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The realities of war: recognising and planning for the decisive role of media on the urban battlefield

Charles Knight and Li Ji
With a journalist's perspective from Hugh Riminton

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The Realities of War: Recognising and Planning for the Decisive Role of Media on the Urban Battlefield

How does the Army bridge the philosophical gap between perceptions of bloodless precision and the reality of close combat?

by

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© Kudleka, 'Don't shoot.' EuroISME gratefully acknowledges the generous permission of Jon Kudelka. The cartoon appeared first in *The Australian* of 18 November 2004. During the battle for Fallujah in 2004, a wounded Iraqi prisoner was filmed being shot by a US marine. This cartoon was in response to the ensuing attack on the cameraman for filming the event and was a comment on the level of control of the media in the Iraq war. The cartoon was drawn many years ago but it still has relevance today. Although control of the message is nearly impossible given the rise of social media and portable cameras, this won't, of course, stop people trying.

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Abstract

Future conflicts will increasingly occur in cities where destruction of property and loss of life has always been greater and more concentrated than on other terrain. This greater cost will now be more visible because of extensive and decreasingly controllable media coverage, and the increased interest will combine with new sources of information flow that the military will be unable to control. Most media research shows that in wartime the domestic mainstream press tend to be broadly supportive of the military, but urban war is different. Unfamiliar and unexpected events provide windows of opportunity where reporters have a 'clean slate', in the absence of any pre-existing narrative. Since contemporary audiences have little understanding of war generally, war among civilians and insurgents is incomprehensibly brutal, and because prior understandings of the likely costs are not pre-established among politicians or public, audiences make simplistic moral judgements. If the military fights in cities without establishing both media understanding of urban war and processes to influence the public narrative, the consequence may be problematic policy direction. This study uses a framing analysis of newspaper reports of urban battles to examine the way media messaging might indirectly influence military urban operations, especially by shaping popular and political demand for more aggressive or less aggressive actions than optimum military practice. The findings include recommendations for enhancing Army-Media processes, which feedback from journalists suggests are troubled.

Executive Summary

Overview

This project considers how media messaging might indirectly influence military urban operations, especially by shaping popular and political demand for more aggressive or less aggressive actions than optimum military practice. The research on which it is based investigates the way accounts in print media reporting of contemporary urban warfare are 'framed'. The analysis is of Australian, US, British and Chinese print media accounts, from eight different newspapers reporting on six urban battles. The findings from the framing analysis are examined by a Delphi method group (further explained below) to identify environmental factors that might influence media framing or narratives, especially emotive reporting that might lead to unwarranted shifts in military policy. Challenges in the military-media relationship are highlighted and morphological analysis is applied to identify possible improvements.

> The research question posed for this study is: '*How does media framing of urban combat influence elite, public and political opinion; what are the likely impacts on military policy and how should the military respond?'*

Introduction

The introduction to this report focuses on the growing press interest, probability and human cost of conflict in urban areas. Military operations there can prompt volatile public and political responses because of the visibility and emotive nature of casualty events. This is notwithstanding that domestic media tends to be broadly supportive of national military operations and that the supposed media 'CNN effect' drives major policy change rarely and slowly. Two examples of events that dramatically

shifted military policy are given to emphasise the need for preparation. The introduction also provides several key terms and explains the background to the research.

Why the Media matters

The first chapter argues the strategic importance of the media-military relationship in urban conflict. Drawing on the literature, initial discussion explores the historical and cultural basis of mutual distrust, covering military concerns with operational security, reputation and being unjustly judged in the context of the acute tactical problems of urban war. Issues examined include the paradox that since reputation has operational benefits, concealing military missteps might logically be a matter of operational security. These military perspectives are juxtaposed with media concerns about unjustifiable secrecy and its coercive enforcement, while the Australian military-media relationship is used to illustrate how contemporary political norms of government-controlled messaging are increasingly in tension with contestability and democratic accountability. The exploration of a vexed government-military-media political relationship continues with reference to historical tensions between militaries and the press as well as the 'CNN effect'. US embrace of embedding of reporters is contrasted with a cautious Australian approach, followed by discussion of attitudes to risk and the need for constructive engagement. Historical cases are used to illustrate the important role of critical reporting, how in the longer-term, armies often benefit from reforms and new capabilities it prompts. The chapter concludes by explaining the psychology of how media effects operate asymmetrically in contemporary urban warfare, wrapping up by revisiting the cautionary example of the Battle of Fallujah.

