast, just four of the 107 minor articles published during the period – 3.7 per cent – are thematic.

**Table 4 – Comparing the size of episodic and thematic articles**

Size	Episodic	Thematic	Total	Percentage episodic
Minor	103	4	107	3.7
Medium	113	78	191	59.1
Major	129	95	224	57.5

## CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS IN *THE AUSTRALIAN* SAMPLE

### The Sample

*The Australian* newspaper, as Australia's major national daily, holds an elite position among the newspapers considered in this study. It has significant resources, including overseas bureaus, was able to dispatch five Australian journalists to the war zone and has strong syndication links with other publications in the Murdoch newspaper stable. Besides its own staff, it can also draw on the resources of other publications owned by News Corporation, including *The Courier-Mail* and *The Adelaide Advertiser* in Australia, and *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* in Britain. Its circulation in Australia is 126,000 Monday to Friday and 291,000 on Saturdays (Fairfax, 2004).

This study examined the articles that ran in *The Australian's* dedicated Iraq War coverage during the stated period of March 19 to April 10. This period included 20 editions. As in *The West Australian* sample, the editions were divided into three periods of roughly a week each as Table 1, below, illustrates.

**Table 5 – Pages devoted to war coverage March 19-April 10**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Type of coverage</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>March 19</b>	War section	7
<b>March 20</b>	War section	6
<b>March 21</b>	Wraparound	12
<b>March 22</b>	Wraparound	12
<b>March 23</b>	Sunday – no paper	0
<b>March 24</b>	Wraparound	8
<b>March 25</b>	Wraparound	8
<b>March 26</b>	Wraparound	8
<b>March 27</b>	Wraparound	7
<b>March 28</b>	Wraparound	8
<b>March 29</b>	Wraparound	10
<b>March 30</b>	Sunday – no paper	0
<b>March 31</b>	War section	7
<b>April 1</b>	War section	4
<b>April 2</b>	War section	6
<b>April 3</b>	War section	5
<b>April 4</b>	War section	5
<b>April 5</b>	War section	10
<b>April 6</b>	Sunday – no paper	0
<b>April 7</b>	War section	7
<b>April 8</b>	War section	5
<b>April 9</b>	War section	5
<b>April 10</b>	War section	5

This division separates the examined period into three sections: a six-edition period from March 19 to March 25, a seven-edition period from March 26 to April 2 and a seven-edition period from April 3 to April 10.

### Article sources

*The Australian's* war articles are attributed using a different style to that used by *The West Australian*, making it considerably harder to determine the origin of many reports. There is a general lack of consistency in the use of pre-article bylines and "tag" bylines, a term given to bylines added to the end of articles.

While *The West Australian* tends to reserve pre-article bylines for its own correspondents (with a few exceptions), and tag the stories with the relevant agencies used at the end, *The Australian* uses pre-article bylines for the majority of articles (365 articles, or 72.3 per cent). The newspaper uses these bylines not only for its own correspondents, but also for guest authors, reporters working for newspapers with syndication links – such as *The Times* of London – and on some occasions for reporters working at wire agencies. In total, 126 different bylines are used on *The Australian's* articles, although just 70 belong to writers directly attached to the newspaper. Of the 365 bylined reports, 16.7 per cent are written by reporters not attached to *The Australian* or by other external writers.

This lack of consistency in style prompted a change of categorisation for articles published in *The Australian* to follow the style outlined by Putnis et al (2000) in which the first, second and third named are noted. The origin of first authors in *The Australian* sample is outlined with explanations below:

**Table 6 – ‘First authors’ of articles in *The Australian* sample**

First author	No. of occurrences
Byline given	365
“A correspondent”/“correspondents”	87
Named wire agency	29
“Agencies” (unspecified)	1
Staff reporters (unspecified)	4
No attribution for article	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>

**Byline given:** More than 60 articles that carry a bylined reporter as first author are drawn either from wire services or linked publications. Once again, a question arose over how to treat articles written jointly by an *Australian* reporter and a member of an external publication. To ensure consistency with *The West Australian’s* results, articles that included any *Australian* staff members were classed as being written by an “own correspondent”. Articles written without assistance of own correspondents were classed by the originating wire agency or publication – if known – or by “mix” if more than one source was used. Thus an article by Tony Allen-Mills of *The Sunday Times*, for example, would be classified “Sunday Times” but an article by Knight Ridder correspondent Jessica Guynn, with copy from Associated Press, would be classified “mix”.

**Wire articles:** In 87 articles, the first author is given either as “a correspondent” or “correspondents”. In 29 cases, a named wire agency is given as the first author. In each of these latter cases, the agency is either: Australian Associated Press (4); Agence France Presse (14); Associated Press (7); or Reuters (4). In one case, “agencies” was given as the first author. The absence of the words “correspondent” or an agency name as first author is no guarantee the article was not drawn from the wires, due to the extensive use of bylining outlined above.

**Own correspondents:** In 304 cases, a bylined reporter attached directly to *The Australian* is given as the first author of the report. In a further four instances, “staff reporters” is given as the first author of an article. In cases where the first author is an employee or a person directly linked to the newspaper, the article is classified as having been written by an “own correspondent”. This category includes experts engaged by *The Australian* to analyse the war, but excludes comments by political leaders whose work is merely reprinted. As noted previously, articles written jointly by own correspondents and wire agencies were classed for the purposes of this study as having been written solely by the own correspondent, however the instances where this occurred were noted. This type of combination exists was found in 35 articles over the period examined.

**External authors:** In 14 cases, articles are attributed to people not employed by any newspaper or wire agency, usually indicating that the piece is either an extract of a speech, an analysis written for publication or a portion of a briefing. These articles are categorised as “external” and refer mainly to works attributed to US President George Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, Prime Minister John Howard, former Opposition Leader Simon Crean and Brigadier-General Vincent Brookes. It should be noted that no such category exists in *The West Australian* sample, although speeches were reprinted in that newspaper, as *The West Australian* sourced such external works to a wire service, such as AAP.

## Results

Overall, 60.6 per cent of all articles in the three-week period are written by *The Australian*’s own correspondent. *The Australian* also has a fraction of the unattributed articles seen in *The West Australian* sample, with just 19 of the 505 articles published during the examined period bearing no attribution at all – the “not stated” category. The rest are divided between articles drawn from wire agencies or other linked publications and articles reprinted from speeches or written by people not employed by any newspaper or wire agency.

*The Australian* also increases its reliance on wire copy as the war progresses, although it still has a substantial number of articles written by its own

correspondents. It should be noted, however, that a portion of these “own correspondent” articles (35 in total or 11.4 per cent) include wire copy – although they are not separately categorised for the purposes of this study. Had these been counted as part of the wire copy set, it would have adjusted the overall percentage of own correspondent articles to 53.6 per cent overall rather than 60.6 per cent.

**Table 7 - Number of stories published and wire source**

Source	Mar 19- 25	Mar 26-Apr 2	Apr 3-10	Total	%
Own	127	105	74	306	60.6
Total wire <sup>a</sup>	39	66	61	166	32.9
Not Stated	6	12	1	19	3.7
External	8	1	5	14	2.8
Mix	11	21	19	51	10.1
AFP	7	13	9	29	5.7
London Times	8	9	10	27	5.3
Reuters	3	5	6	14	2.8
KRT	1	6	6	13	2.6
AP	2	5	5	12	2.4
Sunday Times	2	2	2	6	1.2
AAP	2	3	0	5	1
Agencies	1	1	3	5	1
Independent	2	0	0	2	0.4
NY Times	0	1	0	1	0.2
Western Daily Press	0	0	1	1	0.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>100</b>

a) “Total wire” is sum of all attributed wire stories including mix category



In week one, own correspondents are responsible for a very high 70.5 per cent of all articles, with the total number of wire articles used (39) representing just 21.7 per cent of articles published. In the wire article category, combined articles – the “mix” category – dominates, making up 28.2 per cent of the total number of wire articles used and 6.1 per cent of all articles used overall. The most-used individual wire services (or external publications) are *The Times* (20.5 per cent of wire articles) and Agence France Presse (17.9 per cent).

Another 3.3 per cent of articles lack any attribution and 4.4 per cent are classed as “external” – a comparatively high result for this category. This result can be explained by the use of speeches by world leaders outlining their positions on the war in this week. This first week included articles attributed to Prime Minister John Howard, former Federal Opposition Leader Simon Crean, former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and US President George Bush.

In week two, the use of own correspondent copy drops sharply to 57.1 per cent – a 17 per cent fall on the number of articles used in the previous week. At the same time, the reliance on wire articles increases, with 35.8 per cent of all articles drawn from the wires or other external publications. The number of “mix” articles almost doubles, to 21, pushing the category to 31.8 per cent of all wire articles used, or 11.4 per cent overall. Agence France Presse dominates the remaining wire articles, representing 19.7 per cent of the category. Articles from *The Times* make up another 13.6 per cent and Knight Ridder Tribune articles 9 per cent. The use of unattributed articles also doubles in the second week, while the number of external articles falls to just a single use.

In week three, the pattern of growing wire dependence is again shown, as the percentage of articles written by own correspondents drops to 52.5 per cent, while wire article use rises to 43.2 per cent. The number of “mix” articles (19) represents 31.1 per cent of all wire articles, and 13.5 per cent overall. Again, *The Times* and Agence France Presse provide the majority of wire articles, representing 16.4 and 14.8 per cent of all articles published this week. Just one article is unattributed, but the use of external articles returns to 3.5 per cent due to the reprinting of excerpts of military briefings.

## **Episodic versus thematic articles**

*The Australian* sample yields very different results on the question of the predominance of episodic or thematic articles to the sample taken from *The West Australian*. Where two-thirds of *The West*'s articles are episodic, *The Australian* splits its coverage almost 50-50.

In total, 54.9 per cent of articles published over the examined period are episodic – a proportion that is roughly the same throughout the war. Episodic articles make up 55.6 per cent of all articles in the first week; the category rises slightly to 56.5 per cent in week two and drops to 51.8 per cent in week three. Interestingly, the percentage of episodic articles written by the newspaper's own correspondents falls more obviously during the examined period, from a peak of 53.5 per cent of all articles written by staff in week one to 44.6 per cent in week three. The percentage of episodic wire articles also drops during the period, with 63.8 per cent of all wire articles judged to be episodic in week one, and 65.7 per cent in week two but just 59.1 per cent of wire articles classed as episodic in week three.

Table 4, below, illustrates the use of episodic articles by the various sources.

**Table 8 – Forms of articles used and wire source**

Source	Episodic	Thematic	Total	Percentage episodic
Not Stated	15	4	19	78.9
External	9	5	14	64.3
Total wire	104	62	166	62.7
Own	149	157	306	48.7
AAP	5	0	5	100.0
Western D. P.	1	0	1	100.0
AP	10	2	12	83.3
Agencies	4	1	5	80.0
AFP	22	7	29	75.9
Reuters	10	4	14	71.4
Mix	36	15	51	70.6
KRT	8	5	13	61.5
London Times	7	20	27	25.9
Sunday Times	1	5	6	16.7
Independent	0	2	2	0.0
NY Times	0	1	1	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>277</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>54.9</b>

As can be seen, clear distinctions emerge between the various wire and linked publication sources. The small representation played by several sources in the overall results makes some findings unreliable; however the major wire classifications – mix, Times and AFP – show strong patterns. Mixed articles are overwhelmingly episodic, with an average 70.6 per cent event-driven during the examined period. Similarly, AFP articles are dominated by episodic writing, with 75.9 per cent of all AFP articles classed as event-driven. In week two, this classification reaches its peak, with 84.6 per cent of AFP articles episodic. In contrast, articles from *The Times* are predominantly thematic, with just 25.9 per cent

of all Times-coded articles classified as episodic (there was an extreme low in week two, when just 11 per cent of articles from this source fell into the category.)

This suggests a level of selectivity by *The Australian* not seen in *The West Australian* sample. Not only does the strong use of thematic articles back up the argument that newspapers with more space are likely to choose in-depth and analytical stories (Horvit, 2003), but it suggests the newspaper was choosing thematic stories from linked publications over wire services deliberately. This would fit with Robertson’s (1998) findings that editors are uncomfortable relying on the accuracy and objectivity of wire stories. In *The Australian’s* case, the newspaper chooses pieces that interpret the war from other members of its syndication stable rather than using thematic pieces simply plucked off the wires.

Clear trends also emerge in the size of thematic or episodic articles, showing that the number of articles is not necessarily representative of their importance on a page. The smaller the article in *The Australian* – as in *The West Australian* sample – the more likely it was to be episodic, and vice versa. Just 19 per cent of small articles were thematic, (or, put another way, just 1.5 per cent of all thematic articles were run small) while every one of the 19 extremely large articles fell into the category. One-quarter of all thematic articles were either extra large or extremely large compared to just 10.8 per cent of episodic articles, as table 5 illustrates.

**Table 9 – Comparing the size of episodic and thematic articles**

Size	Episodic	Thematic	Total	Percentage episodic
Small	17	4	21	81.0
Medium	71	28	99	71.7
Large	159	140	299	53.2
Extra-large	30	37	67	44.8
Extremely	0	19	19	0.0
Total	277	228	505	54.9

This table again demonstrates that although episodic articles are run more frequently than thematic articles, they are afforded far less space.

## CHAPTER 6 – WIRE COMPARISON FINDINGS

### Examples of wire use

The following chapter features articles that relate to four “events” or incidents in the recent Iraq war: a battle near the town of Najaf; the shooting of a van of Iraqi citizens from the US soldiers’ perspective; the same story from the perspective of the survivors; and the first articles that appeared on the rescue of US soldier Private Jessica Lynch.

Each of the events has been termed a series, to allow articles that relate to the incident to be placed together in order to show how the various newspapers used wire service copy in their coverage. While it would be normal to include such articles in an appendix, they have been inserted into the body of the discussion in this case for ease of reference and comparison.

The four articles are quite different examples of wire service use. The Najaf Series refers to a battle that was covered by a number of different services, although there is evidence that at least some wire services were aware of other wire reports and some elements are repeated between sources. Information came to the sources through several routes, including comments made to an embedded reporter and statements made by soldiers in the field. The series provides a useful example of how multiple sources can be combined into a final article.

The Checkpoint Series is based around an article written by a single source, embedded Washington Post reporter William Branigin, about the shooting of an Iraqi family near a checkpoint. This series explores how different newspapers use a single source in a case where no corroboration or official line is available.

The Hassan Series takes the same incident from a different perspective. Where Branigin interviewed the troops involved in the shooting, Knight Ridder Tribune writer Meg Laughlin spoke to the survivors of the family. The articles reprinted here rely on Laughlin’s story, but also give varying degrees of prominence to the official line, which was printed in a separate wire story.

Finally, the Rescue Series deals with the first reports of the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch from an Iraqi Hospital. Once again, multiple sources were available, although information about the rescue itself was limited to the official line, with no comments initially available from troops involved in the mission or any accounts from embedded reporters. With only the official line, reporters seeking alternative information have turned to Lynch's family and friends, and they are given considerable space in some of the articles.

In all cases, reprinted articles are produced with copy that can be directly traced to a wire service highlighted in a corresponding colour, while text that appears to have been added at the editing level in the newspaper – or which cannot be traced – is highlighted in black bold. Changes are noted as the articles progress, indicating the stylistic nature of many editing decisions, but also recording those occasions where more substantive alterations have been made.

In several instances, information has been linked to a source that has not been credited by the publishing newspaper – in these cases, the copy has been highlighted and the suspected original version of the statement included at the end of the article.

### **The Najaf Series**

On March 27, several Australian newspapers reported news of a major battle near Najaf, including *The West Australian*, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*. Between them, the four newspapers named nine wire sources, although at least 12 were used in the compilation of the articles.

The following reprinted articles are coloured to indicate the origin of the texts. Text written in bold black indicates words added or rewritten by the editors at the publishing newspaper.

## **Bloody battle near Najaf**

*The West Australian* March 27, 2003

**Dateline – Washington**

**Authors – none**

**Attribution – none given.**

**Colour code: Dark Blue for Associated Press; Green for Agence France Presse**

**UNITED STATES forces fought their bloodiest battle of the campaign yesterday**, killing between 150 and 500 Iraqi troops in a fierce fight after coming under attack near the central Iraqi city of Najaf, a US defence official said. (*Minor changes: “killing” for “killed”; “US defence” for “senior defense”.*)

**A US officer closer to the action said the toll might be as high as 650.**

No US casualties were reported, though the official cautioned that few details were immediately available. Elements of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment were east of Najaf when they suddenly came under fire from rocket-propelled grenades. Some of the 7th Cavalry's equipment was damaged in the attack. (*Changed: attribution of both claims to an official dropped.*)

The Iraqi dead included Saddam Fedayeen militiamen and fighters of Mr Saddam's Baath party. **They were using Kalashnikov rifles and rocket-propelled grenades and were heavily outgunned by US Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles.**

(*Changed: honourific added to Saddam; “they were using” for “they battled with”; “and were heavily outgunned by” for “against”. Also, attribution of whole comment to officer dropped.*)

About 250 Iraqis were killed when the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade secured a bridge north of Najaf, towards Baghdad. Another 200 were killed to the west of Najaf and the rest in various other spots. (*Minor changes: “towards Baghdad” for “south of Baghdad”; “to the west” for “near the storage depot west”.*)

Three-hundred Iraqis were taken prisoner and about 100 fled, perhaps to take up positions as snipers. (*Change: drops attribution to officer.*)

The clash was with “dismounted forces” but it was unclear whether they were regular army or irregulars such as the Saddam Fedayeen.

“They fired first,” the official said. “We were engaged.”

The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry is part of the army force driving towards Baghdad.

Some elements of the force are farther north, near Karbala, with only the Medina armoured division of the Republican Guard between them and Baghdad.

Meanwhile, US intelligence has picked up signs suggesting that the closer ground troops get to Baghdad the greater the chance they will face chemical weapons, US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld **warned** yesterday. (*Minor change: “Meanwhile, US intelligence” for “U.S. intelligence, meanwhile”.*)

The Army's 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division is within about 80km of Baghdad, with the Medina armoured division of Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard in its path. (*Minor change: “within about 80km” for “has drawn to within approximately 50 miles”.*)

Elements of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division are approaching the capital from a more easterly direction, and some analysts believe the Army's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, now in southern Iraq, will join the battle for Baghdad.



**'Hundreds' of Iraqis die in battle**

*The Age*, March 27, 2003

**Dateline** – none

**Authors** – Tony Perry, David Wharton

**Attribution** – LA Times, Reuters

**Colour code:** Deep red for Los Angeles Times; Orange for Reuters

Several hundred Iraqi troops were killed near Najaf, south of Baghdad, yesterday in the fiercest ground engagement of the war so far, according to US commanders. (Changed: Original said "... soldiers of the U.S. Army's 7th Cavalry killed several hundred Iraqi troops during a fierce firefight Tuesday near the town of Najaf in central Iraq, the Pentagon said.")

Pentagon officials said up to 300 Iraqis died when they attacked the US Seventh Cavalry near the town, 160 kilometres south of the capital.

Iraqis struck the cavalry regiment with rocket-propelled grenades and anti-tank missiles, disabling two Abrams tanks – some of the Americans' most advanced battle hardware – and hitting a Bradley fighting vehicle. (Changed to drop attribution to an official and adds comment.)

Using thermal imaging to aim through the flying sand, the Seventh Cavalry fired 25-millimetre guns and pushed across the Euphrates River. There were no US casualties, officials said. (Minor change: original said "No U.S. casualties were reported, defense officials said.")