What Shapes a Story – and What Makes it Matter?

The second chapter draws further on the literature to describe the processes of media influence, examining theories of opinion forming, indexing, agenda-setting and framing as well as highlighting the crucial phenomenon of 'event-driven news' with its potential for shifting public and political opinion. An opening discussion introduces the concept of media biases in favour of the status quo and militaries, and how the press 'manufacture consent' for governments. Despite journalists being critical and committed to truth, reporting is 'indexed', meaning published discussion occurs within a 'legitimate' range established by social norms and defined by societal elites. Agenda setting, the determination of which events will or will not be reported, is explained as product of political interplay between media, elites and the public which is difficult to influence in a crisis. Similarly, the initial framing of any reported event, the ideas portrayed by words or images, is fundamental to how audiences will comprehend, emotionally respond and their related opinions will develop. The focus of the chapter is the idea of 'activation'. This describes the effect of some kinds of events or interactions that draw public attention and set the conditions for shifts in political opinion. The phenomenon of 'event driven news' is where a dramatic and usually emotive event, disrupts established agendas and frames and can lead to impulsive political decision-making in response to public outrage. Either civilian or own troops casualties may trigger this. It appears that the volatility of media responses may be reduced by constructive engagement and activities that inform journalists of the broad methods, risks and possible failures of military operations and so 'pre-frame' narratives. Risk mitigation lies in educating the press and public, not censorship.

Analysis of Frames in Reports of Urban battles

The third chapter provides the empirical component of this report, which seeks a better understanding of the messages conveyed by the media during urban war by means of a framing analysis of print media reports of battles. This is a quantitative and qualitative assessment on the basis of identifying the dominant idea being expressed in each article and the words or phrases used as descriptors. The account explains the basis of the case selection, that is; three pairs of battles on the same ground at different times as reported in eight different newspapers, in four countries and from different political perspectives. It also describes the data collection process that searched each of the newspapers for 40 days from the beginning of the battle in four day blocks, identified all relevant reports and coded them appropriately. In each case the dominant thematic frame of the article was assigned to one of six meanings as used in previous media research and then to twenty inductively developed sub-themes that discriminate further on the basis of urban combat issues. A quantitative thematic analysis then compares and presents charts of the relative use of different themes, or 'perceptions', over all eight newspapers analysed, while a tabular thematic analysis compares the themes used in the different newspapers for the different battles. Later in the chapter there is a description of the rhetorical analysis of journalists' word choices or 'metaphorical pictures' using Nvivo software and a tabular presentation of results. These findings are then discussed in some detail before a conclusion that reflects previous research showing domestic media bias in favour of 'own' forces and confirms that for armies that operate with restraint, the event-driven news phenomenon is significant and can drive policy changes.

Delphi Discussion and Morphological Analysis – the Factors that Shape Influence?

The fourth chapter describes both the process of engagement with a group of experienced journalists and army officers, and the use of a morphological analysis to operationalise their insights. The study employed a modified Delphi method, a structured approach using questions and responses iteratively to arrive at a group consensus. A set of indicative responses to preliminary questions suggest that the problematic Australian Defence Force (ADF) – media relationship, described earlier by media scholars, continues. A caveat is made about small sample size. There follows a description of the process of brainstorming, culling and synthesising that identified the factors most affecting the impact of media reporting in urban war. These factors are then defined and further discussed before being applied in a morphological analysis. A table that describes different possible conditions for each of those factors allows exploration of the media impact during urban war in terms of desirable 'capacities' and highlights measures to reduce risks of policy volatility or threats to Army's reputation.

Review, Discussion and Conclusions

This final part of the report draws together the elements of the research to offer a response to the question: how should the military respond to the growing media challenges of urban war? It first provides a discursive review of the chapters, then explores possible responses to four key issues. The first is the need for the military to be proactive in improving the relationship with the media. The second is to recognise the risks that flow from politicians' desire to control military narratives. The third is the opportunity for preparatory engagement and education to shape media framing of future urban operations. The last is to reconceptualise engagement with the media to distinguish between information operations that are 'defensive' and actively seek to re-

duce available information, and those that are 'offensive' and seek to generate technically superior and compelling narratives for broadcast. The chapter concludes with a warning against complacency about the status quo, warning of the growing risk that 'unmediated' reporting of casualties may trigger public outrage with unpredictable effects on operations and military reputations. The media might indeed be decisive in urban war.

Postscript - Assessing the Report's Findings Against the Case of Marawi

This chapter provides a case study of the Battle of Marawi that was written after the completion of the main report. Whilst publication was pending, Dr Knight conducted field research in the Philippines to write an account of the battle which was then used to test and assess the conclusions previously drawn. The decision of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to treat information operations equally with kinetic effects, and their success in so preventing a wider insurgency supports the thesis that media influence in urban war is a strategic priority. The notions of defensive and offensive information operations proposed in the report align with the robust approach taken by Filipino military personnel. They both aggressively degraded adversary messaging kinetically and online, while strongly promoting their own 'combat themed' narrative through multiple channels ranging from social media to leaflet drops and loudspeaker announcements. The Philippine commander General Bautista, stated that their military-media emphasis and innovation "translated tactical gains in the main battle area into strategic victories."

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Introduction

Overview of Issues

Future conflicts will increasingly occur in cities where destruction of property and loss of life has always been greater and more concentrated than on other terrain. This greater cost will now be more visible because of extensive and decreasingly controllable media coverage. The reality of urban war, with its collapsed buildings and the dusty, red-clotted limbs of dead children protruding from rubble, perfectly fits the press maxim: 'if it bleeds it leads'. This truth will drive media interest, while the protracted nature of the fight will allow attention to build and give reporters time to get to the battlefield. This increased interest will combine with new sources of information flow that the military will be unable to control.

> *The ADF and other western military forces will need to acknowledge that (ownership of) UAVs and the airspace over a conflict zone is no longer their exclusive preserve. Defence officials may be forced to review the contentious subject of media management; embedding and reporting; as UAV technology may in some cases lessen media dependence on restrictive embeds. If a journalist wants to quickly confirm details on the activities of an Australian or US Army unit 20 kilometres distant in the next valley in Afghanistan, why should that reporter be subjected to the limitations of an embed, when a small fixed wing drone can be swiftly launched to establish the facts.*[1]

[1] Corcoran, Mark. *Drone Journalism: Newsgathering applications of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) in covering conflict, civil unrest and disaster* (Flinders University, 2015) p. 26.

Technology has given the press their own UAVs, put smartphone cameras into the hands of fighters and bystanders, enabled people living in cities to microblog during armed conflict and given reporters satellite communications that bypass censorship.[2] Soldiers defy orders and upload images of the enemies they have killed on the web.[3] It is a near certainty that ugly stories and images will emerge. Their political impact is unpredictable.

Should negative media accounts be a major concern to the military in war? Most media research shows that in wartime the domestic mainstream press tend to be broadly supportive of the military. This aligns with the 'rally round the flag' effect which shifts public opinion towards greater support for governments' military action as war starts.[4] Though sections of the press may be critical from the beginning of a war, publishers are unlikely to alienate audiences by 'not supporting the troops': the British Daily Mirror lost readership for its pro-troops but anti-war stance in 2003.[5] Voices that dramatically contradict government narratives will, at first, normally get little exposure. Policy change depends on a complicated opinion-developing

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[2] *Ibid;* Goldberg, David, Corcoran, Mark, Picard, Robert G. *Remotely piloted aircraft systems & journalism: opportunities and challenges of drones in news gathering,* (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism University of Oxford) 2013, p. v; Monroy-Hernández, Andrés, Danah Boyd, Emre Kiciman, Munmun De Choudhury, and Scott Counts. 'The new war correspondents: The rise of civic media curation in urban warfare', in: *Proceedings of the 2013 conference on Computer supported cooperative work,* (ACM, New York, pp. 1443-1452, 2013).

[3] Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari. 'Body horror on the internet: US soldiers recording the war in Iraq and Afghanistan', *Media, Culture & Societ,* (2009) 31(6): 921-38.

[4] Baker, William D, Oneal, John R. 'Patriotism or opinion leadership? The nature and origins of the 'rally round the flag' effect,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* (2001), 45(5): 661-87.