US commanders said yesterday their troops had killed large numbers of Iraqis in the overnight battle, although reports of hundreds of Iraqi deaths could not be independently confirmed. (Changed: "large numbers of" for "as many as 300"; drops "south of Baghdad" after battle.)

Early reports said the Iraqis were on foot, perhaps a military unit from the town of Kut. But the officials said they also could have been regular army or members of the Republican Guard. (Minor change: drops "Saddam Hussein's" before "Republican guard.")

A Reuters correspondent with US forces near Najaf said officers in the field reported a furious two-hour battle between American tanks and Iraqi fighters with rocket-propelled grenades. (Minor change: name of correspondent Luke Baker omitted.)

A dozen or more US tanks became stranded on the far side of a river after Iraqis blew up a bridge they had crossed. More US tanks were sent in to help. Commanders on the ground gave no information on casualties on either side, beyond saying that they expected the Iraqi death toll to be "very high".

A correspondent for Britain's Sky television said a senior US officer near Najaf told him 650 Iraqis could have died in the Najaf attack. (Changed: original said "a senior US officer near Najaf told him the Iraqi death toll could be 650 among thousands of infantry forces facing the Americans.")

If confirmed, it would be by far the bloodiest encounter in six days of fighting – though it appeared that the sandstorm could hamper efforts to make an accurate body count. (Minor change: original said "it would be hard to make an



*accurate body count in the sandstorm affecting the area throughout the night and into the morning."*)

In Washington, the Pentagon said 150 to 300 Iraqis might have been killed when they attacked the US Seventh Cavalry's tanks. *(Minor change: original said "tanks of the US 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry near Najaf.")*

"Apparently ground forces tried to hit some of our guys with rocket-propelled grenades," an official said. "They did damage a couple of pieces of our gear but we've had no reports of casualties on our side.

"Apparently there are some reports that we may have killed quite a few of them.

"Estimates differ. Some say 200-300. Some say 150. Some reports had suggested as many as 500 Iraqis had been killed." *(Change: quote changed to include last sentence. Originally cast as indirect speech.)*

## US claims 650 enemy killed

*The Australian*, March 27, 2003

**Dateline – Washington**

**Authors – Correspondents near Najaf**

**Attribution – AFP, KRT**

**Colour code: Green for Agence France Presse; Violet for first Knight Ridder**

**Tribune report, Purple for second KRT report. Brown for possible new wire source**

US troops backed by tanks killed 650 Iraqis in **desperate fighting** around the central town of Najaf, a US officer said, in what appeared to be the most lopsided victory of the Iraq war so far.

About 200 of the deaths were reported around a storage depot that had come under scrutiny as a possible chemical weapons factory, said Major John Altman, intelligence officer of the Third Infantry Division's First Brigade. *(Minor changes: words added; tenses adjusted.)*

Major Altman said there were no American **losses** in fighting around the Shi'ite Muslim centre **near where US forces were massed for a decisive push on Baghdad**. *(Minor changes: "losses" for "casualties"; plus additional comment.)*

"An estimated 650 Iraqis were killed over the last 24 hours in the Najaf area," Major Altman said, **updating earlier estimates from Washington of a death toll** somewhere between 150 and 300. *(Minor changes: "updating earlier estimates from Washington of a death toll," for "while US officials in Washington earlier put the Iraqi death toll".)*

He said the Iraqi dead included Fedayeen militiamen and fighters of Hussein's ruling **Sunni Muslim-dominated** Baath party who battled with Kalashnikov rifles and rocket-propelled grenades against US Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles. *(Minor changes: "Hussein" for "Saddam"; plus additional comment.)*

**About** 250 Iraqis were killed when the First Brigade secured a bridge north of Najaf, located 120km south of Baghdad, Major Altman said. *(Minor change: "about" for "some".)*

Another 200 were killed near the storage depot west of Najaf and the rest in various other **areas**. *(Minor change: "areas" for "spots".)*

Major Altman said 300 Iraqis were taken prisoner and about 100 fled, some perhaps to take up positions as snipers.

A Pentagon official said a US tank was disabled by grenade fire in the fighting and two other vehicles of the US Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment were damaged.

Elements of the US Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment engaged the Iraqis after coming under grenade fire that damaged some US equipment said the official, who asked not to be named. *(This may not be in all versions of AFP story.)*

However, the equipment appeared to have included two M1-A1 Abrams tanks. The Iraqis were also launching wire-guided missiles from pick-up trucks as they rode around the countryside. *(It is not clear where this paragraph comes from – no corresponding text was found in any named source material. A similar paragraph*

*appears in the SMH copy, taken from Reuters, and attributed to CNN. Reuters is not a named source for this article. See discussion for further details.)*

Marines replied to the attacks with “the full packet” – Air Force and Marine jets, Cobra attack helicopters, artillery, tanks and armoured personnel carriers, **according to** Lieutenant Colonel David Pere at the Combat Operations Centre for the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force. *(Minor change: “according to” rather than “said”).*

Marines reported knocking out 10 Iraqi T-55 tanks, an artillery piece and a ZSU anti-aircraft cannon as they punched their way through one bridge over the Euphrates and a span just north of that over a canal.

Iraqi forces put up a surrender flag at one point but continued to fire on the US forces. *(Change: attribution of this claim to marines is dropped.)*

Major Altman said the Iraqis were attempting to reinforce Najaf with thousands of elite Republican Guard troops from the holy town of Karbala, about 60km to the north. *(Minor changes: reordering of paragraphs from original AFP copy, adjective “holy” added to Karbala).*

Reporters travelling with troops along the 250km supply route that stretches from Nasiriyah to north of Najaf reported extreme tension. At one forward position, soldiers asked a reporter to carry a pistol to help protect the perimeter. *(Minor changes: paragraphs trimmed, but largely unchanged Taken from a second KRT report.)*



## Two hours of death in the sand

*The Sydney Morning Herald, March 27, 2003*

**Dateline – Kuwait City**

**Authors – Patrick Tyler**

**Attribution – New York Times, Reuters, AFP**

**Colour code: Blue for New York Times, Maroon for second New York Times article, Pink for third New York Times article, Orange for Reuters, Green for Agence France Presse,**

United States forces killed at least 150 Iraqi soldiers after being attacked in a swirling sandstorm about 160 kilometres south of Baghdad in what **could** be the biggest battle of the war so far, **US military** officials said. (Minor changes: “could” for “may”; “United States” for “American”; “US military” for “senior American”.)

**One army officer said the number of Iraqi deaths could be as high as 650.** (Changed: original said “A correspondent for Britain’s Sky television said a senior US officer near Najaf told him the Iraqi death toll could be 650 among thousands of infantry forces facing the Americans.”)

Soldiers from the 7th Cavalry of the 3rd Infantry Division had moved to the east bank of the Euphrates River, near Najaf, on Tuesday when fedayeen **militia** and regular Iraqi soldiers attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire from **utilities and four-wheel drive vehicles**. (Minor changes: “militia” for “militiamen”; “utilities and four wheel drive vehicles” for “pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles”.)

**A dozen or more US tanks had become stranded on the far side of a river after Iraqis blew up a bridge they had crossed. More US tanks were sent in to help.**

Before the exchange was finished, **hundreds of Iraqis were dead** and more than 35 vehicles destroyed, according to **widely ranging estimates** from US officials. There was no word on American casualties. (Minor changes: “hundreds of Iraqis were dead” for “American forces had killed between 150 and 450 Iraqis”; “widely ranging estimates” for “various estimates”; “US officials,” for “American officials”.)

**Reuters correspondent Luke Baker, with US forces near Najaf, 140 kilometres south of the capital, said officers in the field reported a furious two-hour battle** (Changed: drops “between American tanks and Iraqi fighters with rocket-propelled grenades” after “battle”).

**Commanders on the ground gave no information on casualties on either side beyond saying that they expected the Iraqi death toll to be “very high”.**

**“An estimated 650 Iraqis were killed over the last 24 hours in the Najaf area,”** said Major John Altman, intelligence officer of the 3rd Infantry Division’s 1st Brigade.

**If confirmed, it would be by far the bloodiest encounter so far, though it appeared that it would be hard to make an accurate body count in the sandstorm affecting the area throughout the night and into Wednesday morning.** (Minor change: “so far” for “in six days of fighting”.)

A CNN correspondent with the 7th Cavalry quoted US officers in the field saying Iraqis using wire-guided missiles from **utilities** had knocked out two M1-A1 Abrams tanks, some of the Americans' most advanced battle hardware. (Minor changes, "utilities" for "pick-up trucks".)

Allied bombers on Tuesday flew 1400 missions across the country, focusing their attack on the Republican Guard division blocking the US approach to Baghdad and on the capital itself, **military officials said**. (Minor changes: "US approach" for "US Army's approach", plus extra attribution).

General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicated on Tuesday that air attacks on the Republican Guard's Medina Division would be followed by a full-scale tank assault aimed at destroying the capital's outer ring of defence. (Minor changes: defence for defences; Republican Guard's Medina Division for Medina Division of the Iraqi Republican Guard).

US and British forces said they had taken about 3500 Iraqi prisoners and would provide Red Cross access to them in the next few days.

**In Washington, US officials claimed that** some of the army mechanics captured on Sunday after taking a wrong turn in Nasiriyah were **apparently** executed by their captors, probably in front of townspeople in the area. (Minor changes: additional phrase and added word "apparently".)

The officials cautioned that the information was based on a single source, apparently a communications intercept, and that they were seeking corroborating evidence.

**The accusations came days after footage of the prisoners and dead soldiers was broadcast on Al-Jazeera, the Arab satellite television network.**

### Discussion of the Najaf Series

As can be seen in this rather colourful example, the four articles cite nine sources between them but at least 12 individual wire articles are used. AFP is used by three of the four articles (those in *The West Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian*), while Reuters is used in two publications (*The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*). While not certain, it is possible Reuters was also used by *The Australian* without any attribution.

In considering how newspapers used wire services in the Najaf series of articles, it is useful to concentrate on a number of elements in the stories: the death toll, who started the fighting, how the battle is described, the credibility of details and sources.

#### The death toll

Each of the newspapers conceded that the possible toll of 650 had not been independently confirmed, yet they all reported it – three of them either in the headline, first paragraph or second sentence. Only *The Age* ran the figure in the middle of the story.

*The West Australian's* introduction estimates that US troops had killed “between 150 and 500 Iraqi troops” (“Bloody battle near Najaf,” 2003). This comment, drawn from AP, is followed by the claim “A US officer closer to the action said the toll might be as high as 650.” This sentence does not appear to be drawn directly from wire copy, but is similar to comments taken from the same AFP copy used for other information in the article.

*The Age* attributes the figure of “up to 300” dead to “Pentagon officials” – comments drawn directly from LA Times copy. However, it later includes the 650 figure, in copy taken from Reuters, which cites a correspondent for Britain’s Sky Television as the source. That correspondent had in turn attributed the comment to “a senior US officer near Najaf” (Perry & Wharton, 2003).

*The Australian*, relying on AFP, gives the 650 toll both in its headline and opening paragraph, attributing it to “a US officer”. It later gives further details of the officer, naming him as Major John Altman, “intelligence officer of the Third Infantry Division’s First Brigade” (“US claims 650 enemy killed in Najaf fighting,” 2003). It

is not clear whether Major Altman is the “senior US officer near Najaf” mentioned in *The Age* article (in the copy taken from Reuters which includes the reference to a Sky Television reporter). It is clear, however, that Major Altman is the “US officer closer to the action” who is quoted in *The West Australian’s* article (“Bloody battle near Najaf,” 2003). Finally, *The Sydney Morning Herald* runs an edited version of the Reuters copy, shortening the wire service’s original sentence explaining where the figure had come from and removing the acknowledgement that the reporter had the officer’s estimate second-hand, by editing it to “One army officer said the number of Iraqi deaths could be as high as 650” (Tyler, 2003).

This disparity between tolls – and statements showing the origin of the tolls – highlights the difficulty for subeditors to establish who said what and to whom. It also raises the likelihood that wire services are inadvertently reinforcing each other by repeating claims without clear attribution. For example, the Reuters report of the Sky News correspondent’s conversation with a “senior US officer near Najaf”, may refer to a Sky News interview with Major Altman or another officer altogether. Similarly, the AFP comments from Major Altman may be an example of another officer confirming the report made by the “senior US officer” in the Reuters report, or they may be two different accounts of the same briefing.

Although the information given by Reuters and AFP is almost identical, the AFP report carries extra credibility as it names the officer involved, is apparently a first-hand account of a conversation, and backs up Major Altman’s comments with a geographical breakdown of where at least 450 of the possible 650 were killed. This air of credibility may be why *The West Australian* takes Major Altman’s comments a step further and repeats them as being factual by dropping any attribution. His comment, for example, that about 300 Iraqis “had been taken prisoner” while 100 fled “some perhaps to take up positions as snipers” is published without any suggestion that a single officer is the source (“Bloody battle near Najaf,” 2003).

### **Who started the fighting**

All four newspapers examined agree the Iraqi soldiers started the fighting, although they place varying degrees of emphasis on this information.



*The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The West Australian* and *The Age* claim in the first or second paragraphs of their respective articles that the American troops had come under attack. Only *The Australian* does not make this claim, and it is conspicuous by its absence. Nowhere in *The Australian's* article does it say who fired the first shots, although by the use of the term "desperate fighting" (added by an editor at the newspaper to the wire copy) seems to suggest more that the Iraqis were struggling against superior forces, rather than acting as the aggressors. Indeed, the selective use of comments from Major Altman, such as "About 250 Iraqis were killed when the First Brigade secured a bridge north of Najaf," seems to suggest it was the Americans who provoked the confrontation ("US claims 650 enemy killed in Najaf fighting," 2003). *The Australian's* introduction is arguably the most sympathetic to the Iraqi soldiers of the four examined. *The West Australian* and *The Age* are reasonably neutral in their opening paragraphs, *The Sydney Morning Herald* captures the sense of drama offered by a fierce battle conducted in a "swirling sandstorm", while *The Australian* adds a sense of inevitability to the American battle victory.

### **How the battle is described**

In describing the battle, three of the newspapers – *The West Australian*, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* – concur and label the battle one of the "bloodiest" encounters of the campaign in thus far.

*The West Australian* describes an attack by Iraqi soldiers that was "sudden" and developed into a "fierce" fight. *The Age* gives a similar element of surprise in its statement that the Iraqi troops "struck" the cavalry regiments, in the "fiercest ground engagement" in the short-lived war (Perry & Wharton, 2003). *The Sydney Morning Herald*, with its dramatic headline, describes the battle as a brief yet bloody affair, in which Iraqi soldiers "attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and small-arms fire from utilities and four-wheel drive vehicles" but "... before the exchange was finished, hundreds of Iraqis were dead" (Tyler, 2003).

Again, *The Australian* differs in its description of the battle. Instead of the word bloody, which is accurate if not partisan, it uses the term "lopsided" – a word drawn from a wire article by AFP. This reinforces the idea that the Iraqis are outgunned by a superior force and could be evidence of a sympathetic treatment by



the wire service at least. While its headline seems less sympathetic – *The Australian* uses the word ‘enemy’ in to describe the combatants and is the only newspaper to do so – it puts the word in the mouth of the US. In contrast, *The Age’s* use of “Iraqis” in its headline fails to distinguish that the dead were from an opposing army, while *The West Australian* takes a neutral stance by focusing its headline on the battle, not the death toll.

Another, relatively minor difference is the description of where the deaths occurred. *The West Australian* and *The Australian* attempt to give locations of the battles (around a storage depot and north of Najaf near a bridge). *The Age* adds that the Iraqis were apparently on foot (which could be read as inclusion of sympathetic information) and may have come from the town of Kut. *The Sydney Morning Herald* extends its report by incorporating information from other breaking stories, including an update on the number of Iraqi prisoners taken by the Coalition troops, and the number of sorties believed to have been flown across Iraq (both details reinforcing the suggestion of American dominance of the battlefield).

*The Australian*, which appears to use two KRT reports as well as an AFP report and an uncredited source, adds extra information not given elsewhere about the Coalition’s military response. It makes two claims not made in the other articles: that “Iraqi forces put up a surrender flag at one point but continued to fire on the US forces” and that “at one forward position, soldiers asked a reporter to carry a pistol to help protect the perimeter”. No attribution is given for either claim, although the former comment has been edited to remove its attribution to US marines. The suggestion that Iraqis fired despite claiming to surrender can only be read as negative, while the second point, a reporter being asked to become involved in protection, can be read either as reflecting the many risks faced by US forces on the battlefield, or as suggesting that the Americans still were vulnerable to attack.

### **Credibility of details and sources**

As already noted, the use of multiple wire services may inadvertently over-emphasise claims through the repetition of sources, as in the case of the 650 death toll. Another example arises in *The Australian* article’s statement that “Iraqis were launching wire-guided missiles from pick-up trucks as they rode around the countryside” (“US claims 650 enemy killed in Najaf fighting,” 2003). The

newspaper gives no attribution for this claim, nor does it appear to come from the named wire sources, AFP and KRT. It is, however, similar to a paragraph in *The Sydney Morning Herald* drawn from the Reuters wire copy: “A CNN correspondent with the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry quoted US officers in the field saying Iraqis using wire-guided missiles from utilities had knocked out two M1-A1 Abrams tanks”.

Reuters is not a named source for *The Australian*’s article, but it is possible that editors at *The Australian* either used the Reuters information without attributing it, or included the information directly from a CNN broadcast. A statement similar to this claim appears in a CNN article published on March 28, 2003, which sourced the comment that “Iraqis are also launching TOW wire-guided missiles from pick-ups” to unnamed US officers (CNN, 2003). That statement did not mention anything about Abrams tanks, however. If the claim about missiles being used to disable Abrams tanks is accurate, it may be of little importance who originally reported the information. However it is interesting to note that the claim that the Iraqis had been able to take out two of the Abrams tanks was greeted with both scepticism and alarm by military watchers, as it was believed that the tanks should have been able to withstand such an attack (Roos, 2003).

Finally, this series of article also demonstrates the willingness of newspapers to rely on official sources and other media, even when the information is not independently confirmed. *The West Australian* and *The Australian* both drop the attribution of some claims to US officers, instead reporting details as facts; *The Age* drops the provenance of the 650 death toll; reducing the ability of readers to judge its likely accuracy for themselves. Only the *Sydney Morning Herald* keeps all military attributions and the history of the death toll estimate, and goes so far as to attach the word “claimed” to military officials rather than “said” and the phrase “wide ranging estimates” instead of the more conservative “various estimates” when describing the frequently changing death toll (Tyler, 2003).

## The Checkpoint Series

On April 2, a series of articles about a mass shooting of Iraqi civilians appeared in Australian newspapers based on a story written by *Washington Post* reporter William Branigin who was embedded with the 3rd Infantry Division and witnessed the shooting (*Covering the war*, 2003; Giles, 2003; *Official story vs eyewitness account - on Najaf killings, some outlets seem to prefer the sanitized version*, 2003; T. Smith, 2003). His eye-witness account makes compelling reading, and was reprinted around the world, including in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The West Australian* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

Where the Najaf Series examined the use of at least 12 sources by different newspapers, the following series explores how different newspapers used a single wire article, in a case where no corroboration was available. Once again, text apparently written by editors at the publishing newspaper (or lacking any clear wire source) is highlighted in bold.

## Jumpy troops trigger a nightmare on Highway 9

*The Sydney Morning Herald, April 2, 2003*

**Authors – none**

**Attribution – Washington Post**

**Colour code: Green for Washington Post.**

As an unidentified four-wheel-drive vehicle came barrelling towards an intersection held by troops of the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division, Captain Ronny Johnson grew increasingly alarmed.