[5] Goddard, Peter, Robinson, Piers, Parry, Katy. 'Patriotism meets plurality: reporting the 2003 Iraq War in the British press,' *Media, War & Conflict,* (2008), 1(1): 9-30.

process between the media, 'elite' opinion makers (politicians and others whose views are valued), opinion leaders in the community and the public. Effective domestic opposition to war takes a long time to build and typically only occurs after heavy casualties and the emergence of significant political debate. It is rare for critique to influence long term military policy.[6]

Urban war is different. In reporting generally, unfamiliar and unexpected events provide windows of opportunity where there are no pre-existing narratives to follow and reporters have a 'clean slate'. Since contemporary audiences have little understanding of war generally, war among civilians and insurgents is incomprehensibly brutal, and because prior understandings of the likely costs are not pre-established among politicians or public, audiences make simplistic moral judgements. Emotive reports of casualties and destruction can trigger anger or outrage leading to dramatic shifts in public opinion and demands for 'action'. A politician's impulse to be seen to act (and the ease of directing the military) makes policy changes an 'easy option' – attractive even against military advice. Two comparable cases of atrocity driving reflexive policy change make the point. The 1993 'Black Hawk Down' incident saw the bodies of US soldiers dragged through the streets of Mogadishu and led to the US withdrawal from Somalia, to the dismay of military leaders. In the 2004 'Blackwater Bridge' incident in post-invasion Iraq, insurgents ambushed and killed four American contractors and hung their burned bodies from a bridge. The television images portrayed on US TV prompted such outrage that the White House overruled military objections and ordered an assault on Fallujah to 'pacify the city'. The assault stalled but media accounts of civilian casualties crystallised the Iraqi

[6] Berinsky, Adam J., Druckman, James N. 'The Polls--Review: Public Opinion Research and Support for the Iraq War,' (2007) *Public Opion Q.* 71(1): 126-41.

insurgency.[7] Thus, emotional decisions arising from the nature of the reporting of a small number of deaths changed the course and perception of US foreign policy in the 1990s and the course of the occupation of Iraq after 2004. The nature of urban war will continue to provide such emotive events with the potential to inspire popular resistance and prompt international condemnation. If militaries fight in cities without establishing both media understanding of urban war and processes to influence the public narrative, the consequence may be problematic policy direction.

Key Terminology

This report uses important terms in particular ways. *News* is defined as 'newly received or noteworthy information, especially about recent events.'[8] Crucially, it is something not directly observed but rather is received from others. These others may include '*the Press'* – formal organisations whose primary activity is delivering information. The press are a subset of '*the Media'*, which includes informal 'new media' delivered via the internet and personal devices. The crucial idea in both cases is '*mediation*'; another entity determines what is noteworthy and how it is communicated. What is chosen or not chosen reflects '*agendas'*—sets of issues or topics that are held and communicated by rank.[9] Some events or information may appear intrinsically newsworthy, yet will remain unreported if they conflict with an agenda.

People understand the issues or topics on their agendas in particular ways. When they communicate these they

[7] Malkasian, Carter. 'Signaling resolve, democratization, and the first battle of Fallujah' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2006), 29(3): 423-52.
[8] Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford: *Oxford University Press*, 2004), s.v. "News".
[9] Dearing, James W, Rogers, Everett. *Agenda-setting* (1996 London: Sage publications).

consciously or unconsciously structure the message to have particular meaning and influence audience perception. This is *framing*. Framing describes the central organising idea of a message that makes sense of events and suggests what is at stake. It involves what is, or is not, included in a story, the size and placement of details and the emotional tone.[10] This is explained fully below. The agendas and framing used by the press are greatly influenced by a key group of '*influencing elites'* who are commentators and influencers drawn from political, academic, economic and social media circles.

Background to the Study

The main research for this study was conducted by both Dr Charles Knight and Dr Li Ji at Macquarie University in response to and partially funded by the Australian Army Research Scheme (AARS). This program invites external researchers to address nominated topics to inform future land force development and modernisation. The AARS topic question responded to was: *'how does the army bridge the philosophical gap between perceptions of bloodless precision and the reality of close combat?'*

> The research question posed for this study is: '*How does media framing of urban combat influence elite, public and political opinion; what are the likely impacts on military policy and how should the military respond?'*

The report's focus on Australian practice and examples reflects that it was written to provide recommendations for enhancing Australian military-media processes. There were extensive delays when the draft was submitted to the Army for review, which provided an opportunity to validate the report's findings against

[10] Melki, Jad, 'The interplay of politics, economics and culture in news framing of Middle East wars. Media,' *War & Conflict*. (2014), 7(2): 165-86, p. 157.

military operations in Marawi in 2017. Philippines fieldwork and postscript drafting were done by Dr Knight while at Charles Sturt University.

Chapter 1: Why the Media Matters So Much in Urban War

This chapter examines the interaction between the media and the military, internationally and in Australia. There are three reasons why media issues are accentuated in urban warfare.