From his position at the intersection, he was heard radioing to one of his forward platoons of M2 Bradley fighting vehicles to alert it to what he described as a potential threat.

"Fire a warning shot," he ordered as the vehicle kept coming. Then, with increasing urgency, he told the platoon to shoot a 7.62mm machine-gun round into its radiator.

"Stop [messing] around!" **he** yelled into the company radio network when he still saw no action being taken. Finally, he shouted at the top of his voice: "Stop him, Red 1, stop him."

That order was immediately followed by the loud reports of 25mm cannon fire from one or more of the Bradleys. About half a dozen shots were heard. (*Minor changes: "platoon's" dropped before Bradleys; "in all" dropped after "shots were heard".*)

"Cease fire," Captain Johnson yelled over the radio. Then, as he peered into his binoculars from the intersection on Highway 9, he roared at the platoon leader: "You just [expletive] killed a family because you didn't fire a warning shot soon enough."

So it was that on a warm, hazy day in central Iraq, the fog of war descended on Bravo Company.

Fifteen civilians were inside the packed Toyota, **it turned out**, along with their possessions. (*Minor changes: "inside the packed Toyota" for "packed inside the Toyota", attribution to officers dropped, "along with their possessions" for "along with as many of their possessions as the jammed vehicle could hold."*)

Ten of them, including five children who appeared to be under five years old, were killed on the spot when the high-explosive rounds slammed into their target, **Captain Johnson's** company reported. Of the five others, one man was so severely injured that medics said he was not expected to live.

"It was the most horrible thing I've ever seen, and I hope I never see it again," Sergeant Mario Manzano, 26, **a Bravo Company medic said**.

One wounded woman **had remained** in the vehicle holding the bodies of two of her children. "She didn't want to get out of the car." (*Minor changes: drops attribution of sentence and quote to Sgt Manzano, drops "mangled" before "bodies".*)

The tragedy cast a pall over the company as it sat in positions it occupied on Sunday on this key stretch of highway at the intersection of a road leading to the town of Hillah, about **22 kilometres** to the east. The Toyota was coming from that direction when it was fired on.

Dealing with the gruesome scene was a new experience for many of the soldiers here, and they debated how it could have been avoided. (*Minor changes: "many of*



*the soldiers here” for “many of the US soldiers deployed here”; drops “the tragedy” before “could have been avoided”.)*

Several said they accepted the platoon leader's explanation to **Captain Johnson** on the radio that he had, in fact, fired two warning shots, but the driver failed to stop. And everybody was edgy, they realised, since four US soldiers were blown up by a suicide bomber on Saturday at a checkpoint much like theirs **just 32 kilometres** to the south.

On a day of sporadic fighting on the roads and in the farms and wooded areas around the intersection, the soldiers of Bravo Company had their own reasons to be edgy.

The Bradley of the 3rd Battalion's operations officer, Major Roger Shuck, **had been** fired on by a rocket-propelled grenade a couple of **kilometres** south of Karbala.

No one in the vehicle was seriously injured, but **the major had experienced breathing difficulties** afterwards and had to be treated with oxygen, medics said.

*(Minor changes: “the major had experienced breathing difficulties” for “Shuck had difficulty breathing”.)*

That happened after a column of M-1 Abrams tanks headed north to Karbala in the early afternoon and returned a couple of hours later.

Throughout the day, Iraqis lobbed periodic mortar volleys at the **Americans**, and Iraqi militiamen and soldiers tried to penetrate their lines.

Later, multiple-launcher vehicles had fired rockets to try to take out the mortars, and AH-64 Apache helicopters swooped low over the arid terrain in search of other enemy guns emplacements.

It was in the late afternoon, after this day of defending their positions, that the men of Bravo Company saw the blue Toyota coming, and reacted.

After the shooting, medics evacuated the survivors to US lines south of here. One woman escaped without a scratch. Another, who had superficial head wounds, was flown by helicopter to a field hospital when it was learnt she was pregnant.

Lieutenant-Colonel Stephen Twitty, the 3rd Battalion commander, gave permission for three of the survivors to return to the vehicle and recover the bodies of their loved ones.

“They wanted to bury them before the dogs got to them,” said **28-year-old** Corporal Brian Truenow.

Medics gave the group 10 body bags and US officials offered an unspecified amount of money as compensation.

In Washington, the Pentagon issued a statement saying that the vehicle had been fired on after the driver ignored shouted orders and warning shots. The shooting, it said, **was being investigated**. *(Minor change: “was being investigated” for “is under investigation”.)*

The Pentagon account **said** the vehicle was a van carrying “13 women and children”. Seven **had been** killed, two injured and four were unharmed. **It did not mention any men**. *(Changed: quote marks added, “had been” for “were”, “It did not mention any men” for “without mentioning any men”.)*

**Captain Johnson has now** ordered that signs be posted in Arabic to warn people to stop well short of the Bradleys guarding the eastern approach to the intersection.



## **A drive straight into death**

*The Age April 2, 2003*

**Authors – William Branigin**

**Dateline – Central Iraq**

**Attribution – The Washington Post.**

**Colour code: Green for Washington Post.**

**A child-laden car, shouted orders, confusion - then slaughter, writes William Branigin from central Iraq.**

As an unidentified four-wheel-drive vehicle came barrelling towards an intersection held by troops of the US Army's 3rd Infantry Division, Captain Ronny Johnson grew alarmed. From his position at the intersection, he was heard **on the radio** to one of his forward platoons of M2 Bradley fighting vehicles, **alerting** it to a potential threat. (Minor changes: US added; "on the radio" for "radioing", "alerting" for "to alert"; drops "what he described as" before "potential threat".)

"Fire a warning shot," he ordered as the vehicle kept coming. Then, with increasing urgency, he told the platoon to shoot into its radiator. "Stop (messing) around," Captain Johnson yelled into the company radio network when he saw no action being taken. (Minor change: drops "7.62mm machine gun round" before "into its radiator"; "saw no action" for "still saw no action".)

Finally, he shouted: "Stop him, Red 1, stop him." (Minor change: drops "at the top of his voice".) That order was immediately followed by the loud reports of cannon fire. (Changed: drops "25mm" before cannon fire; drops "from one or more of the platoon's Bradleys" as final phrase.)

About half a dozen shots were heard. (Minor change: drops "in all" at end).

"Cease fire," Captain Johnson yelled over the radio. Then, as he peered into his binoculars from the intersection on Highway 9, he roared at the platoon leader: "You just (expletive) killed a family because you didn't fire a warning shot soon enough." So it was that on a warm, hazy day in central Iraq, the fog of war descended on Bravo Company. Fifteen Iraqi civilians were packed inside the Toyota, along with as many of their possessions as the vehicle could hold. (Minor changes: drops "jammed" before "vehicle"; drops attribution of claim to officers.)

Ten, including five children who appeared to be under five, were killed, Captain Johnson's company reported. Of the five others, one man was so severely injured he was not expected to live. (Changed: drops "of the occupants" after "ten"; "were killed" for "were killed on the spot when the high-explosive rounds slammed into their target, Johnson's company reported".)

**According to the Pentagon**, the vehicle was fired on after the driver ignored shouted orders and warning shots. A statement said the vehicle was a van carrying "13 women and children". The statement claimed seven were killed and two injured. (Changed: This information was added late to the Washington Post wire copy and appears to have been given extra prominence in The Age article.)

**In Doha, Qatar, US Central Command issued a statement, saying: "In light of recent terrorist attacks by the Iraqi regime, the soldiers exercised considerable restraint to avoid the unnecessary loss of life."\***



The shooting is being investigated.

**Back at the scene**, Sergeant Mario Manzano, 26, a medic with Bravo Company of the division's 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, said: "It was the most horrible thing I've ever seen, and I hope I never see it again." *(Minor changes: quote style changed to place attribution first; drops "Army" before "medic"; substitutes "Back at the scene" instead of "later in an interview".)*

He said one wounded woman sat in the vehicle holding the mangled bodies of two of her children. "She didn't want to get out of the car," he said.

The tragedy cast a pall over the company as it sat on this stretch of Highway 9 at the intersection of a road leading to Hilla, about 20 kilometres to the east, near the Euphrates River. *(Minor changes: "sat on this stretch" for "in positions it had occupied Sunday on this key stretch"; distance changed to metric; drops detail that the Toyota had approached from this direction.)*

Dealing with the gruesome scene was a new experience for many of the soldiers. *(Minor change: drops deployed here.)* They debated how the tragedy could have been avoided. Several said they accepted the platoon leader's explanation to Captain Johnson on the military radio that he had fired two warning shots, but that the driver failed to stop. And everybody was edgy since four US soldiers were blown up by a suicide bomber on Saturday at a checkpoint much like theirs, only 30 kilometres to the south. *(Minor changes: drops "in fact" before "fired two warning shots"; adds "drops "they realised" after "edgy"; distance changed to metric".)*

The soldiers of Bravo Company had their own reasons to be edgy. *(Minor changes: drops "on a day of sporadic fighting on the roads and in the farms and wooded areas around the intersection," as opening phrase.)*

The Bradley tank of the 3rd Battalion's operations officer, Major Roger Shuck, had been fired on with a rocket-propelled grenade a few kilometres south of Karbala. Throughout the day, Iraqis lobbed mortar volleys. *(Minor changes: details of attack on Shuck dropped; drops "mortar volleys" for "periodic mortar volleys at the US troops and Iraqi militiamen and soldiers tried to penetrate the US lines".)*

It was in the late afternoon after this day defending their positions that the men of Bravo Company saw the blue Toyota coming down the road. After the shooting, US medics evacuated survivors to US lines south of Karbala. One woman escaped without a scratch. Another, who had superficial head wounds, was flown by helicopter to a US field hospital when it was found she was pregnant. *(Minor changes: "Karbala" for "here"; "found she was pregnant" for "learned she was pregnant"; drops Johnson's explanation for his initial suspicion that the driver might have been a suicide bomber.)*

Lieutenant-Colonel Stephen Twitty, the 3rd Battalion commander, gave permission for three survivors to return to the vehicle and recover the bodies of their loved ones. "They wanted to bury them before the dogs got to them," said Corporal Brian Truenow, 28. To try to prevent a recurrence, Captain Johnson ordered signs be posted in Arabic to warn people to stop well short of the Bradleys. Before the signs could be erected, 10 people with white flags walked down the road and were allowed to walk around the Bradleys. **And the war continued.**

*(Minor changes: incident of people carrying flags abbreviated but unchanged; final line added.)*

*\* As this statement was reported by a number of news agencies, it is not clear from where the line was taken. It does not appear in the original Washington Post copy.*



**Ten die as nerves fail**

*The West Australian* April 2, 2003

**Authors – none**

**Dateline – Karbala**

**Attribution – Washington Post.**

**Colour code: Green for Washington Post; Deep Red for Agence France Presse.**

**Deadly equation: innocent family car, engines of battle and the fog of war**

CAPT. RONNY JOHNSON grew increasingly alarmed as he watched a plain blue four-wheel-drive vehicle speeding towards a key intersection held by troops of his US Army 3rd Infantry Division. *(Changed: Sentence reversed to remove subordinate phrase at beginning; adds details; "his US Army" for "Army".)*

He radioed one of his forward platoons of M2 Bradley fighting vehicles: "Fire a warning shot." Nothing appeared to happen, and the car kept coming.

With urgency, he said, "Stop messing around", and told the platoon to shoot a 7.62mm round into the car's radiator. *(Changed: Sentences reworked; details dropped; quote changed to remove expletive.)*

Again nothing happened, and finally Capt. Johnson yelled: "Stop him, Red 1, stop him." Immediately there was the sound of half a dozen 25mm cannon shots from one or more of the platoon's Bradley vehicles.

"Cease fire," Capt. Johnson yelled over the radio.

Then, as he peered into his binoculars, he roared at the platoon leader: "You just (expletive) killed a family because you didn't fire a warning shot soon enough." So it was that on a warm, hazy day in central Iraq, the fog of war descended on Bravo Company. *(Changes: sentences edited and reworked; quotes kept.)*

Fifteen Iraqi civilians were packed in the Toyota along with as many of their possessions as the jammed vehicle could hold.

It had been speeding from the direction of the eastern town of Hilla towards the intersection of Highway 9, a main road running north and south through central Iraq.

Ten of the occupants, including five children who appeared to be under five years old, were killed instantly when the high-explosive rounds slammed into the car. *(Minor changes: adds "of the occupants"; "instantly" for "on the spot"; "car" for "vehicle".)*

Of the five others, one man was so severely injured he was not expected to live. *(Minor changes: drops "medics said" before "he was not expected".)*

Medic Sgt Mario Manzano, 26, said: "It was the most horrible thing I've ever seen, and I hope I never see it again." He said one of the wounded women sat in the vehicle holding the mangled bodies of two of her children. *(Minor changes: quote style changed to place attribution first; drops "Army" before "medic"; drops "later in an interview".)*

The platoon leader explained to Capt. Johnson that he had, in fact, fired two warning shots, but that the driver failed to stop. *(Changed: original less unequivocal, noting*



that several soldiers "said they accepted the platoon leader's explanation to Johnson on the military radio that he had, in fact, fired two warning shots".)

**They said everyone was edgy after four comrades had been blown up by a suicide bomber at the weekend at a checkpoint much like theirs 32km to the south.** (Minor changes: "comrades" for "US soldiers"; "had been blown up" for "were blown up"; "at the weekend" for "Saturday"; distance converted to metric.)

**And their nerves had been worn thin by sporadic attacks by mortars and rocket-propelled grenades.**

**Medics evacuated the Toyota survivors to secure territory in the south.** (Minor changes" adds "the Toyota" before survivors; "secure territory in the south" for "US lines south of here".)

One woman escaped without a scratch.

Another, who had superficial head wounds, was flown by helicopter to a US field hospital when it was learnt she was pregnant.

**The 3rd Battalion commander, Lt-Col Stephen Twitty, gave permission for three of the survivors to return and take the bodies of their loved ones. Medics gave the group 10 body bags.**

US officials offered an unspecified sum of money to compensate them.

"They wanted to bury them before the dogs got to them," Cpl Brian Truenow, 28, said.

**Fifteen members of another family were killed when their jeep was blown up by a rocket from an Apache helicopter near Hilla.**

**The family was fleeing fighting when the US helicopter fired on the vehicle.**

(Minor changes: drops "between Iraqi forces and the US-led coalition in Nasiriyah, 350km south of Baghdad" after "fleeing fighting"; drops location of event, which occurred in Haidariya.)

**The only survivor showed a photographer the coffins he said held the bodies of his wife, his six children, his father, mother and three brothers and their wives.**

## Highway 9 horror - women, children die

*The Daily Telegraph, April 2, 2003*

**Authors – Robert Reid in Doha and Ben English**

**Attribution – none given.**

**Colour code: Green for Washington Post; Purple for Agence France Presse;**

**Orange for first Associated Press article; Light green for second AP article,**

**written by Robert Reid; Aqua for third AP; Blue-green for fourth AP; Olive for possible CNN article; Red for possible New York Times article.**

**A BLUE Toyota van filled with Iraqis in civilian clothing rumbles towards a US checkpoint in lengthening shadows on Highway 9, a few miles outside Najaf in central Iraq.**

**The US commander of the checkpoint, Captain Ronny Johnson, radios one of his forward platoons in a Bradley Fighting Vehicle and orders: “Fire a warning shot” as the van speeds towards him.**

**As the seconds pass and the vehicle shows no signs of stopping, Capt Johnson barks out: “Stop messing around!” But the van keeps coming.**

**Capt Johnson screams at the top of his voice, “Stop him, Red 1, stop him!” Half a dozen reports of the Fighting Vehicle's 25mm cannon fire echo across the area.** *(Changed: paragraphs reworked into present tense and details added and subtracted in editing process; expletive dropped from “Stop (messing) around”. Story and order, however, fundamentally unchanged.)*

**Capt Johnson inspects the wreckage and bawls into his radio at the platoon leader: “You just f...ing killed a family because you didn't fire a warning shot soon enough.”** *(Minor changes: expletive returned to quote, original said “... just (expletive) killed a family”.)* **Of the 13 women and children in the vehicle, seven die and two are wounded.**

**Five of the victims are younger than five.**

**Another officer at the scene, who refused to be named, insists the US troops had fired warning shots.**

**“The soldiers did the right thing,” he says. \***

**Later the Pentagon issues a statement saying the vehicle had ignored shouted orders and warning shots.**

**The incident is under investigation but irrespective of the outcome, it marks the first victims of America's new rules of engagement forged since suicide bombers entered the war at the weekend.**

**US troops, edgy since a taxi exploded on Saturday and killed four 3rd Infantry soldiers at an army checkpoint in Najaf, no longer are taking chances.**

**They killed another unarmed Iraqi driver late yesterday at a checkpoint outside Shatrah after he too ignored warnings to halt.**



It was there that marines recovered the body of a dead comrade which had been hanged in the town square.

The new harder-line phase was reflected in heavier coalition air attacks on Baghdad yesterday.

Missiles smashed Iraq's Olympic headquarters, where Saddam Hussein's son Uday is said to run a torture centre.

Other targets included communications and command centres as well Saddam Hussein's presidential palace perched on the Tigris.

More than 3000 precision-guided bombs were dropped on Iraqi targets at the weekend, compared with about 5000 the previous week, said Major General Stanley McChrystal of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (Changed: "Iraqi targets" for "Iraq"; "at the weekend" for "in the past few days" and "compared with about 5000 the previous week" for "out of 8000 in the entire war".)

He said coalition forces had fired more than 700 Tomahawk cruise missiles.

US Third Infantry troops followed up the air attacks on Republican Guards at Hindiya, 80km south of Baghdad.

At least 35 Iraqis were killed and several dozen were captured. (Minor change: drops "who identified themselves as members of the Republican Guard" after "dozen".)

Meanwhile a US-led assault on a compound controlled by an extremist Islamic group turned up a list of names of suspected militants living in the US and what may be the strongest evidence yet linking the group to al-Qaeda.

Elsewhere, US Marines raided an air base in southern Iraq and seized a large weapons cache.

Saddam's aides yesterday announced troops who defended Umm Qasr would be showered with medals and money.

*Note: the sentences highlighted in red may be taken from the New York Times, which also seems to have had access to a soldier within the Third Infantry Division. The sentence which ran in the original New York Times copy was as follows:*

An officer with the Third Infantry Division, who would not be identified, said this morning, "The soldiers did the right thing." (Weinraub, 2003).

## Discussion of the Checkpoint Series

The four articles focus on the apparent failure of US troops to fire quickly enough to force the van of Iraqi family members to stop. They are remarkable in the extent of criticism levelled at the US soldiers and – although mitigating factors are noted in the article, such as the recent checkpoint suicide bombing – the articles tend to be negative towards the actions of the soldiers. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The West Australian* and *The Age* treat the article in a very similar fashion. All rely almost entirely on the copy taken from the *Washington Post*, adding very little in the way of new information.

### Reliance on a single source

*The Sydney Morning Herald's* copy is reproduced first, as it is virtually unchanged from the *Washington Post* original. The article, which began on the newspaper's front page, with a spill to inside pages, has only minor differences to embedded reporter William Branigin's original piece, notably the changing of imperial measurements to metric and occasional shifts in tense. The most important of *The Sydney Morning Herald's* changes is the addition of quote marks around a claim by the Pentagon regarding the number killed – clear evidence of newspaper scepticism regarding the accuracy of the official toll.