- First, conflict is increasingly drawn there by the military advantages offered to weaker adversaries. Buildings offer protection from superior sensors and weapons; the presence of people inhibits the use of firepower and structures prevent rapid offensive manoeuvre. The media follow the fight.
- Second, the press are drawn to the greater human drama among the populations; the destruction and the casualties.
- Third, protracted urban battles allow public attention to develop and the press to get there. The earlier mentioned adage 'if it bleeds it leads' captures the reality that negative stories make news. Stories of urban conflict are almost inevitably negative and often horrific, and either persistent negative narratives or a single event that prompts outrage can have domestic or international political impact that changes policy and shapes political-strategic outcomes.

The narrative of an urban battle may matter as much or more than the tactical outcome; in military terms the media may be 'Vital Ground'. This is not only because technology has changed the scope and speed of what will be reported and thus the volatility of political impact, but because the press can set the definitions of success or failure.

This chapter makes the case that the military should pay special attention to a growing media impact in urban war. To provide context it first explores the vexed historical relationship between the press and the military that shapes current reporting, and then argues that a critical media is in the best interest of

soldiers. Next the discussion highlights the potentially decisive role of the media in contemporary asymmetric war generally – and how that will have greater impact in cities. The chapter rounds off by highlighting the operational effects of negative narratives, uses the case of Fallujah to explore military perspectives that are hostile to media and concludes to argue that solutions lie in educating the press, not censorship.

To appreciate the dynamics of media influence in urban operations it is important to consider the basis of antagonism between media and military.

Understanding Military and Media Distrust

There are fundamental differences between military and press attitudes, notwithstanding a shared commitment to society's greater good. The underlying military preference for secrecy is at odds with democratic norms that declare the value of a free and critical press that demands and is entitled to truth.[11]

> *"In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies".*[12]
>
> Winston Churchill

The military have cultural and legal norms of secrecy grounded in the nature of war. It is a primal struggle for advantage, a pursuit of surprise and opportunity to apply strength against weakness, psychologically as well as physically. Concealing one's own strengths and weaknesses is fundamental. The need for 'operational security' is obvious; its proper boundaries are less so. An enemy always wants to understand intentions, dispositions, capabilities and tactics. Armies mostly want to hide

[11] Menning, Anton. 'The Military's Relationship with the Media,' (Thesis, University of Kansas, 2007), p. 8-10.
[12] Discussion of Operation Overlord with Stalin at the Teheran Conference (November 30, 1943) from <http://izquotes.com/quote/37198>.

and mislead about these things but paradoxically they also display information to intimidate enemies and reassure allies.

Concealing soldiers' attitudes matters also, firstly because they reveal the state of morale which determines what armies can achieve, and secondly, because their expressions can have political impact – and wars are political struggles. If an Australian soldier expressed contempt for allied troops, or suggested that a current war is illegitimate, that information could be used by enemies for propaganda purposes. In war, what an enemy knows is always uncertain, so militaries err on the side of caution. This instinct to conceal can go well beyond security demands into the more ambiguous realm of loyalty and reputation.

Armies are hierarchical and tribal. Soldiers are loyal to their nation, their army, their unit, their team and each other. The military reflex is also to expect the support of the nation on whose behalf they have been sent into harm's way. Criticism of military actions in the domestic press may be perceived as damaging and hostile; loyalty thus demands closing ranks. Soldiers are intensely protective of their collective reputation and their instinct is that concealment or deception to protect it is necessary and justified. Individual reputation is precious because, ultimately, fear of its loss is what motivates soldiers to risk death and maiming.[13]

Collective reputation intimidates enemies and inspires the confidence of friends. Thus, repute has operational impact, so can be argued to be a legitimate matter of 'operational security'. The soldier may believe that the pursuit of victory justifies secrecy to protect reputation, but, in principle, liberal democracies do not. Australia offers a useful example to explore

[13] Greenbaum, Charles W. 'The Small Group Under the Gun: Uses of Small Groups in Battle Conditions,' *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science,* (1979), 15(3): 392-405, p. 397; Siebold, Guy L. 'The Essence of Military Group Cohesion,' *Armed Forces & Society* (2007), 33(2): 286-95, p. 289.

this tension. The ADF's formal media policy reflects political reality and the press are not required to redact information that is damaging to reputation rather than security.[14] This dissonance is a challenge that drives military caution or distrust. There is a related and growing challenge in the political arena where ADF communications, or non-communication, are required to conform to government messaging. The military have a loyalty to the government of the day and under the notion of 'civilian primacy', not merely an obligation to execute all legal orders, but also must support Government policy regardless of personal opinion or judgement. If it is Government policy to portray an issue in a particular way, ADF communications should conform – and certainly not contradict. The inevitable consequence, as explained by Rose[15] is that particularly since the 2001 'Children Overboard' incident (that was so-labelled following an SBS interview[16] with PM John Howard and is further analysed below), the military may be perceived as complicit in 'spin' around controversial issues or in applying secrecy to protect political reputations.

Soldiers also instinctively distrust non-soldiers to fairly judge their actions in the brutal chaos that is war. The public, politicians and even most military leaders no longer have personal experience of battle, although ironically, war reporters may. In contemporary society, even militaries eschew risk taking and assume death and injury must involve fault. Yet war, as Clausewitz tells us, is a 'realm of uncertainty and chance' that favours taking the initiative, embracing risk and accepting the possibility of misjudgement. The great strength of Prussian and later German military culture was to recognise this and value

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[14] Logue, Jason. *Herding Cats: the Evolution of the ADF's Media Embedding Program in Operational Areas,* (2013, Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre), p. 34.

[15] Rose, James. 'From Tampa to now: how reporting on asylum seekers has been a triumph of spin over substance,' *The Conversation* 14 (2016).

[16] Brockie, Jenny. 'John Howard Interview'. *Insight*, SBS, 8 November, 2001.

intuition and decisiveness over deliberate judgement.[17] Johnson and colleagues demonstrate theoretically[18] and experimentally[19] the adaptive evolutionary advantage of overconfidence in decision-making in war. Boldness and risk-taking pays. Close combat represents the extreme of stress and uncertainty as hyper-alert and often sleep-deprived soldiers use all their wits to kill each other. Success requires aggression, speed and superior destruction. Survival demands instinctive decisions with poor information and often the immediate engagement of possible threats before positive identification. Retrospectively sub-optimal decisions and errors are inevitable, as demonstrated by the constant recurrence of fratricide since it was first recorded in 424 BC.[20]

Urban combat accentuates 'error' and requires tactics and techniques that sit uneasily with contemporary norms. The urban environment compounds uncertainty, risk and psychological pressure. Structures conceal and protect enemies, allow them to strike at very close quarters from three dimensions while movement outside buildings is highly exposed and vulnerable Buildings are 'combat equalisers' that compartmentalise combat into isolated engagements fought by those within the rooms and spaces inside. Walls prevent comrades nearby providing supporting fire or moral support and so allow a small number of defenders to fight at advantage. Every time attackers enter a room or stairwell they must pass through a 'funnel of death' beyond which a defender may be poised to shoot or an explosive

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[17] Leistenschneider, S., *Auftragstaktik im Preussischen Heer 1871 bis 1914*, (2002: Mittler und Sohn), p. 106-111.

[18] Johnson, Dominic, Fowler, James H. 'The evolution of overconfidence,' *Nature,* (2011), 477: 317-20, p. 316.

[19] Johnson, Dominic, Weidmann, Nils B., Cederman, Lars-Erik. 'Fortune Favours the Bold: An Agent-Based Model Reveals Adaptive Advantages of Overconfidence in War,' *PloS ONE*, (2011) 6(6). e20851.

[20] Syms, Paul. 'An Historical Analysis of Fratricide,' in: Kirke, Charles ed. *Fratricide in Battle:(un)friendly fire. (*A&C Black, 2012).

device may lurk. Since the widespread introduction of rapid firing small arms and explosive boobytraps in the 1930's, this effect has repeatedly provided the opportunity for small groups of determined and prepared defenders to inflict a steady stream of casualties. In the early years of WW2 armies learned that the way to avoid such attrition was to precede building attacks with flame or High Explosive (HE) – ideally by tank and direct artillery fire, but always with many grenades. This understanding of the need for HE for building combat receded in Western armies as urban operations during the Cold War took the form of counterinsurgencies such as the Northern Ireland 'troubles'. In particular, a series of successful surgical counter-terrorist recovery operations shifted public and even military expectations towards restrained tactics. However, the armies that did conduct intense urban operations, such as the Israelis in Lebanon in 1982 or the Russians in Grozny in 1995 rapidly re-learned the need for HE after suffering heavy casualties early in their battles.