*The Age's* version appears to have been edited primarily for style reasons (such as the removal of the verb "radioing" which is substituted with "on the radio") or for brevity (such as the reduction of "were killed on the spot when the high-explosive rounds slammed into their target, Johnson's company reported" to a simple, "were killed"). Arguably, little meaning is lost in such changes, although it should be noted that the published article includes a prominent comment from US Central Command – downplaying the shooting, and attributing to the soldiers "considerable restraint in avoiding the unnecessary loss of life" (Branigin, 2003). This statement did not appear in the original *Washington Post* copy and was added at the editing level, although it is not clear which of the many wire agencies that reported the comment was used by *The Age*. The comment itself is ambiguous, as it

is not clear whether the “restraint” soldiers showed was in pre-emptively firing on the vehicle in order to prevent a potential suicide bomber, or in the fact that their shots killed only 10 out of the 15 Iraqis in the van. Its ambiguity raises questions as to why it was used at all; it adds little to the story and is unclear in presenting any sort of defence. It appears to have been included in a bid to provide an official response – even a poorly worded one – to Branigin’s damning article.

Editing in *The West Australian* version is more pervasive, with numerous sentences paraphrased or shortened, although key details are kept and facts left unchanged. Just as in *The Age*’s article, the most emotive sentences are kept, including Capt. Johnson’s fury at his troops’ indecision, his quote that soldiers had killed a family because they had not fired quickly enough, Sgt Manzano’s quote about the mother of several victims, the description of her holding the “mangled” bodies of her children and the comment that relatives had been sent to bury the dead “before the dogs got to them” (“Ten die as nerves fail,” 2003). Although extra information is added to the end of this article, copy from the two sources is separated and relevant details remain intact.

*The Daily Telegraph* is quite different in its use of the Washington Post information, however. Branigin’s byline is dropped, and replaced with the bylines of Robert Reid, who reported from Doha for the Associated Press, and Ben English, the European manager of News Ltd’s Bureau in London (*Australian Media in London*, 2004). It is clear, however, that much of the article is taken directly from the Washington Post copy, although it has been paraphrased and converted into present tense. Where the other publications are happy to rely solely on William Branigin’s account, *The Daily Telegraph* includes a sentence quoting an unidentified member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division which appears to have been taken from a report that appeared in the *New York Times* (Weinraub, 2003). No other wire source or newspaper could be found quoting an unnamed soldier making such a statement.

The rest of the article is drawn from a number of sources, including several Associated Press articles covering different events taking place in the war. One line seems to have been taken from CNN, which used the sentence word-for-word in a summary of events and on its ticker the day before publication (*Special report - war tracker*, 2003). The effect of the various additions to the report is that the checkpoint shooting is presented not as a discrete event but as the result of a chain of events and

mitigating circumstances. Instead of the soldiers' response being portrayed as the result of troops on edge after the death of their comrades in a suicide bombing, the article relates the event to a deliberate strategy of increased military force by the US and Coalition. This is a subtle difference to the way the event is treated by *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The West Australian*; nonetheless it has the effect of making the US troops seem in control rather than vulnerable, and unapologetic for the incident, rather than stunned and sorry.

### **Presentation of the story**

The presentation of this story is also important, considering how negatively it portrays the actions of the US military, if not the individual soldiers involved. The story ran on the front pages of both *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age*, at around 850 and 700 words respectively. This prime placement gives considerable attention to the article, and suggests the newspapers were prepared to trust the accuracy of Branigin's eye-witness report of the incident. *The West Australian* used the article far less prominently, on page 9 of its April 2 edition, however it still allocated around 550 words to it. *The Daily Telegraph* ran 500 words in its article but of these, just 250 related directly to the shooting incident. The article also ran on page 5 of the newspaper's war section, showing little importance was placed on the incident itself.

Unlike the Najaf Series of articles, the Checkpoint Series is thematic in style. In *The West Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and the original Washington Post copy, the articles are clearly presented in a way that interprets the actions of the soldiers, dwelling on the reasons for those actions and devoting considerable space to the results.

Once again, *The Daily Telegraph's* treatment stands out. The newspaper maintains and enhances the original's interpretative tone, through its conversion of the article to present tense and its feature-style summation of the shooting "marks the first victims of America's new rules of engagement forged since suicide bombers entered the war at the weekend" (Reid & English, 2003). However it also includes numerous examples of other "events". Rather than convert the Washington Post-based copy to an episodic article, however, these other sources have effectively been turned from episodic reports into statements to support an interpretative position.

### **The Hassan Series**

The *Washington Post* story of the shooting covered in the Checkpoint Series, concentrated on the causes and impact of the event on the US soldiers involved. The day the story appeared in Australian newspapers, Wednesday, April 2, 2003, a second report was transmitted across the wires by Knight Ridder Tribune writer Meg Laughlin, telling another story – that of the family in the van (Ramsey, 2003). Later wire copy added extra information, giving the Pentagon side of the story ("US regrets deaths of women and children," 2003).

The KRT article included strongly emotional interviews with one of the men in the van, Bakhat Hassan, and his wife Lamea. While this article was as compelling as the original report from the *Washington Post*, it suffered in terms of coverage not only because it was a follow-up story rather than breaking news, but as it was quickly overshadowed in the media by the rescue of an American soldier, Private Jessica Lynch (Ramsey, 2003).

The following series illustrates the ways different newspapers told the story. Once again, a single source was relied on for much of the published copy, although different newspapers used the official reaction, taken from an Agence France Presse wire story, with varying degrees of prominence.

It should be noted that although an article from *The Sydney Morning Herald* is included in the series, this article appeared only on the newspapers online service and was not published in the newspaper itself. *The Sydney Morning Herald* did not publish a print version of the KRT story at all, although its April 3 front page lead refers to the shooting in a single paragraph, alongside numerous other incidents (Graham & Wilkinson, 2003). The following version is included at the end of the series for example purposes as it gives the most complete version of the KRT story, but is not analysed in the overall discussion.



## Family sought US 'safety'

*The West Australian*, April 3, 2003

**Dateline –Najaf**

**Authors – none**

**Attribution – Knight Ridder Tribune**

**Colour code: Green for KRT, Blue for Agence France Presse.**

AN IRAQI mother says she saw her two young daughters decapitated as her family's car was fired on by United States soldiers in Monday's checkpoint incident that killed nine other family members. Her husband said they had driven towards American lines in response to leaflets dropped by US helicopters telling them to "be safe". When they saw US troops waving at them, they thought it was in greeting. "We were thinking these Americans want us to be safe," Bakhat Hassan said through an army translator at a mobile army surgical hospital near Najaf. **But then the soldiers fired.** (Minor changes: paraphrasing of original, details left largely unchanged.)

"I saw the heads of my two little girls come off," Mr Hassan's heavily pregnant wife, Lamea, 36, said numbly. (Minor changes: "said" for "recalled".)

Mr Hassan lost his daughters aged two and five, his three-year-old son, his parents, two older brothers, their wives and two nieces aged 12 and 15 immediately. **His father died under surgery at the army hospital.**

Mr Hassan, his wife and another of his brothers are in intensive care at the MASH unit. Another brother, sister-in-law and a seven-year-old child were released to bury the dead. The Shi'ite family of 17 **had been** packed into a 1974 Land-Rover, so crowded that Bakhat Hassan, 35, was outside on the rear bumper hanging on to the back door. Everyone else was piled on one another's laps in three sets of seats.

Mr Hassan's father, in his 60s, wore his best clothes for the trip through the American lines, a pinstriped suit. "To look American," Mr Hassan said.

An Army report written last night cited "a miscommunication with civilians" as the cause of the incident.

**The soldiers thought the Land-Rover was another suicide bombing attempt** US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Richard Myers said yesterday: "I'd like to express our regrets to the families of the Iraqis killed yesterday at the checkpoint near Najaf. The loss of any innocent life is truly tragic."

But he pointedly added that: "The climate established by the Iraqi regime contributed to this incident." President George Bush, through a spokesman, expressed similar sentiments to the top US military officer.

"The President always regrets any innocent loss of life. And he recognises that most innocents have been lost in this war at the hands of Saddam Hussein and his henchmen," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer. "That's who is to blame for the loss of innocent lives."

**Mr Hassan said:** "We had hope. But then you Americans came to bring us democracy and our hope ended." **His wife** is nine months pregnant. "It would be better not to have the baby," she said. "Our lives are over."



**Pregnant woman sees two daughters killed**

*The Age, April 3, 2003*

**Dateline – near Najaf**

**Authors – Meg Laughlin**

**Attribution – agencies**

**Colour code: Green for KRT, Blue for Agence France Presse.**

An Iraqi mother saw her two young daughters die when US soldiers fired on the van she was travelling in as it approached a roadblock. Her son and eight other family members were also killed in the attack on Sunday.

The children's father, who was also in the van, said the soldiers fired as the family fled towards what they thought was safety.

**They were fleeing because** they thought a leaflet dropped by US helicopters told them to "be safe", and they believed this meant getting out of their village near Karbala.

Bakhat Hassan - who lost his daughters, aged two and five, his three-year-old son, his parents, two older brothers, their wives and two nieces aged 12 and 15 - said US soldiers at an earlier checkpoint had waved them through.

As they approached another checkpoint 40 kilometres south of Karbala, they waved again at the US soldiers. "We were thinking these Americans want us to be safe," Mr Hassan said through an army interpreter at a mobile army surgical hospital near Najaf.

The soldiers did not wave back. They fired. **After the van stopped,** Mr Hassan's heavily pregnant wife, Lamea, 36, repeated numbly: "My girls. My son is dead." US officials originally gave the death toll as seven, but reporters at the scene placed it at 10. Mr Hassan's father died at the army hospital later. US officials said the soldiers who opened fire were following orders not to let vehicles approach checkpoints.

**US commander Richard Myers expressed regret for the deaths. But he said: "The climate established by the Iraqi regime contributed to this incident."**

On Saturday, a suicide bomber had killed four US soldiers outside Najaf.

Details emerging from interviews with **Mr and Mrs Hassan** tell a distressing tale of a family fleeing towards what they thought would be safety. (*Changed: names replace "survivors", drops phrase tragically misunderstanding instructions" at end.*)

Mr Hassan's father, in his 60s, wore his best clothes for the trip through the US lines - a pinstriped suit "to look American", Mr Hassan said. The Shiite family of 17 was packed into a 1974 Land Rover, so crowded that Bakhat Hassan, 35, was outside on the rear bumper hanging on to the back door. The rest sat on one another's laps in three sets of seats. The family was fleeing a farming town south-east of Karbala, where US attack helicopters had fired missiles and rockets the day before. Helicopters also had dropped leaflets - a drawing of a family sitting at a table eating and smiling with a message written in Arabic.

Sergeant Stephen Furbush, an army intelligence analyst, said the message read: "To be safe, stay put." But Mr Hassan said he and his father thought it just said: "Be safe." To them, this meant getting away from the helicopters firing rockets and missiles.

**Mr Hassan, his wife and another of his brothers are in intensive care at the MASH unit. Mr Hassan's brother is not expected to live.**

"We had hope," Mr Hassan said. "But then you Americans came to bring us democracy and our hope ended." His wife Lamea said of her pregnancy: "It would be better not to have the baby." "Our lives are over."



**Mother saw daughters slaughtered**

*The Daily Telegraph, April 3, 2003*

**Authors – Rachel Morris**

**Colour code: Green for KRT, Blue for Agence France Presse.**

**THE mother of three Iraqi children killed when US troops opened fire on a van they were traveling in saw her two daughters decapitated by the gunfire.**

**The family has revealed they fled towards a checkpoint in southern Iraq because a US propaganda leaflet dropped by helicopters promised them they would be “safe”.**

*(Changed: although words used from the original, several substantial changes have been made, including the addition of the word “propaganda” and the claim that the leaflets “promised” the Iraqis they would be safe. Original said “told them to “be safe”.)*

**The family’s tragic story was revealed as the battle for Baghdad began, with a coalition ground assault on the capital ready to begin after days of relentless bombardment. The US forces yesterday expressed “regret” for the incident which saw the two girls, their three-year-old brother, their two older brothers plus wives, their grandparents and two cousins aged 12 and 15 killed by gunfire.**

*(Changed: combination of two articles, paraphrasing of the original KRT story, details largely left unchanged.)*

**Lamea Hassan, who is being treated in US Army hospital near Najaf, told how she watched her daughters, aged two and five, die.**

**“I saw the heads of my two girls come off,” said Lamea, 35, who is also heavily pregnant. *(Changed: age made 35 not 36.)***

**“My girls – I watched their heads come off their bodies. My son is dead.”**

**The Shi’ite family of 17 was packed into a 1974 Land Rover, so crowded that Lamea’s husband Bakhat, 35, was outside on the rear bumper hanging on to the back door. One of the men killed, Bakhat’s 60-year-old father, wore his best clothes – a pin-striped suit – for the trip through US lines because he wanted to “look American”. Mr Hassan said that, as they approached the checkpoint 40km south of Karbala, they waved at the American soldiers. *(Minor changes: paraphrasing of original article, details largely unchanged.)***

**“We were thinking these Americans want us to be safe,” Mr Hassan said.**

**US officials said the soldiers who opened fire were following orders not to let vehicles approach checkpoints following a suicide bombing on Saturday that killed four US soldiers outside Najaf.**

**The Hassan family were fleeing their home southeast of Karbala after US helicopters had fired missiles and rockets the day before.**

**Helicopters had dropped leaflets in the area depicting a drawing of a family sitting at a table eating and smiling with a message written in Arabic which said to “be safe”. *(Changed: original gave claim by US officer that the message said “to be safe, stay put”.)***

**General Richard Myers, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff said: “I’d like to express our regrets to the families of the Iraqis killed yesterday at the checkpoint near Al Najaf. The loss of any innocent life is truly tragic.”**

**He also said** "the climate established by the Iraqi regime contributed to this incident". Iraqi officials claim more than 600 civilians have been killed by the bombing of Baghdad and other attacks since March 20.

**In other developments yesterday US ground troops tackled Iraq's elite Republican Guard near Karbala, marking the first time coalition ground forces have been fully engaged against Republican Guards.**

**Iraqi officials claim they still control the key southern city of Basra, site of some of the fiercest fighting so far. British troops said they were awaiting reinforcements before making a final push to take the city.**

**On the diplomatic front, US Secretary of State Colin Powell arrived in Turkey to repair the relationship damaged by a series of rows over Iraq.**



**A family, a white flag and confusion – and a father left with nothing.**

*The Advertiser, April 3, 2003*

**Authors – Meg Laughlin**

**Dateline – Najaf**

**Colour code: Green for KRT, Blue for Agence France Presse.**

**BAKHAT Hassan thought he was driving his family to safety – away from the bombs, away from the bloodshed.**

**Instead, on the road to freedom, American soldiers who were supposed to be saving his country blew away all that Mr Hassan held precious to him.**

**In a continuous burst of M16 gunfire, they killed 11 members of his family – two daughters aged two and five, his son, 3, his parents, two older brothers, their wives and two nieces aged 12 and 15.**

**“I saw the heads of my two little girls come off,” Mr Hassan said yesterday. “They are all gone, everyone is gone.”** *(Changed speaker switched from Mrs Hassan to Mr.)*

**The tragic accident happened as their vehicle – a 1974 Land Rover – approached a checkpoint 40km south of Karbala. It was so crowded that Mr Hassan, 35, was outside on the rear bumper hanging on to the back door.** *(Changed: inclusion of words “tragic accident”).*

Everyone else was piled on one another’s laps in the three sets of seats. They were fleeing their farm town of Hendiyar where US attack helicopters had fired missiles and rockets the day before. “We read the leaflets the Americans drop, telling us to leave and that we will be safe,” Mr Hassan said through a translator at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital set up near Najaf.

**He said that as they approached the checkpoint they waved at the soldiers and kept driving towards them. Panicked by the threat of suicide bombers, they opened fire. American officials said the soldiers were simply following orders not to let vehicles approach checkpoints. The details that emerge in interviews with the survivors of Tuesday’s incident tell a distressing tale.**

Mr Hassan’s father, in his 60s, wore his best clothes for the trip through the American lines: a pinstriped suit.

**“He wanted to look American, he wanted to impress them,” Mr Hassan said. “This year we were having good crops of tomatoes, cucumbers, scallions and eggplant.** *(Changed: indirect speech converted into quotes.)*

**“We had hope. But then you Americans came to bring us democracy and our hope ended.”**

**An Army spokesman described the incident as “a miscommunication with civilians”.**

**He said helicopters had dropped leaflets on the town – a drawing of a family sitting at a table eating and smiling with a message written in Arabic.**

Sgt 1<sup>st</sup> Class Stephen Furbush, an Army intelligence analyst, said the message read: “To be safe, stay put.” But Mr Hassan said he and his father thought it just said: “Be safe.” To them, that meant getting away from the helicopters firing rockets and missiles.

His father drove. They planned to go to Karbala. They stopped at an army checkpoint on the northbound road near Sahara, about 35km south of Karbala, and were told to go on. But at the next checkpoint, soldiers in a Bradley fighting vehicles opened fire. Mr Hassan remembers an Army medic at the scene of the killings speaking Arabic.

"He told us it was a mistake and the soldiers were sorry," Mr Hassan said.

"Sgt Furbush said the soldiers "believed it was a van of suicide bombers".

Mr Hassan, his wife, his father and a brother were airlifted to the MASH unit. Three doctors and three nurses worked on the father for four hours. His right hand and right leg were amputated by a plastic surgeon. A cardio-thoracic surgeon cracked his chest and an intern repaired a hold in his colon.

**But his heart stopped and he died.** "We didn't know who he was, and we didn't care. We just wanted to save him," said John Cho, the cardio-thoracic surgeon.

**Mr Hassan and his wife are next to each other in the green army hospital tent in the desert.**

He has staples in his head. She has a mangled hand and shrapnel in her face and shoulder. Major Scott McDannold, an anesthesiologist, said Hassan's brother **was barely clinging on to life with horrific bullet wounds and a broken neck. "I don't think he'll make it," he said.** (*Changed: indirect speech converted into quotes.*)

Two dozen civilians, wounded in other US military accidents, are also in the field hospital. One of them, Amel Hadi, 30, from Makrea, 100km east of Najaf, begged to go to her two-month-old daughter. "I am nursing. I tried for eight years to have my baby," she said. Intern David Vetter explained: "She was with two other women in a car, with her baby. They had a white flag out the window, but there was confusion, and our troops fired on them."



**'I saw the heads of my two little girls come off'**

*The Sydney Morning Herald, April 2, 2003. Online service only.*

**Dateline – none**

**Authors – none**

**Attribution – KRT**

**Colour code: Green for KRT**

An Iraqi mother in a van fired on by US soldiers says she saw her two young daughters decapitated in the incident that also killed her son and eight other members of her family.

The children's father, who was also in the van, said US soldiers fired on them as they fled towards a checkpoint because they thought a leaflet dropped by US helicopters told them to "be safe", and they believed that meant getting out of their village to Karbala.

Bakhat Hassan - who lost his daughters, aged two and five, his three-year-old son, his parents, two older brothers, their wives and two nieces aged 12 and 15, in the incident - said US soldiers at an earlier checkpoint had waved them through.

As they approached another checkpoint 40km south of Karbala, they waved again at the American soldiers.

"We were thinking these Americans want us to be safe," Hassan said through an Army translator at a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital set up at a vast Army support camp near Najaf.

The soldiers didn't wave back. They fired.

"I saw the heads of my two little girls come off," Hassan's heavily pregnant wife, Lamea, 36, said numbly. *(Minor changes: "said" for "recalled".)*

She repeated herself in a flat, even voice: "My girls - I watched their heads come off their bodies. My son is dead."

US officials originally gave the death toll from the incident as seven, but reporters at the scene placed it at 10. **And Bakhat Hassan's terrible toll was 11 members of his family.** *(Minor changes: "from the incident as seven" for "as seven in the incident"; Final sentence added.)*

Hassan's father died at the Army hospital later.

US officials said the soldiers at an Army checkpoint who opened fire were following orders not to let vehicles approach checkpoints.

On Saturday, a suicide bomber had killed four US soldiers outside Najaf.

Details emerging from interviews with survivors of yesterday's incident tell a distressing tale of a family fleeing towards what they thought would be safety, tragically misunderstanding instructions. *(Minor changes: "details emerging from" for "The details that emerge in".)*

Hassan's father, in his 60s, wore his best clothes for the trip through the American lines: a pinstriped suit.

"To look American," Hassan said.

An Army report written last night cited "a miscommunication with civilians" as the cause of the incident.

Hassan, his wife and another of his brothers are in intensive care at the MASH unit.

Another brother, sister-in-law and a seven-year-old child were released to bury the dead.

The Shi'ite family of 17 was packed into a 1974 Land Rover, so crowded that Bakhat, 35, was outside on the rear bumper hanging on to the back door.

Everyone else was piled on one another's laps in three sets of seats.

They were fleeing their farm town southeast of Karbala, where US attack helicopters had fired missiles and rockets the day before.

Helicopters also had dropped leaflets on the town: a drawing of a family sitting at a table eating and smiling with a message written in Arabic.

Sergeant 1st Class Stephen Furbush, an Army intelligence analyst, said the message read: "To be safe, stay put."

But Hassan said he and his father thought it just said: "Be safe".

To them, that meant getting away from the helicopters firing rockets and missiles.

His father drove. They planned to go to Karbala. They stopped at an Army checkpoint on the northbound road near Sahara, about 40km south of Karbala, and were told to go on, Hassan said.

But "the Iraqi family misunderstood" what the soldiers were saying, Furbush said.

A few kilometres later, a Bradley Fighting Vehicle came into view. The family waved as it came closer. The soldiers opened fire.

Hassan remembers an Army medic at the scene of the killings speaking Arabic.

"He told us it was a mistake and the soldiers were sorry," Hassan said.

"They believed it was a van of suicide bombers," Furbush said.

Hassan, his wife, his father and a brother were airlifted to the MASH unit.

Three doctors and three nurses worked on the father for four hours **but he died despite their efforts.** *(Changed: details of procedures and extent of damage omitted. Original included a note that the father "died at 11pm.")*

**Today, Hassan and his wife remain at the unit.** He has staples in his head. She has a mangled hand and shrapnel in her face and shoulder.

Major Scott McDannold, an anaesthesiologist, said Hassan's brother, **lying nearby,** wouldn't make it. He is on a respirator with a broken neck. *(Minor changes: Drops unit of McDannold and comment that he stayed up all night Monday with the brother.)*

On March 16, Hassan and his family began to harvest tomatoes, cucumbers, scallions and eggplant. It was a healthy crop, and they expected a good year.

"We had hope," he said. "But then you Americans came to bring us democracy and our hope ended."

Lamea is nine months pregnant.

"It would be better not to have the baby," she said.

"Our lives are over."



## Discussion of the Hassan Series

As in the Checkpoint Series, a single author is responsible for almost all the information available in the Hassan Series. The Knight Ridder Tribune copy used as the basis of the Hassan series of articles, although not particularly sensational in style, tells a powerful story that is highly sympathetic to the plight of a group of Iraqi individuals. Meg Laughlin's descriptions of the family that was destroyed after it tried to cross to the American side of the lines are repeated—albeit in reduced form—in all four published articles. Just as in the Checkpoint Series, *The Age* credits the writer, *The West Australian* does not, and *The Daily Telegraph* replaces the wire service byline with that of one of its own reporters. *The Advertiser* runs most of the KRT story, with attribution, but increases the dramatic nature of the article, in the process making a number of mistakes.

### Who is to blame?

Although each publication paraphrased the original KRT copy to some extent, the information remained relatively intact. One of the more poignant elements of Meg Laughlin's story—that Bakhat Hassan's slain father had worn his best suit "to look American"—is repeated in all four newspapers. The four also repeat the quote by Lamea Hassan, Bakhat's wife, that she saw heads of her daughters "come off", although *The Advertiser* changes the speaker from Mrs Hassan to Mr. Three publications—*The West Australian*, *The Age* and *The Advertiser*—also carry Lamea's statement that she believes it would be better if the couple did not have the baby she is carrying. The same three newspapers also reproduce Hassan's statement that "We had hope ...But then you Americans came to bring us democracy and our hope ended" (Laughlin, 2003b).

These details are both emotive and clearly negative, although the question must be asked, negative of whom? At first blush, it seems to be US troops. After all, it was US soldiers who first fired missiles from helicopters near the family's farm. More soldiers dropped leaflets on the farm with a message that was either unclear or



misinterpreted. A third group of soldiers apparently waved the family through at the first checkpoint, while the fourth group of soldiers fires on the van. Yet none of the comments made by the Hassan family are particularly vehement against individual troops. Instead, mitigating statements are included: that the soldiers were afraid of potential suicide bombers; they had made “a mistake” and “were sorry” according to an army medic, (Laughlin, 2003a); and the military’s medical staff are described as working hard to save members of the family’s life, as one says “We didn’t know who he was, and we didn’t care. We just wanted to save him” (Laughlin, 2003a).

These descriptions do not exonerate the soldiers, but they do shift the blame higher up the line. The papers’ inclusion of Bakhat Hassan’s comment disparaging the supposed motive for war (the arrival of “you Americans ... to bring us democracy”) lays the blame firmly at the feet of the US Government.

### **Prominence in coverage**

While *The West Australian*’s article – at 440 words – is the shortest of the four, *The Daily Telegraph* carries the briefest version of the Hassan story, as only about 420 words of its 510-word article is devoted to the incident, with the rest considering other developments in the war. *The Age* devotes 525 words to the story, while *The Advertiser* undertakes a considerable rewrite of the article, giving it 740 words. In the process of rewriting the article, a number of errors appear to have been made, however. A quote attributed to Lamea Hassan in the original, is now attributed to her husband, while several comments originally presented as indirect speech by both Bakhat Hassan and a doctor have been turned into direct quotes. The rewriting is done to increase the emotive strength of the article, with the introduction changed from the tragic account of a mother who watched her children die into something more dramatic:

“Bakhat Hassan thought he was driving his family to safety – away from the bombs, away from the bloodshed. Instead, on the road to freedom, American soldiers who were supposed to be saving his country blew away all that Mr Hassan held precious to him.”

(Laughlin, 2003a)

*The Advertiser* also uses poetic licence in its headline, “A family, a white flag and confusion – and a father left with nothing”, which mixes details of the second incident described in its story (the wounding of Amel Hadi) with the events of the Hassan shooting. The newspaper is not alone in its dramatic impulses, however. *The Daily Telegraph* leads with the headline “Mother saw daughters slaughtered” and uses the term ‘decapitated’ in the introductory sentence, as does *The West Australian*. *The Age* is more reserved, shying away from the term and describing the mother as simply watching her daughters “die”, a sanitisation that prompted strong criticism by *Sydney Morning Herald* commentator Alan Ramsey.

Ramsey also noted that the article did not make the pages at all in several major newspapers, including *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and he accused other newspapers of burying the story (Ramsey, 2003). His argument was that the newspapers ignored the story to focus on another breaking news item, the rescue of American soldier Private Jessica Lynch, and that to the Australian media “One pretty, live, teenage US soldier is worth more than a family of 11 dead Iraqi civilians any day” (Ramsey, 2003).

## **The Rescue Series**

On March 23, 2003, members of the US Army's 507th maintenance crew, including Private Jessica Lynch and 18 other soldiers were ambushed after taking a wrong turn. Nine of her comrades were killed, four were rescued by American troops later that day and the remaining five were taken as prisoners of war (Baker, 2003). Lynch was kept separate from the other prisoners, and was taken to a local hospital.

Eight days later, American troops rescued Lynch from her hospital bed, in what was described as a commando raid. Lynch, according to early reports, had been shot, stabbed, "slapped about on the hospital bed and interrogated" (Kampfner, 2003). It was later reported that she had no stab wounds, that she had been well cared for by her Iraqi doctors and that attempts to return her in an ambulance to American forces failed, when the driver heard US soldiers firing nearby. (Cohen, 2003; Eviatar, 2003; Faramarzi, 2003; Kampfner, 2003). The Pentagon has since blamed media speculation for some of the misinformation reported regarding the rescue (McIntyre, 2003). Regardless of what actually occurred, news of the rescue saw a portrait of Lynch, dressed in combat gear in front of the American flag, run on front pages worldwide, where it dominated news coverage.

The rescue of Lynch has been described by some commentators as a turning point in coverage in the combat stage of the recent war (Eviatar, 2003; Hanson, 2003). The following series considers some of the earliest reports that emerged of Lynch's rescue, and how the information was prioritised by the recipient newspapers. As multiple sources are used for each article, notes on changes are limited to adjustments felt to be important in the context of the copy.

## Yellow ribbons for Jessica

*The West Australian* April 3, 2003

**Dateline – New York**

**Authors – none**

**Attribution – Washington Post.**

**Colour code: Green for first Washington Post article, Navy for second Washington Post article, Orange for comment made to CNN**

### **Tiny town turns out in tears for America's first Iraq war heroine**

In the tiny West Virginia town that ran out of yellow ribbon but never hope, word of **the** rescue **of** hometown soldier Jessica Lynch spread swiftly from neighbour to neighbour, from the firehouse to the **petrol** station to the pizza parlour, until the entire mountain hamlet seemed to explode with a cacophonous horn-honking, siren-blaring, fireworks- bursting joy.

"I can't even begin to describe it," said Rose Ruble, a cashier at the Exxon station across from Wirt County Courthouse.

"The firetrucks are going, the police cars all have their sirens on. People are pouring into the street. People in town are absolutely ecstatic. People are standing out on the streets crying. Oh yes, me too. It's wonderful."

A weeping, cheering crowd of well-wishers converged on the Lynch family home in **the town named** Palestine, where Jessica's truck driver father stood at the end of the gravel lane waving, and her mother, Deadra, sobbed with relief after **10** days of heart-wrenching uncertainty. (*Minor change: inserted phrase; "truck driver father" for "father, a truck driver"; "10 days" for "9 days".*)

**The CIA had found Jessica badly wounded in Saddam Hussein Hospital near the Iraqi town of Nasiriyah.**

The CIA **has** played a significant role in **the Iraqi war, pinpointing Iraq's secrets for attack.** A Special Operations rescue team **of Army Rangers and Navy Seals**, which is on 24-hour standby in a nearby Persian Gulf country, **was alerted and the rescue planned.**

US **marines** staged a **big diversionary attack using artillery and aircraft on a local Baath Party headquarters as the rescue team flew in by helicopter.**

**The rescue team also collected 11 bodies at the hospital, at least two of them believed to be American, as yet unidentified. Jessica, with two broken legs and a broken arm, was flown to an unnamed US base.**

**Since March 23, when she went** missing in action, her parents had insisted, despite **any** shred of evidence, that their Jessi was all right, that she must have escaped, that she was hiding and would be found.

**Her 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company truck convoy had taken a wrong turn on to a road not secured by United States combat forces and was ambushed by Iraqi militiamen near Nasiriyah.** (*Minor change: edited to shorten, but details unchanged.*)



Three days later, the army listed two members of the unit as dead, five as prisoners of war and eight – including Pte Lynch – as missing. (*Minor change: “missing” for “duty status whereabouts unknown, or missing in action”.*)

Iraqi television had already broadcast a videotape of **five prisoners**, four men and a woman. The tape also showed at least four bodies.

**But there was no sign of Pte Lynch.**

**At her home yesterday, her father Greg said:** “She’s got enough country in her, a sense of direction, knowing when to lay low.” **The family’s adults had kept their spirits up by telling cousins worried about Jessi:** “She’s playing hide-and-seek. You know how good Jessi is at that.” (*Changed: indirect speech recast as direct quote.*)

The second of three children, Pte Lynch **studied at Wirt County High School in a district which has nearly the highest unemployment rate in the US.** She interviewed recruiters from several military branches, and decided the army was offering the best deal. (*Minor change: “interviewed recruiters” for “interviewed with recruiters”.*)

She was finishing her second year **in the service** and had just signed on for another four-year stint. Before arriving in the Middle East three weeks ago, she had never been outside the US.

**At her old school,** teachers and students tied yellow ribbons until there was no ribbon left.

Hundreds of townsfolk gathered for a candlelight vigil in front of the courthouse a week ago to pray for the petite blonde who had been named Miss Congeniality in the county fair beauty pageant.

**When the phone call came through that Pte Lynch had been rescued, her older brother, Greg jun., said of the US special forces:** “They did a wonderful job out there.” A Special Operations officer said he hoped other **special** military units were going after the other five prisoners of war from the 507th, who were probably being held in the same area.

**There are two other known US prisoners of war, army Apache helicopter pilots captured on March 24 after their craft crashed in Iraqi territory. Fourteen other Americans are listed as missing.**

**The Special Operations officer** said news of the rescue of Pte Lynch could help the others psychologically.

“We talk about small victories and you train to cherish them,” he said.

“This is a small victory.”

## Midnight raid rescues teen soldier

*The Australian April 3, 2003*

**Dateline – New York**

**Authors – Rodney Dalton**

**Attribution – Washington Post.**

**Colour code:** Blue for Reuters, Olive for Second Reuters story, Lilac for possible Los Angeles Times copy, Orange for CNN copy.

**THE** daring rescue of Private First Class Jessica Lynch began shortly before midnight on Tuesday, when US forces took out the lighting grid in Nasiriyah, south of Baghdad.

Shortly afterwards, under cover of darkness, US Marines launched a diversionary attack on the city, using Harrier jets, tanks and armoured personnel carriers.

As troops created havoc, destroying targets including the Baath party headquarters in the city's centre, special forces swooped on Saddam Hospital, identified by CIA investigations as being the 19-year-old supply clerk's location. Described as a Fedayeen military stronghold, the hospital was taken after what one source called "moderate" resistance, and an injured Private Lynch, listed as missing for more than a week, was spirited to safety.

The 163cm Private Lynch, from Palestine, West Virginia, was among several US soldiers taken captive or killed on March 23 when their maintenance convoy was ambushed by Iraqi forces after taking a wrong turn near Nasiriyah. (Minor changes: original said "Lynch was one of 15 soldiers listed as missing, captured or killed when a 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company convoy made a wrong turn and came under attack from Iraqi tanks and fighters".)

Five of the captives - although not Private Lynch - were shown on Iraqi television alongside the bloodied bodies of at least four US soldiers.

President George W. Bush warned Iraqis that they would be punished as "war criminals" if they mistreated US prisoners.

Captain Jay La Rossa, spokesman for the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, said yesterday that Private Lynch had two broken legs and one broken arm, but was stable and in good condition.

**She also had reportedly suffered at least one gunshot wound.**

Captain La Rossa said special forces also found the bodies of two US soldiers and eight Iraqis.

He said the Americans' identities were not known but they were thought to be among those ambushed with Private Lynch's group.

CNN, which has an embedded reporter who witnessed a part of the operation, said the bodies of 11 Americans had been found during the mission.

For US troops, who vow never to leave a comrade behind, Private Lynch's rescue was a morale-booster better than the centimetres gained on a map.



For her West Virginia home town, it was better than the Fourth of July.

At US Central Command HQ in Qatar, **Brigadier-General Vincent Brooks** called a special pre-dawn briefing.

"Coalition forces have conducted a successful rescue mission of a US Army prisoner of war held captive in Iraq," he said.

"The soldier has been returned to a coalition-controlled area."

It didn't take long for word to get around the small town of Palestine that the rescued soldier was one of their own. Palestine is where Greg and Deadra Lynch raised their three children, all of whom turned to the military as a ladder to a better life. Neighbours gathered outside the Lynch home to celebrate.

Fireworks were lit and the sound of car horns rang throughout the night.

Mr Lynch, wearing a yellow ribbon, told CNN he was too "joyous" to talk when he heard the news of his daughter's rescue.

Private Lynch had wanted to be a schoolteacher but she was realistic about her prospects. Mr Lynch, a truck driver, said money was tight.

"We might have been able to pay for college, but it would have been tough," he said. "The army offered her what she wanted."\*

So when the recruiting officers came calling, Jessica answered the call of duty knowing she would go places, get an education and then return home to teach and raise a family in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains.

Based at Fort Bliss in Texas, Jessica signed on for another four years before shipping out to the Gulf.

Within a few days of her convoy's ambush, the army had listed two of Private Lynch's party as dead, five as PoWs, and eight, including Private Lynch, as missing in action. As they waited for some word, Jessica's friends tied yellow ribbons around trees and telephone poles.

Mr Lynch went on believing his daughter, described as tough for her size, was hiding out. But she had been wounded, and the Iraqis had taken her to the hospital. The CIA, which has been pinpointing targets inside Iraq, passed on the location to US Central Command. A special operations rescue team, on 24-hour standby, was dispatched.

A spokesman for US commander General Tommy Franks said yesterday: "America doesn't leave its heroes behind.

It never has, it never will."

Private Lynch's rescue was the best news the US has had since war began.

*\* It is not clear where this line comes from, although the Los Angeles Times ran a similar comment which is reprinted below:*

"She knew we didn't have a lot of money," says her father, Gregory, who drives a truck. "We might have been able to pay for college, but it would have been tough. The Army offered her what she wanted."

(Simon, 2003)

## **Saving Private Lynch: special forces decoy raid**

*The Sydney Morning Herald, April 3, 2003*

**Dateline – New York**

**Authors – none**

**Attribution – Reuters**

**Colour code: Brown for first Reuters story, Olive for second Reuters story.**

US special forces rescued a female US Army soldier in a daring overnight raid **from an Iraqi hospital** after she was captured **in an ambush** 10 days ago, military officials said.

The rescued soldier was identified as Private First Class Jessica Lynch, 19, from Palestine, West Virginia **and was** with a maintenance convoy ambushed by Iraqi forces on March 23.

They said she was rescued from a hospital in the embattled southern city of Nasiriyah, where US-led forces have faced stiff resistance from Iraqi fighters.

**The New York Times reports that the operation was recorded on videotape by a member of the rescue team, and that the tape may be shown later today.**

**Military sources told Reuters that Marines staged a decoy attack on targets in Nasiriyah, including a Baath party building, to allow special forces to rescue Lynch.**

“US Marines sent a large force led by tanks and armoured personnel carriers to hit targets in the centre of the city and to seize a key bridge over the Euphrates while the hospital raid was under way,” a military source said.

“The operation was timed so that US forces rolled over the highway ...

bridge 15 minutes before the raid.” The source told a Reuters reporter travelling with the Marines **that the hospital** where Lynch was being held was called the Saddam Hospital and was **two kilometres** north of the Euphrates river which runs through the city. *(Minor changes: “the hospital” for “the facility”; change of imperial measurements to metric.)*

The Marines' decoy attack involved a number of targets, including an artillery and air attack on a Baath party headquarters, which the source said was destroyed.

They also hit the home of a local Baath party official, a telecommunications cable repeater station and a headquarters of the Fedayeen paramilitary organisation.

“These were all destroyed,” the source said, adding that there were no injuries on the Marine side, which met little or no resistance from Iraqi forces.

**Lynch was** said to be doing well, but CNN reported that Lynch had suffered multiple gunshot wounds at some point during her ordeal in Iraq that made it hard to move her.

Lynch was one of 15 soldiers listed missing, captured or killed when a 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company convoy made a wrong turn and came under attack from Iraqi tanks and fighters.



Five of the captives, but not Lynch, were shown on Iraqi television as well as the bloodied bodies of up to eight men, prompting President George W Bush to warn Iraqis they would be punished as “war criminals” if they mistreated US prisoners. Military officials would not discuss the fate of the other captives, but CNN reported that Lynch's rescue team also brought out the bodies of up to 11 people believed to be US soldiers.

Jim Wilkinson, a spokesman for US commander General Tommy Franks, said of the other POWs: “I can't get into operational details, but we have a lot more work to do. We have a lot more POWs that we are still worried about.” Brigadier General Vincent Brooks told reporters in a prepared statement: “Coalition forces have conducted a successful rescue mission of a US Army prisoner of war held captive in Iraq.

“The soldier has been returned to a coalition-controlled area,” Brooks told a news conference at command headquarters in Qatar for the U.S. and British forces invading Iraq.

**Wilkinson said Lynch was rescued around midnight Iraq time (0700 AEST) from a hospital in Nasiriyah.**

Military commanders at war headquarters in Doha stayed up late to follow the operation through to completion, he said.

Television reports said US special forces, including Navy Seals and Army Rangers with help from the US Marines, conducted the rescue, but no other details were available.

“America doesn't leave its heroes behind.

It never has, it never will,” Wilkinson said of the operation.

In Washington, White House spokeswoman Suzy DeFrancis said President George W. Bush was informed of the rescue in an afternoon briefing by Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and reacted by saying: “That's great”.

Relatives of Lynch back home said they were told she was “alive and well” and were awaiting a phone call from her.

The military told the family Lynch had “walked into an Iraqi hospital” after going missing, but “we were told nothing else”, relative Terri Edwards told Reuters.

Interviewed on CNN from the woman's hometown, Lynch's kindergarten teacher, Linda Davies, said: “They've (the family) been told she's doing really well and will be calling them later tonight.

People are blowing horns, sirens are going off, there are fireworks going off everywhere.” A spokeswoman for the US military at Fort Bliss, Texas, where Lynch is based, told Britain's Sky television: “I understand that she has spoken with her parents.

They are very happy to hear from her, joyful,” she said.

“The fact that she was found gives a lot of the other parents hope.

They are praying that their loved ones will be returned as well.”



## Marines grab POW from hospital

*The Age, April 3, 2003*

**Dateline – Near Nasiriyah**

**Authors – Adrian Croft**

**Attribution – Agencies**

**Colour code: Brown for first Reuters article, Blue for second Reuters story, Light green for Associated Press, Green for Washington Post, Violet for Agence France Presse.**

A dramatic night mission by special forces has rescued a 19-year-old US woman held captive for 10 days by the Iraqi regime. Tipped off by the CIA, Navy Seals and Army Rangers rescued Private Jessica Lynch, a supply clerk who had been missing since her maintenance convoy was ambushed on March 23. US marines staged a decoy attack on Iraqi targets in Nasiriyah, enabling the special forces to move in under the cover of darkness. While the marines created havoc with tanks, armoured personnel carriers and support from Harrier jets, Private Lynch was rescued from a hospital. The raid also recovered 11 bodies.

US forensics experts were last night trying to identify the remains.

Captain Jay La Rossa, a marines spokesman, said Private Lynch had two broken legs and a broken arm, but was stable and in good condition.

She was also reported to have gunshot wounds. Private Lynch was taken to a coalition military hospital, according to her father, Greg Lynch, and would be sent to Germany for further treatment. Mr Lynch, speaking from the family home in Palestine, West Virginia, said at first he thought news of his daughter's rescue was an April Fool's Day joke. "But it turned out to be the real thing, and we were just real tickled," he said. Asked what words he had for Jessica's rescuers, Mr Lynch said: "They would get the biggest thanks in the world from us . . . They all risked their lives to do this for Jessie. We're just glad to have our daughter back." Private Lynch was one of 15 soldiers listed as missing, captured or killed when a 507th Ordnance Maintenance Company convoy made a wrong turn and came under attack. A dozen other members of the unit remain unaccounted for, including five formally listed as prisoners of war.

Those five were shown on Iraqi television after the incident, as well as the bodies of up to eight men, prompting President George Bush to warn Iraqis they would be punished as war criminals if they mistreated US prisoners.

Army Brigadier-General Vincent Brooks said that, of the 11 bodies recovered in the raid, two were found in the morgue of the hospital and a captured Iraqi led troops to the bodies of nine other people buried in the town outside the hospital. A US military source said the decoy operation was timed so that forces rolled over the bridge at Nasiriyah 15 minutes before the raid. Targets attacked included Baath party headquarters, the home of a local Baath party official, a telecommunications cable repeater station and a headquarters of the fedayeen. "These were all destroyed," the source said, adding that there were no injuries on the Marine side,

which met little or no resistance from Iraqi forces. In Palestine, West Virginia, the news quickly spread among friends and family members who had tied yellow ribbons around light posts and tree trunks and prayed since her capture. "We are all so excited," her cousin, Pam Nicolais, said. "We're waiting for her call. We know she's alive and that's our main concern."

Jim Wilkinson, a Central Command spokesman in Qatar, said Private Lynch was in good spirits.

"America is a nation that does not leave its heroes behind," he said.

*(Changed: drops note that this comment was made to CNN.)*

In Washington, an administration official said **that President Bush had welcomed the rescue as "great" news.** "Clearly for the Lynch family, for the country and for the forces that rescued her, the nation is proud," the official said. **But he added:** "It was tempered by the fact that there are other POWs that the president cares deeply about." **Officials in Washington gave no details on how US forces learned of Private Lynch's whereabouts, but said tips from local people were often helpful in such situations.**

**Private Lynch was finishing her second year in the army and** had just signed on for another four years. She had never been outside the US before arriving in the Middle East three weeks ago.

## Discussion of the Rescue Series

The published articles draw together numerous sources, including at least two Washington Post articles, at least three Reuters articles, an Associated Press story, an Agence France Presse story and a number of comments made directly to CNN (some of these appear to have been reprinted from wire stories that attributed quotes to CNN; others appear to have been taken directly by the publishing newspaper from CNN coverage.) There is also a line which may come from the Los Angeles Times. Just as in the Najaf Series, the various sources are combined as if forming a jigsaw, with sentences written by editors at each publishing newspaper to smooth the joins between different copy.

### Reliance on official comment

Among the articles, the “facts”, as they are presented, vary only a little. Lynch has been rescued by special forces soldiers after a decoy or diversionary attack on Nasiriyah, which includes an attack on political sites such as the Baath Party Headquarters. *The West Australian*, *The Australian* and *The Age* report that the CIA had tipped off the soldiers as to where to find Lynch. The articles also report on the military briefing that announced the rescue, with three out of the four newspapers recounting the line attributed to spokesman Jim Wilkinson in Qatar that “America is a nation that does not leave its heroes behind,” (Croft, 2003). *The Australian*, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* mention that Lynch is supposed to have at least one gunshot wound.

While some elements of these early reports have proved to be inaccurate, the comparison of articles demonstrates that newspapers were fairly uniform in the way they dealt with Lynch’s rescue and details of her capture. Most of the information on these points is attributed to officials or other media. Questionable facts – such as the gunshot wounds – are mentioned prominently but qualified with the use of the words “reportedly” or “reported”, indicating that the editors are distancing themselves from the information on the chance that it turns out to be wrong. Whereas articles in the Najaf Series used wire sources that quoted information not only from military officials, but from embedded reporters and soldiers in the field, the Rescue Series

lacks this on-ground provision of information. Instead, almost all information comes from official sources (named or anonymous), and this single point of origin for details explains the conformity between the articles.

### **Credibility of sources**

*The Sydney Morning Herald* is the most obvious example of careful sourcing, with military officials referred to directly or obliquely throughout, including references in the first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and tenth sentences; *The New York Times* is quoted as a source in the fourth sentence, and CNN in the 11<sup>th</sup>. Other television reports were referred to as sources later in the article. Interestingly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* example is also the article with the least information added by the newspaper itself. Of the article's approximately 800 words, fewer than 60 are obviously written at the editing level.

This contrasts starkly with *The Australian's* coverage. This article appears to have been substantially written by the paper's New York correspondent Rodney Dalton, whose byline appears on top. However, it should not be assumed that it is entirely original copy. Instead, much of the article is information taken from wire sources and paraphrased; there is little evidence that Dalton himself did much first-hand information gathering. Most of this article is drawn from two stories from Reuters, one (highlighted in blue) by Adrian Croft, the other an update that provides quotes from military officials.

*The Age's* detailed version of the story also uses copy by Croft, but combines it with that from another Reuters article (the third in this series), an Associated Press piece on reaction in West Virginia, background from the Washington Post on Lynch's enlistment in the army and an article from Agence France Presse. *The Age* article shows considerable editing in the combination of these sources, although comparatively little is written by the editors themselves, and much of the copy which has not been attributed to a wire source is the product of paraphrased wire information. *The Age* is also less cautious than *The Sydney Morning Herald* about the sourcing of information in the article and it repeats several details of the rescue as fact.



*The West Australian* relies mainly on two sources, although it includes one quote that had been given to CNN but may been referred to in a separate wire source. The paper combines two Washington Post articles that provide different aspects of the story: the official reports of the rescue and the response in Lynch's West Virginian home. While *The Australian*, *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported the story with episodic articles, focusing on the events surrounding the rescue and the comments made about it, *The West Australian's* reliance on what was a colour or feature article from the Washington Post for its introduction and initial paragraphs, shifts its style towards the thematic end of the spectrum. While the published article still deals with events relating to the rescue, it concentrates on explaining the impact of Lynch's recovery to her town and her country. Her rescue is, although "a small victory", written up as one that has wider implications in the war ("Yellow ribbons for Jessica," 2003).

### **Our hero?**

What is also interesting about this coverage of Lynch's rescue is the degree of sentimentality attached to it. Three of the four articles make references to "yellow ribbons" tied around trees and lamp poles in her home town in support of her release; *The West Australian* mentions the ribbons three times, twice in the article and once in the headline. *The West Australian* and *The Australian*, which devote the most time to Lynch's home circumstances, also drop her title for the more familiar "Jessica" and "Jessi". She is described by *The West Australian* as "a petite blonde", and a former "Miss Congenialty in the county fair" ("Yellow ribbons for Jessica," 2003), and in *The Australian* as "tough for her size" and the type of girl who "answered the call of duty knowing she would go places ... and then return home to teach and raise a family in the foothills of the Appalachian mountains" (Dalton, 2003).

At this early stage, Lynch is cast not as a hero (that comes later with the erroneous reports that she fired at her captors until she ran out of bullets) but as a hometown girl who did her duty to her country before being ambushed and mistreated. In *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* versions of the articles, which are the more reserved, Lynch herself plays a minor role in the "daring overnight raid" ("Saving Private Lynch: special forces decoy raid," 2003) and the "dramatic night mission" (Croft, 2003). To *The West Australian* and *The Australian*,



however, the young private is a symbol and an inspiration, a small, cherished victory and “the best news the US has had since war began” (Dalton, 2003).

## CHAPTER 7 – FRAMING IRAQ

In discerning what frames – if any – where used by *The West Australian* in its coverage of the recent Iraq war, a combination of methodological approaches was used to determine a list of possible frames, search the set of articles for those frames and detect keywords and phrases that might reinforce particular frames.

### Finding frames

The search for individual frames relied on the model proposed by Entman (1993), who argues that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgements and suggest remedies. In their application of Entman's frame detection model, Tankard and Israel (1997) examined a public relations campaign regarding Iraq to determine what frames might be present. This process asked what problems the campaign raised, what cause was given for those problems, what moral judgements were made (if any) and what remedies were suggested (Tankard & Israel, 1997). A similar process was tested on a number of articles that appeared in *The West Australian's* coverage.

For example, on March 24, a story headed "Saddam enlists Chemical Ali" reported that then Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had "enlisted one of his most notorious lieutenants to take command of southern Iraq". The man, Ali Hassan al-Majid, was Saddam's cousin and was said to have pioneered "the regime's use of chemical warfare against civilians" and had murdered "thousands of Kurds in 1988" by gassing them, was involved in the "brutal occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and (the) torture and repression of Shi-ite Muslims" ("Saddam enlists Chemical Ali," 2003).

**What is the problem in this story?** Power being given to a brutal and murderous man

**What is the cause of the problem?** An evil Saddam Hussein who bequeaths power to his equally evil relatives.

**What moral judgements are made?** “Chemical Ali” is a man who has committed atrocities and who is likely to commit them again.

**What remedies are suggested?** Only one remedy is suggested, and that indirectly. The article includes the suggestion that one of Saddam Hussein’s worst nightmares would be “for residents of southern Iraqi cities to rise up and throw off the ruling Baath Socialist Party”.

Tankard and Israel (1997) might view this frame as similar to the Atrocity frame they detected in public relations messages about the first Gulf War, but as this study deals with individual articles rather than an overall campaign, the frames applied by *The West Australian* are both more shallow (to use Wolfsfeld’s [1997] terminology) and more detailed than this. ‘Atrocity’ serves to express the horror of an act or series of acts, while this article (and many like it) lay blame at the feet of a brutal regime and its evil leaders. Thus it may be more appropriate to name this frame ‘Evil Iraq’.

Similar examination of a sample of articles revealed a number of recurring frames. Following Tankard’s (2001) “list of frames” approach, a number of words and phrases were then identified to assist in detecting the frames. The list of possible frames and some of the relevant keywords and phrases are given below:

#### **List of possible frames**

1. Aggressor (United States as invader or aggressor and Iraqis as the invaded)
2. Liberator (United States as liberator and the Iraqis as needing liberation)
3. Jubilant (Iraqi people delighted at liberation and moves to put down Saddam Hussein)
4. Ungrateful (Iraqi people angry at an invasion and ungrateful to liberators)
5. Evil Iraq (Iraqi leaders as evil, despotic and linked with terrorists)
6. Hawkish US (US leaders as war-mongers bent on invading despite cost or claim)
7. Justified (that the war was a justified action)

8. Unjustified (that the war was an unjustified action)
9. Going Well (action by Coalition/US troops progressing smoothly and to plan)
10. Bugged Down (action by Coalition/US troops bogged down or meeting considerable obstacles)
11. Powerful Heroic (US/Coalition war machine is powerful or in control; soldiers are heroic and compassionate)
12. Vulnerable Incompetent (US/Coalition war machine is making mistakes, firing on their own, susceptible to the enemy and natural forces)
13. Dirty Tricks (underhand Iraqi soldiers deserve what they get for ignoring rules of war/fighting back)
14. Hapless Iraqis (Iraqi soldiers should be pitied as they are being forced to fight)
15. Lack of Support (reluctant allies/persistent peaceniks are undermining case for war; creating trouble)
16. Wary of Spin (newspaper wary of the way governments and leaders are putting positive Spin on the war).

Almost immediately it became clear that many of these frames were dichotomous – existing only in exclusion to each other (a phenomenon which researchers had previously noted among justice/injustice frames – see Ross, 2003 and Wolfsfeld, 1997). Articles portraying the Iraqi soldiers as breaking the rules of war, faking surrenders and firing on civilians did not also suggest that they were being forced to fight by despotic leaders, for example, although a number of separate articles repeated this claim.

It was also found that some articles held several frames at once. *The West Australian's* article on a battle outside Najaf, which appeared on March 27, used the Powerful Heroic frame in its description of American troops coming under sudden attack from Iraqi troops who were “heavily outgunned”. Although the battle was described as bloody, a point is made that US soldiers took 300 prisoners, suggesting

a compassion which is not at odds with this frame. The same article also uses the Dirty Tricks frame, citing claims that some of the fleeing Iraqis were likely to “take up positions as snipers” and that US troops were likely to have chemical weapons used against them as they neared Baghdad ("Bloody battle near Najaf," 2003).

Each article that appeared in *The West Australian* during the studied period was coded against the 16 frame categories. For an accurate picture of how each edition framed the war, frames used in dominant photographs were included if the frame was obvious. The cover of the edition, almost always a single, full-page photograph and headline, was given particular attention.

It is important when considering the results of the analysis to note that some articles had more than one major frame while others lacked any discernable framing. In cases of multiple major frames, each was counted in the final analysis. In cases where no major frame could be detected, none was counted. The absence of discernable framing is most apparent in the first week of the war, when many articles can best be described as strategic, speculating on how the war will play out. This type of article is subsumed by other, noticeably framed articles as the war progresses.

**Findings**

The study found that three frames, Powerful Heroic, Lack of Support and Evil Iraq, are dominant throughout the examined period, although they change ranking several times.

The findings of the frame analysis are shown below by weeks.

**Week one**

In week one, Powerful Heroic is the dominant frame, as articles outline the massive fire power arrayed against the Iraqi army and edition covers use combat images or powerful shots to depict the early conflict. Table one, below, shows the use of frames in this week.

**Table 10 – Use of frames in Week One of the studied period**

Frame	Uses	Percentage
Powerful Heroic	50	22.42
Lack of Support	47	21.08
Evil Iraq	34	15.25
Justified	21	9.42
Going Well	16	7.17
Wary of Spin	12	5.38
Vulnerable Incompetent	8	3.59
Dirty Tricks	7	3.14
Hapless Iraqis	7	3.14
Bogged Down	6	2.69
Unjustified	6	2.69
Liberator	4	1.79
Aggressor	2	0.90
Ingratitude	2	0.90
Jubilation	1	0.45
Hawkish US	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Powerful Heroic is used on four occasions on the cover (with headlines such as “Deadly force”). On March 21, the Powerful Heroic frame is used in combination with the Justified frame. On that date, a full-page image of a battleship firing a missile is accompanied by the headline “War in Iraq” and a quote from US President George Bush announcing the commencement of a military operation “to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger” ("War in Iraq," 2003).



The Going Well frame is used twice on covers, Evil Iraq once, and – on the last day of the first week – the Bogged Down frame. That March 25 edition ran with the front-page headline “Grim Reality”, and included four articles that used the Bogged Down frame, accounting for a total of five out of the six uses of the frame in the week.

As might be expected, a number of articles in this first week deal with the case for war, explaining both the prominence of the Lack of Support and Evil Iraq frames. The edition which had the highest percentage of articles carrying the Lack of Support frame was March 19, when it was found in 63 per cent of articles with discernable frames. If this edition were not counted, the use of the Evil Iraq frame would equal the use of the Lack of Support frame in this first week.

This early stage of the war also has a comparatively high use of the Justification frame, which predominantly appears in articles repeating comments by Coalition and US leaders or by pro-war commentators. It should be noted that in this early stage of the war, there is a strong distinction made between the “evil” Iraqi leaders, notably Saddam Hussein (although *The West Australian*, unlike most other newspapers examined, refers to him with the honorific of Mr) and other Iraqi people, including the military. At this stage, there is considerable sympathy towards the Iraqi soldiers who are considered to be unwitting and unfortunate tools of a desperate government.

This can be seen clearly in a March 21 article describing the Iraqi army as a military force “in decline”, which received a “drubbing” in the first Gulf War, and now must struggle with “worn, ageing or obsolete” equipment (the Hapless Iraqis frame). These descriptions were paired with a graphic speculating that the Iraqi leadership would fight firepower “with chemicals” (the Evil Iraq frame). The newspaper uses quite different frames when referring to the Coalition, and US in particular, at this stage of the war, strengthening the Allies with the use of terms such as “in control”, facing a “well-known battlefield” and “preparing for combat”.

The Lack of Support frame also is used in more than 15 per cent of articles, reflecting numerous articles on anti-war protests and UN member discomfort with the operation. The Unjustified frame is similar to the Lack of Support frame, although it expresses more than a disagreement with the military action; it is a statement that ulterior or insufficient motives exist for going to war. The Unjustified

frame gets little coverage – used only a third as often as the Justified frame. Many of these Unjustified-framed articles comprise direct statements against the war by then Federal Opposition Leader Simon Crean and WA Premier Geoff Gallop, and some articles by anti-war commentators.

One other frame is worthy of note – the Wary of Spin frame. Much has been written about wholesale media acceptance of information in the first Gulf War (see Knightley, 2000; Nohrstedt, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 1997). In the first week of the war, 5.7 per cent of articles use the Wary of Spin frame, that is, the reports are framed in such a way as to suggest that only part of the truth might be being told and that not all US and Coalition leaders were worthy of trust. Several articles look at the possible financial benefits to the US and to various presidential advisors of a war in Iraq, for example, and are framed by the suggestion that there may be more to the war than meets the eye. This is an important frame as it suggests a greater wariness by writers and the newspaper over “official comment” than might have been the case in the previous conflict.

### **Week two**

In week two, the Lack of Support and Evil Iraq frames pushed Powerful Heroic down the list. Just over 18 per cent of articles are framed through Lack of Support, up from 15 per cent in the first week. The results for week two are as follows:

**Table 11 – Use of frames in Week Two of the studied period**

Frame	Uses	Percentage
Lack of Support	32	17.98
Evil Iraq	25	14.04
Powerful Heroic	22	12.36
Wary of Wary of Spin	18	10.11
Going Well	17	9.55
Vulnerable Incompetent	13	7.30
Dirty Tricks	12	6.74
Liberator	11	6.18
Hapless Iraqis	8	4.49
Bogged Down	5	2.81
Unjustified	4	2.25
Jubilation	4	2.25
Aggressor	4	2.25
Justified	2	1.12
Hawkish US	1	0.56
Ingratitude	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The change of emphasis by the newspaper in this second week is indicative of the changing fortunes in the war. After the first military strikes, US and Coalition forces entered Iraq to find a mixed welcome. The weather was bad – with troops beset by blinding sandstorms and hot weather ("Storms stop troops, again," 2003)– and the demand for aid by Iraqis was greater than the allied nations could immediately meet ("The human face of war," 2003).

Back home, there was also renewed opposition to the war, which was reflected most clearly in the cover of the March 27 edition. Under the headline “War protests turn violent”, the newspaper showed a half-page image of young protesters wrestling with police. The edition also had a full page on the story, with another half-page photograph showing two police officers restraining a young boy.

The Lack of Support frame peaks in the first two days of the second week – March 27 and March 28 – which have between them 14 of the 32 uses of the frame. While March 28’s cover uses the Powerful Heroic frame, under the headline “Deadly force – Hundreds die in bloody clashes” – the March 29 edition takes a more pessimistic tone with the Bogged Down frame used in headline “Allies plan for longer war – Stalled on the road to Baghdad”. The US and Coalition are being waylaid not only by Iraqi troops, but by nature, as “freak sandstorms (played) havoc with the world’s greatest military machine” (“Nature’s spring offensive,” 2003).

The mood changes again for the March 31 edition – a Monday – with the use of a combination of the Dirty Tricks and Evil Iraq frames on the cover under the headline “Dirty tactics”. The following day, April 1, the Dirty Tricks and Evil Iraq frames are again used, this time with the headline “Nowhere to run” accompanied by a full-page image of an extremely distressed Iraqi woman carrying a child. They had apparently been caught in a crowd that was used as human shields by Iraqi soldiers. Evil Iraq and is used again on April 3, in combination with the Powerful Heroic frame, as readers are introduced to the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch.

These four Evil Iraq covers show how the use of the frame begins to supersede more anti-war frames (such as Bogged Down and Lack of Support) in this week. The frame is used in articles not only to depict Saddam Hussein as evil and despotic, but is also extended to the upper echelons of Iraq’s ruling groups and the military. Through the juxtaposition of articles on Iraq’s “terrorist allies” and extreme Muslims elsewhere in the world, the frame is used to tie Saddam and his regime to fanatic, dangerous groups (“Huge al-Qaida poison plant destroyed: US,” 2003). Among the Iraqi people, the regime is said to have created “fear and loathing” through “the anvil of Saddam Hussein’s apparatus of repression” (Bishop, 2003). Off the battlefield, the Iraqis had “executed prisoners of war”; on the battlefield “Iraq behaviour ... was disgusting” (“Executions claimed,” 2003). Iraq’s soldiers are said to have fought “Taliban-style”, linking them with the extreme religious former

leaders of Afghanistan, and some are said to be members of a “regime terror squad”. There is even the sense in one March 28 headline – “Iraqi soldiers fight back and die” – that in their opposition to the US and Coalition, the Iraqis deserved whatever they got.

Use of the Dirty Tricks frame also peaks in this second week of the war, not only appearing in the covers noted above but in headlines such as “Diggers shun dirty war” and “Iraqi troops fire on civilians: British officer”. Week two is the only week of the war in which the Dirty Tricks frame is used more than its counter-frame, Hapless Iraqis. The contrast can be seen in the description of the actions of the Iraqi soldiers when compared to those taken by Allied forces. US military choices are made based on logic and strategy, while the actions of Iraqi soldiers are described as “deceptive”, in violation of “the rules of law” and include faking surrenders, the forcing of people to fight against their will and involvement in guerrilla warfare. While the Australian SAS are brave when they are involved in “deep surveillance and reconnaissance behind enemy lines”(Stevens, 2003), the Iraqi army are deceptive when they are “disguising soldiers as civilians or using them as human shields” (Ruse, 2003).

Even articles about the citizens of Iraq – which would seem to require a more sympathetic frame – are given mixed treatment this week. A March 29 article on the deaths of Iraqis after rockets fell on Baghdad streets carried the headline “Judgement Day for city”, taken from a quote used later in the article by an Iraqi woman. Exactly what the “judgement” was for is not stated in the article and it is equally unclear who bears responsibility for the tragedy. Despite clear suggestions that American missiles had caused the devastation, a comment noting that a US general “did not rule out that it might have been an Iraqi missile” is placed high in the article. The article notes that there is absolutely no evidence suggesting the missile was Iraqi, yet speculates that the tragedy could have been Iraq’s own fault (“Judgement Day for city”, 2003).

### **Week three**

As the first stage of the ground war in Iraq draws to a close, the framing of articles again changes. By week three, the use of the Dirty Tricks frame is halved. Instead, after several military victories for the Coalition and US, and the highly



publicised rescue of one of its soldiers, the Powerful Heroic frame returns to ascendency, as table three demonstrates.

**Table 12– Use of frames in Week Three of the studied period**

Frame	Uses	Percentage
Powerful	38	24.84
Evil Iraq	26	16.99
Going well	16	10.46
Lack of Support	12	7.84
Liberator	12	7.84
Vulnerable	10	6.54
Wary of Spin	9	5.88
Hapless Iraqis	7	4.58
Aggressor	6	3.92
Dirty Tricks	5	3.27
Jubilation	5	3.27
Justified	4	2.61
Bogged Down	2	1.31
Hawkish US	1	0.65
Unjustified	0	0.00
Ingratitude	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100.00</b>

A quarter of all articles in this week use the Powerful Heroic frame, driven in no small part by the rescue of Private Lynch. The frame is used in five of the seven covers in this week, including the April 3, April 4 and April 5 front-page stories on Private Lynch ("Americans inspired by Jessica," 2003; "Daring raid to rescue soldier," 2003; "The Iraqi who saved Pvt Lynch," 2003). The frame is also used on

front covers as the Coalition and US near and enter Baghdad. The front-page headlines on April 8, "US storms into Baghdad", and April 10, "Baghdad falls", are ones demonstrating strength. The only thing tempering the use of this Powerful Heroic frame on cover articles this week is the unusual use of terms suggesting an excess of power. On April 2, for example, the Allies "fierce assault" pounding Baghdad was described as a "vicious" attack, while on April 4, in an article headlined "Battle lines drawn for showdown", the Coalition and US were described as having made a "brutal" advance. Neither word is particularly positive; indeed were the uses stronger or more frequent, they could indicate the presence of the Aggressor frame.

Although Evil Iraq is the second-most used frame in this third week, a distinction is again made between the hierarchy and ordinary Iraqis. The frame is used regularly in descriptions of the excesses by Saddam Hussein in his palaces, wealth and barbarism ("Poor eye a lavish folly," 2003). In contrast, ordinary Iraqis are described as jubilant at the collapse of his regime, and even military officers who opposed the Americans are treated as misguided but not evil ("Face to face with American firepower," 2003).

Even the use of the Lack of Support frame this week appears to be lessened in intensity. Where anti-war protesters were once central to the war story and were depicted in their thousands marching through city centres, they are now reported as individuals or fringe groups who are peripheral to the main event. The frame persists, but is now used to frame the debate over the future of Iraq, not the reasons for the conflict itself.

### **Framing in overall coverage**

While 16 separate frames were identified for the purposes of this study, three dominated the coverage by *The West Australian*. Overall, the Powerful Heroic, Lack of Support and Evil Iraq frames account for 51.63 per cent of articles, as Table four below shows.

**Table 13 – Use of frames over the entire studied period**

Frame	Uses	Percentage
Powerful Heroic	110	19.86
Lack of Support	91	16.43
Evil Iraq	85	15.34
Going well	49	8.84
Wary of Spin	39	7.04
Vulnerable	31	5.60
Liberator	27	4.87
Justified	27	4.87
Dirty Tricks	24	4.33
Hapless Iraqis	22	3.97
Bogged Down	13	2.35
Aggressor	12	2.17
Unjustified	10	1.81
Jubilation	10	1.81
Hawkish US	2	0.36
Ingratitude	2	0.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The dominant frame used over the entire period is Powerful Heroic, showing a strong, compassionate and noble Allied force. Just less than one in five articles published by *The West Australian* during the examined period uses this frame. This weighting towards the Powerful Heroic does not mean the newspaper is unerringly positive about the war, however. The second most-used frame overall is the Lack of Support frame, which throughout the conflict is used to express the mixed feelings held by many individuals, groups and even nations about the war. Finally, the third

dominant frame is that of Evil Iraq – a frame which clearly points out the culpability of Iraq's leaders, if not actually justifies the war against them. This frame is used in just over 15 per cent of articles examined.

It is worth noting in light of the considerable criticism of media coverage of the first war that the Wary of Spin frame ranks as the fifth most-used frame in the examined period. This frame reflects the attitude that Coalition and US leaders may not be telling the whole truth – if they are telling the truth at all – and that they are not automatically worthy of being trusted. While just 39 uses of the frame were found out of 552 detected instances of framing, this is still a significant finding in that it suggests a greater scepticism by media outlets in the coverage of the recent Gulf War. The pattern of the frame's use, however, rising from 5 per cent in the first week to 10 per cent before falling back to 5 per cent, suggests that the level of scrutiny for spin-doctoring is not consistent. In the rush to report the early phases of the war, and the haste of the sudden collapse of Baghdad, the newspaper perhaps drops its guard and reports too ingenuously.

Finally, it was found that apart from the strong use of the Justified frame in the first week of the war – when the frame is used repeatedly by articles quoting directly from Coalition and US leaders – both it, and its counter-frame Unjustified are used rarely in subsequent weeks. Overall, the Justified frame is used in 27 articles – 21 of those in the first week. The Unjustified frame is used in just 10 articles, and again, most of these are reports of direct comments by people opposed to the war or columnists speaking out against the conflict. These results suggest *The West Australian* may have deliberately refrained from using articles that took a strong position on the justness of the conflict. However, the constant use of positive frames that emphasise the strength and dominance of the Coalition express the newspaper's support through indirect means.

### **Framing on covers of editions**

Although the overall results show a reasonably balanced split between the three dominant frames, this is not the case on the front pages of the editions – considered to be especially important, as the headline, lead article and dominant photograph are able to frame the edition as a whole (see Appendices for examples). When the use of frames on the front covers of editions is singled out, the dominance

of the Powerful Heroic frame is more clearly shown. Table five illustrates the dominant frames in covers (taking into account front page stories, photographs and headlines) during the examined period. As some covers had more than one frame vying for dominance (featuring a headline suggesting the Powerful Heroic frame, for example, when the photograph suggests the Evil Iraq frame) two frames may be listed.

**Table 14. Use of dominant frames on covers of *The West Australian***

Date	Cover frame/frames
March 19	Powerful Heroic
March 20	Powerful Heroic
March 21 (am)	Going Well/Powerful Heroic
March 21 (pm)	Going Well/Powerful Heroic
March 22	Powerful Heroic
March 24	Evil Iraq/Powerful Heroic
March 25	Bogged Down
March 26	Powerful Heroic
March 27	Lack of Support
March 28	Going Well/Powerful Heroic
March 29	Bogged Down
March 31	Evil Iraq/Dirty Tricks
April 01	Evil Iraq/Dirty Tricks
April 02	Powerful Heroic
April 03	Evil Iraq/Powerful Heroic
Apr-04	Powerful Heroic
Apr-05	Evil Iraq/Powerful Heroic
Apr-07	Powerful Heroic
Apr-08	Going Well/Powerful Heroic
Apr-09	Liberator/Evil Iraq
Apr-10	Liberator/Powerful Heroic



These results show that despite the prominence of alternative frames in the articles during the examined period, Powerful Heroic dominated front-page coverage and effectively framed many of the newspaper's war editions.

### **Textual analysis**

Entman's (1991) work contrasting frames used in articles on the Iran Air and KAL incidents relied strongly on the use of recurring terms and presence and absence of editorial suggestion to illustrate how framing works in practice. As he noted in his analysis of the media coverage, there is a tendency for media on one particular "side" of a debate to humanise their own citizens over those of an opposing or different group, "encouraging more empathy with American than with foreign victims", (Entman, 1991, p17). Entman argues that ethnocentric slant is constantly reinforced by production constraints that make it easier to get coverage of the human elements of one side of the story than of the other. To see how relevant this finding is in the context of the recent Gulf war, a number of articles were examined and terms searched for across the articles published by *The West Australian*.

### **Humanising terminology**

The use of the term "victim" appears in 21 of the 505 examined articles. The majority of the uses (14) refer to Iraqi victims, two refer to killed Australian cameraman Paul Moran, one to a shot Russian, two are technical descriptions of the affects of VX gas and two refer to Coalition troops who had died.

Within these categories, the use of the word victim varies. Three of the 14 references to Iraqi victims are references to the potential deaths caused in war, used speculatively in the March 21 editions, when the war was still young. A further two references are historical references to Iraqis who were victims in the first Gulf War or the years of sanctions that followed. One reference is a broad statement of Iraqi victimhood made by German leaders in an article calling for a swift end to the war. The remaining eight Iraqi victims are divided between victims of Saddam Hussein and his regime (three uses) and victims of US or Coalition action (five uses). In one

cases, the story of an individual US soldier is told describing his first kill, with reference to an unnamed Iraqi victim who had been a member of the Republican Guard. The two uses of 'victim' in cases referring to Coalition or US troops are the description of a number of British soldiers as "combat victims" and dead American pilots as victims of an electrical "brownout".

Although it must be remembered that 21 uses of a term is a very small sample, these uses highlight the way that the word 'victim' is used to weaken the Iraqis but strengthen the US and Coalition. Iraqi victims of the war are described both as individuals and as groups, with their injuries related directly in articles to actions of the Coalition and US. Allied troops, however, are victims of generic "combat" or of mechanical failure, not of any strength shown by the enemy.

Beyond the term victim, humanising descriptions of the Iraqis are richer than might be assumed, considering the difficulty of accessing Baghdad for many journalists. There are a limited number of articles based on experiences of citizens in the capital, reflecting the trouble journalists had in accessing both the people and information. Articles outside the capital are more forthcoming, describing the Iraqi people as afraid, hungry, angry, tired, resigned, suspicious, frustrated and – occasionally – jubilant and relieved. Individual stories are told, although usually in scant detail. A six-year-old girl is described as the victim of a US bomb; a pregnant woman is killed by a suicide bomb at a checkpoint; a man loses almost his whole family after soldiers fire on his van. Photographs also tell some stories, albeit briefly. Under the headline "High cost of Saddam strike" on April 10, two pictures of devastation in Baghdad carry the captions "Agony: A woman screams at the plight of her son in Kindi Hospital" and "Stretched: There is no time to clean the blood of thousands of wounds from walls" ("High cost of Saddam strike," 2003).

Although these descriptions go a long way to humanising the Iraqi victims of war, they are far less compelling than the descriptions given to US soldiers. Indeed, one pictorial article makes the point of trying to describe "the humanity" of soldiers with photographs showing a soldier receiving a hug from an Iraqi boy, while another pauses to inhale the scent of a letter received from his wife ("Behind the front lines," 2003). Soldiers are shown bowing their heads to pray, struggling to sleep in howling sandstorms and taking time to show compassion to young children. The extent reporters go to in telling human interest stories – which often do little to illuminate

the broader conflict – can be seen in the tale of an American sailor on board a warship who is described as “fighting the war one can of soft drink at a time” as he ensures vending machines are fully stocked (“A carrier day,” 2003). These vignettes are colourful and act to soften the image of members of the Coalition and US forces. Nothing written about individual Iraqis carries quite the same impact, nor do images of Iraqis help. Photographed Iraqis tend to be shown as angry, distraught, suspicious or wounded; this lack of “normality” serves to distant the subjects from the reader.

### **Moralising terminology**

The set of articles was also searched for terms which might indicate moralising by the newspaper – either justifying or decrying the reasons for the war, or taking a stance for or against specific incidents. The terms searched for were “tragic/tragedy”, “liberate”, “liberator” and “liberation”, “aggressor” and “aggression”; and “hero/heroine”.

The terms tragic and tragedy are used on 12 occasions over the three-week period. Remarkably, very few of these occasions refer to the many deaths suffered by the Iraqi people. Instead, the words are predominantly reserved for speculative comment made at the beginning of the war about potential deaths (four uses), used as a descriptor for the thought that it might be too dangerous for Australians to travel to Anzac Cove in 2003 (one use) and to describe the deaths of US or Coalition troops (three uses). On only four occasions are ‘tragic’ or ‘tragedy’ used in reference to the death of Iraqis. Interestingly, the deaths of Coalition or US troops described as tragic or tragedies are those caused by accident or misadventure, such as friendly fire incidents. It would appear that like the selective use of the term victim, tragic and tragedy are used in ways which downplay the ability of the Iraqi military to harm the US or coalition, but recognise the Coalitions ability to harm itself.

It has already been noted that the Liberator frame occurs more frequently than the Aggressor frame, and that is reflected in the proportional use of the terms. The words ‘liberate’, ‘liberation’ and ‘liberator’ are used in 20 articles. Of these, five are historic references to previous conflicts or neutral uses of the words, ten are positive statements about liberation by US or Coalition sources, or stating the liberation as a matter of fact, such as the April 9 article which declares that the British had liberated Basra (“Chief for Basra,” 2003). A further five articles use the

term in a negative sense, usually with Iraqi citizens or leaders scoffing at the suggestion the war was in order to liberate Iraq.

There are just eight articles using the words 'aggressor' or 'aggression' during the examined period, five of them in reference to the US. Each of these uses is lessened because of its source, however. Two uses are by then Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, two by senior Iraqi officials or envoys and the last by an Iraqi citizen. Australia is described as an aggressor on one occasion, by then Federal Opposition Leader Simon Crean, while US President George Bush and Australian Prime Minister John Howard each describe Iraq as an aggressor in speeches made to outline the reasons for war.

Finally, the articles were searched for the terms 'hero' and 'heroine', in order to assess how emotive the articles were in descriptions of troops on both sides. Again, an interesting pattern emerges. There are eight references to the terms over the period – a low figure suggesting restraint in most cases by the newspaper in avoiding such strong terms. Four references are to US or Coalition soldiers (and two of those are to Private Lynch); three are to Iraqi soldiers or civilian combatants. One reference, in the picture caption "Hero Hussein", refers to a poster of Saddam Hussein surrounded by children in Palestine.

This last reference aside, the use of hero or heroine for US or Coalition troops is in each case to a living soldier or group of soldiers; the heroes of Iraq are all dead. Again, this term is being used to reinforce the power and heroic nature of the US and Coalition, while underscoring the weakness and vulnerability of Iraq.

## CHAPTER 8 –DISCUSSION

The three sections of this study seek to answer different questions. The origin analysis assesses the extent of wire service use in *The West Australian* and *The Australian* newspapers, the origins of that wire copy and whether the articles published were episodic or thematic in nature. The wire use comparison examines how the wire copy was used (whether it was shortened or lengthened, edited for stylistic or substantial reasons or combined with other articles before publication) and whether different newspapers treated the same wire copy in different ways. The framing analysis explores the use of frames in articles that appeared in *The West Australian* in order to assess how the newspaper framed the war.

**Research Question 1 – How much of newspaper coverage of the Iraq war was drawn from wire services? Did the proportion of wire stories used change during the process of the war? Did the proportion used vary due to newspaper size and resources?**

As the analysis of wire service use shows, both *The Australian*, a major national newspaper with considerable resources, and *The West Australian*, a state-based paper with no overseas correspondents, use wire services to provide much of their coverage of the recent Iraq war. *The West Australian*, as its size might suggest, relies heavily on wire sources, drawing at least 41.2 per cent of all articles from named wire service organisations. Importantly, another 36.8 per cent of articles that appear in the newspaper during the examined period lack any attribution, and it is possible that the real use of wire services is much higher than the named wire service figures would suggest. In any case, just 22 per cent of articles are attributed to the newspaper's own correspondents, with more than half of these published in the first of the three weeks. The newspaper's use of copy written by its own staff declines within days of the war beginning, and by the third week of the war, just 10.9 per cent of articles are written by members of *The West Australian's* staff.

relies more on wire services than does *The Australian*. Throughout the studied period, wire copy accounts for most of *The West Australian's* newspaper coverage, while at *The Australian*, wire articles never outnumber those by own correspondents.

The greater dependence on wire copy by *The West Australian* can perhaps be easily explained in terms of resources. *The Australian* had five journalists in the war zone, and many more in overseas bureaus; *The West Australian* had none. Any article used by *The West Australian* referring to events in the Gulf would have to be taken from wire services simply because there was no one to write it first-hand.

But *The West Australian* also relied on wire services for articles interpreting the conflict. Of the 177 thematic articles published during the examined period, just 15.3 per cent are written by the newspaper's own staff. While the absence of own correspondent articles relating to war events is understandable, this is not the case with interpretative pieces. Thematic articles can be compiled by journalists at home – as is often the case in *The Australian's* coverage – drawing on information from a range of sources to make a case or explain background. In deciding not to use its own correspondents to put events in context, *The West Australian* ceded much of its ability to interpret the war to other organisations – most frequently wire services and news publications in the United States and Britain. This raises questions over the interpretation of events provided to *The West Australian's* readers, as these thematic articles are written not by Australian journalists for an Australian audience, but by media in the two most active members of the Coalition.

As has been noted, *The Australian* has a much higher percentage of thematic articles in its war coverage, with just under half of all articles judged to be thematic. More than half of the articles written by own correspondents fit this category, with journalists at *The Australian* responsible for 68.5 per cent of all thematic articles. The remaining thematic articles are mainly taken from syndicated publications, rather than general wire services, suggesting *The Australian's* editors are putting more trust in the interpretations made by linked publications. It should be noted that although both newspapers use more episodic articles than thematic articles, the space devoted to thematic articles is comparatively greater. Thematic articles in *The West Australian* account for more than half the major and medium-sized articles over the three weeks. In *The Australian*, they make up all articles judged to be extremely large and more than half those judged extra large.



Finally, it must be noted that both newspapers obscure the origin of their articles, although in different ways. *The West Australian* neglects to credit a third of articles, making it impossible for the reader to know how much to trust a given article's information and perspective. *The Australian* has far fewer uncredited articles (just 19 out of 505), however the frequent use of bylines for articles not written by the newspaper's own staff – along with the use of phrases such as “a correspondent near Najaf” – imply that the articles are written by people directly linked to the paper.

Although Australia was involved in the Coalition of the Willing, its depth of involvement pales beside that of the two leading members, the United States and Britain. It may be that readers would not put less faith in an article written by British or American newspapers than one written by Australian reporters, however literature based on the last Gulf War suggests the intimate involvement of a nation in the action in Iraq has an impact on the willingness of media groups to buy an official line (Nohrstedt, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 1997). By depriving the reader of any knowledge of an article's origin, the newspaper also reduces the reader's ability to make a judgment.

**Research Question 2 – Did newspapers use the same wire service stories in their coverage of the Iraq War? How did the final appearance of those stories differ?**

This study's wire use comparison features just four “events” in the war, looking in detail at the articles that resulted from them, however the incidents chosen for examination are not particularly unique. Consideration of the three weeks of intensive war coverage revealed many instances in which individual wire stories were used by several newspapers.

The four selected were chosen to highlight different uses of wire copy – either as multiple uses of a single source or combinations of several sources by different newspapers. There are a few key findings emerging from the sentence-by-sentence comparison.

At least in the examples considered, Australian newspapers do not to change wire stories dramatically. In cases where a single wire service article is available, details are usually repeated verbatim, or – if the article has to be shortened – information is paraphrased but left largely unchanged. In both the Checkpoint Series and Hassan Series, it can be seen that the order of the information in the articles is

also maintained, although several newspapers chose to insert an official reaction to the shooting in the middle of the Hassan articles in order to provide another perspective to the KRT story. Although a single author is responsible for the bulk of reports in each series, only *The Age* credits William Branigin in the Checkpoint Series, while *The Age* and *The Advertiser* credit Meg Laughlin in the Hassan Series. In both cases *The West Australian* drops the byline of the reporter, while *The Daily Telegraph* twice rewrites the stories under the byline of a staff member.

In cases where multiple sources are used, the newspapers show less restraint about maintaining information and the order in which that information was originally written. They cut and paste the articles together as they see fit. One of the first things to be cut is the attribution of claims to officers or other media. The most clear example of this is *The West Australian's* Najaf battle article, in which numerous claims have their attribution to sources removed and are repeated as fact. Other newspapers also drop attributions, although to a lesser extent. It can be seen in the case of the Najaf battle's death toll, in which the figure of 650 is attributed to an unnamed official who has spoken to a Sky Television reporter who is then in turn quoted by Reuters, that keeping the provenance of claims helps the reader decide how much weight to place on them. The dropping of attributions – when combined with the use of multiple sources – also raises the risk that wire services are inadvertently reinforcing each other's information by providing two accounts of the same statement, but which appear to be one person corroborating another's opinion.

There is a greater agreement among the newspapers over details of events in the Rescue Series, in which a number of wire service stories are based around the same official military briefings. The absence of anything other than the official line for information about the rescue and diversionary attack may have contributed to the space given to the only other information available to journalists about Private Lynch– the reaction in her home town. It does not explain, however, the level of sentimentality in two of the four newspapers considered; this is the result of a deliberate editing strategy to present the rescue as an emotive and heroic tale rather than the product of a successful military operation.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the wire use comparison are that individual stories were frequently used by more than one Australian newspaper, and that despite minor differences in the ways they were presented, much of the original information is retained and the style of the initial articles reproduced.

### **Research Question 3 – What frames were used by *The West Australian* in its coverage of the recent Iraq war?**

This issue of maintenance of information and style is important when considering framing of the war by *The West Australian*. This study identifies 16 frames at work in the newspaper's coverage of the recent war, with the three dominant frames –Powerful Heroic, Lack of Support and Evil Iraq – accounting for 51.63 per cent of all articles. The framing analysis also demonstrates that terminology is repeatedly used to strengthen and humanise the US and Coalition soldiers.

But are these frames being imposed by the newspaper itself or at the wire services level? The absence of changes to wire copy by the newspaper's editors shows that many of the frames imposed at the wire service level are being maintained and perpetuated through publication in *The West Australian*. Combined with the paper's reliance on thematic and interpretative articles taken from wire services, it is clear that *The West Australian* left much of the framing of the recent Iraq war in the hands of wire services and reporters not employed by the organisation. This finding goes further than the argument put forward by Whitney and Becker (1983) that wire services are responsible for deciding what becomes news (Whitney & Becker, 1983), suggesting wire services have considerable sway over the framing of that news as well.

However, the newspaper does impose its own frames on the war as well. As the literature notes, newspapers frame news not only in through the text that appears in individual articles but through their presentation of those articles (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001; Reese, 2001), and using such devices as headlines, subheadings, photographs and introductory and concluding sentences (Tankard, 2001).

*The West Australian* uses these elements to strengthen the image of the US and Coalition through its repetition of the Powerful Heroic frame (and to a lesser extent Evil Iraq) on front covers throughout the war. Its use of headlines, front-page articles and photographs portraying the US as strong but compassionate and Iraqi leadership as despotic, effectively frames each edition.

Similarly, internal photograph montages highlight the humanity of the US and Coalition, with soldiers shown praying, reading mail from home, caring for Iraqi

children and helping old women. These photographs of caring and compassion soften the image of the troops and do more to humanise and normalise the US and Coalition soldiers. In contrast, Iraqis are shown appearing suspicious, distressed, wounded and angry – images that distance the reader from the people featured.

### **Framing of the Iraq war**

To summarise *The West Australian's* actions in framing the recent Iraq war, then, it can be seen that the newspaper relied strongly on wire services not only to provide episodic coverage of events but also for thematic articles that placed the war into context. These works, drawn primarily from American and British wire services, are changed little between wire service and final publication, although they are sometimes combined with other articles. What changes are made at the newspaper tend to make the articles appear more factual than perhaps they are, with the provenance of provided details shortened or dropped altogether in many cases, and claims presented as facts. When several articles are combined, the newspaper (as with other papers examined) risks inadvertently making details appear to be more substantiated than they are by repeating different accounts of the same claim in such a way that one appears to corroborate the other.

The lack of alteration in wire copy means the frames inherent in the structure of the report and details reported are being set not by editors at *The West Australian* but at the wire service level. Combined with the reliance on wire services for thematic and interpretative works, this represents the surrendering of considerable control to reporters and editors not employed by the newspaper itself. However, *The West Australian's* strong use of the Powerful Heroic frame on its covers – a decision made within the editorial ranks of the newspaper – suggests that the newspaper at least concurred with the framing of the wire articles. Through its repetition of frames that demonstrate the United States and Coalition to be powerful, heroic and compassionate, *The West Australian* lends its support to the Allied side of the war.

### **Implications and future research**

While this study is relatively limited – looking at wire service reliance in only two newspapers, comparing wire use in four instances and examining

framing in a single newspaper – its findings are unique. No Australian study has tracked the use of wire services in the same level of detail, and the findings have implications for future research.

It would be worth revisiting the second elite publication discussed in the Putnis et al (2000) study – *The Sydney Morning Herald* – to determine whether it had a wire use pattern similar to that of *The West Australian* and *The Australian*. *The Sydney Morning Herald* has fewer resources than the News Ltd publication, although it did have a number of correspondents in the war zone and overseas at the time of the conflict. *The West Australian* is also an unusual tabloid newspaper, and a wire use study considering other tabloids may produce quite different results.

The wire use comparison in this study is something which could be conducted simply because the volume of wire copy transmitted and published during the recent war increased the likelihood that several newspapers would use the same wire stories. This is not often the case, however it would perhaps be worthwhile examining a broader range of multiple-use wire stories, to establish whether the trends that emerge in this study hold true.

The framing study could also be revisited, more than a year after the initial combat phase of the war. A cursory examination of media coverage in the post-combat period suggests new frames are emerging. When Federal Opposition Leader Mark Latham spoke of bring Australian troops home by Christmas 2004, for example, his comments were met with the response from Foreign Minister Alexander Downer that it was not Australia's style to "cut and run". In the week before the comment was reported on March 24, 2004, there was just one use of the phrase "cut and run" in *The West Australian*. In the seven days after the statement, there 24 references made. Similarly, negative media reports on prisoner abuse by American soldiers, and suggestions that America needs "an exit strategy" for leaving Iraq are potential frames that could be found in this later coverage.

Finally, it would also be worthwhile examining other newspapers' coverage during the first three weeks of the war to see if the same frames found in *The West Australian* are also present. This could shed further light on the question of whether the frames were imposed at the wire service level or by the newspapers themselves.

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APPENDIX 1

Use of the Evil Iraq frame in an edition cover

SPECIAL EDITION

The West Australian

Established 1833

TUESDAY APRIL 1 2003

thewest.com.au

Nowhere to run



Slipping away: A woman almost loses her grip on her baby as she frantically tries to lead her family away from the bullets of Iraqi militiamen outside Basra. PICTURE AP

First elite Iraqi Republican Guards captured in bitter street fighting near Baghdad

■ BASRA

BRITISH commandos dived for cover and then watched in horror yesterday as Iraqi militiamen opened fire on them under the cover of hundreds of families fleeing the embattled southern Iraq city of Basra.

About 600 men from Royal Marines 40 Commando attacked the suburb of Abu Al Khayth in the first all-out British assault by a full commando unit since the Falklands War in 1982.

But they ceased fire when columns of

refugees gathered, obviously trying to escape the fighting. As the civilians emerged, shooting broke out from Iraqi positions sending families scattering, and paralysing some in terror. Commandos returned fire and appeared to save most of the refugees from serious injury, but hardly from the trauma of war.

British troops had made armoured raids into Basra over the past week to try to stop Iraqi guerrillas sniping at them as they encircled the city. But the decision was made at the weekend to mount a full-scale assault to eradicate Iraqi resistance. When fighting

resumed after the refugee incident, 300 Iraqi militiamen were captured quickly and a number of Iraqi tanks, armoured troop carriers and bunkers destroyed.

British AS90 self-propelled howitzers were called in to deal with 21 Iraqi vehicles — some believed to be T55 tanks — to the north of the Shatt Al-Arab, and the marines dug in to hold their positions overnight.

Further north, United States forces made their first capture of Iraq's elite Republican Guard troops as they ground slowly towards Baghdad. Trading fire with Iraqis hidden

behind brick walls and hedges, an armoured unit of the 3rd US Infantry Division battled its way across a Euphrates River bridge into the town of Hindiyah, 80km from the capital. The unit captured dozens of soldiers wearing the distinctive triangular insignia of the Nebuchadnezzar Brigade, an elite unit which usually guards Tikrit, the home town of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

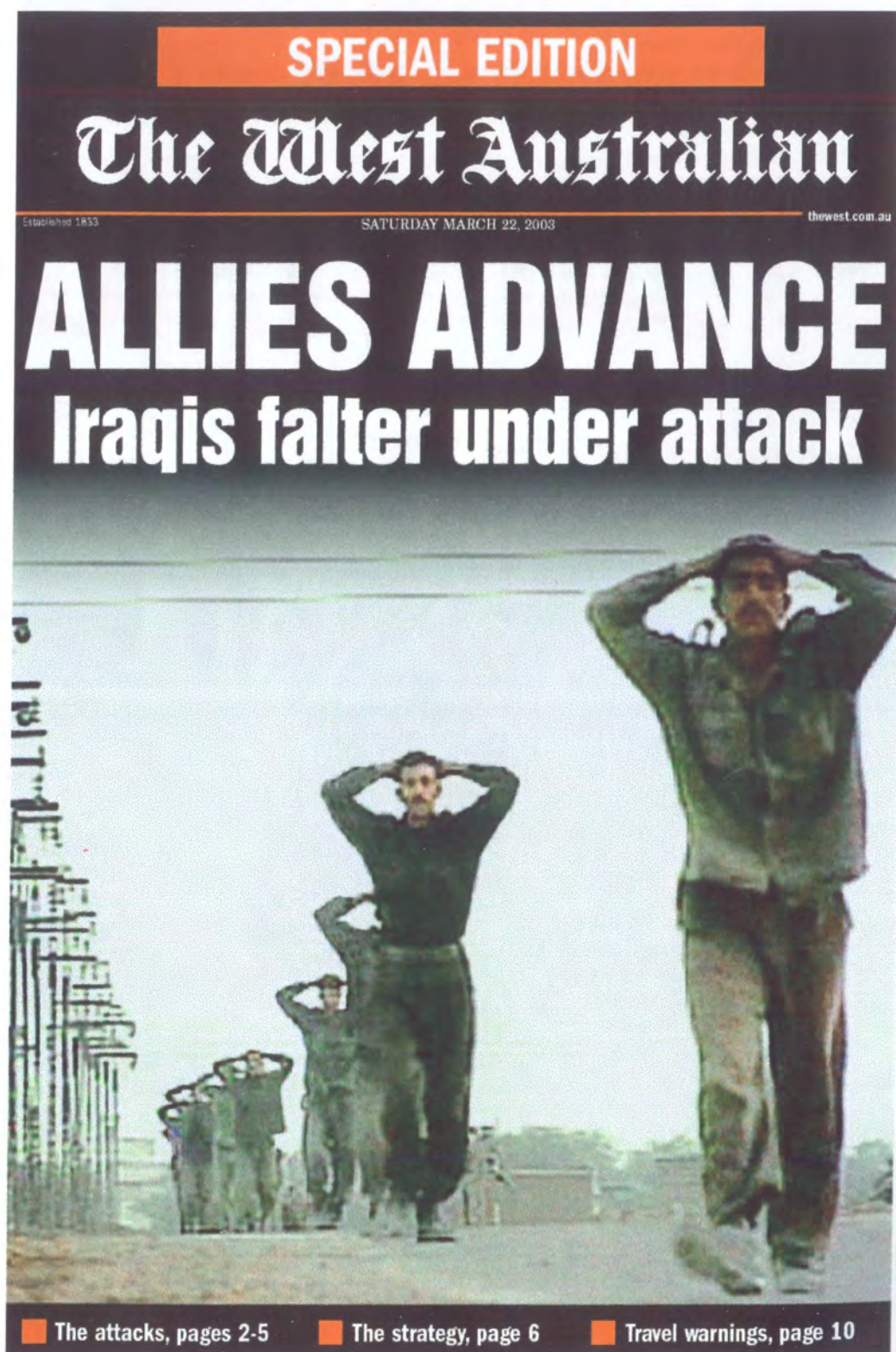
Brigade commander Colonel David Perkins said: "This must have been important to him (Mr Saddam) to send down one of his Republican Guard brigades."

Poison plant found, page 2      Aussie eyes for US spies, Page 5      Basra crossfire terror, pages 6-7



## APPENDIX 2

Use of the Powerful Heroic frame in an edition cover





APPENDIX 3

Use of the Dirty Tricks frame in an edition cover

SPECIAL EDITION

The West Australian

Established 1833

MONDAY MARCH 31 2003

thewest.com.au

DIRTY TACTICS



A United States marine carries a girl wounded after Iraqi troops appeared to force civilians towards US positions. The incident followed a suicide bombing that killed four US soldiers.

SAS on the front line, page 3 Syria, Iran warned, page 4 Iraq's poison queen, page 5