Soldiers on contemporary urban operations are caught in a brutal dilemma. Public expectations are for them to exercise a very high level of discrimination and rules of engagement reflect this. Yet, to enter and clear the unseen spaces of building without a very high chance of being killed, they may have no other option but to use HE weapons with the attendant risk of harming civilians. This places them in a specific situation of moral and tactical ambiguity compounded by the more general uncertainties of war. They fear being retrospectively held to forensic account and judged by those do not understand.

This precise fear was reinforced right across the Australian Army by the decision of the ADF Independent Military Prosecutor (IMP) to bring, and later withdraw, charges against two members of 1st Commando Regiment following their service in Afghanistan in 2009. The charges were laid as a result of an operation in Oruzgan province where six civilians were unintentionally killed in an attack on a compound. The prosecution charged the individuals with the ordinary crimes of

'manslaughter' and 'dangerous conduct' on the legally unprecedented basis[21] that the soldiers owed a duty of care under Australian law to non-combatants, rather than applying war crimes charges available under international humanitarian law. Indeed, no such war crime was suggested at any time.[22] The Government subsequently released the Independent Military Prosecutor' (IMP) submission[23] to the Minister giving her rationale that the soldiers should not have used grenades given the presence of civilian women and children – explaining that she considered a prosecution was necessary to 'uphold the primacy of the rule of law'. This decision to publicly lay novel charges in an uncertain area of law, for tactical conduct that, on the basis of available information, appeared reasonable was highly contentious[24]. The Chief Judge Advocate subsequently determined that there was 'no offence known to law' involved and therefore the IMP withdrew the charges. While these events can be understood as symptomatic of a relatively untested new system of military justice seeking to demonstrate independence, they caused great concern across and beyond the Army, being widely understood as demonstrating that the ADF 'system' either does not understand combat, or is structurally unable to protect subordinates.[25] Although the media were not involved in

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[21] McDade, Lyn. 'Questions arising out of the submission to the civilian casualty incident 12 Feb 2009,' Submission to the Minister of Defence 23 Sept 2011. Downloaded here <http://www.defence.gov.au/FOI/Docs/Disclosures/305_1516_Document.pdf>

[22] McCormack, Tim. 'Commandos finally get justice: Troops can again have confidence in the legality of their combat operations,' *Sydney Morning Herald,* 25 May 2011.

[23] McDade, (2011) *Supra* footnote 21.

[24] Kelly, Joshua. 'Re Civilian Casualty Court Martial: prosecuting breaches of international humanitarian law using the Australian military justice system,' (2013) *Melb. UL Rev.* 37: 342.

[25] Sheehan, Paul 'Our army is at war over the prosecution of commandos,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 October 2010.

the ADF decision, the event clearly suggests to soldiers that nobody beyond their 'tribe' can be trusted with knowledge of combat events.

The first casualty, when war comes, is truth.[26]
Hiram Johnson

Media perspectives of the military can reflect these distrustful Army attitudes. A few journalists are ideologically hostile, but most are probably simply wary. They are aware that militaries use psychological operations (PSYOP) to directly influence the news agenda through constructed events. An example is the toppling of the Saddam Hussein statue during the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. This was created by a US PSYOP unit but represented to the media as a spontaneous act by cheering Iraqis who supposedly welcomed the invaders [27].

Since in this study we are examining influence on and of the press, it is important to acknowledge a latent and darker press perspective of the military culture of secrecy and cover-up. In a later chapter of this report Hugh Riminton describes coercive behaviour. When exploring the ADF-Media relationship with other journalists, several described similar experiences on conditions of anonymity. [28] Importantly, their concern, as expressed to the researchers, was less with what they understood as aberrations by individual defence members and more that

[26] Attributed to Hiram Johnson but first recorded use by Philip Snowden in his introduction to *Truth and the War*, by E. D. Morel. (London, July 1916): "Truth," it has been said, "is the first casualty of war."

[27] Ottosen, Rune. VG, *Saddam and us: a critical gaze at news coverage of war and conflict,* (2009, Fredrikstad:IJ-foraglet).

[28] These comments were made to the researchers under conditions of anonymity and cannot be further substantiated. However, they are consistent with the observations of Hugh Riminton.

such behaviour was enabled by a culture of inappropriate secrecy that is driven from the top.

The 2001 Children Overboard incident is very significant in the ADF-Media relationship. It occurred in the context of a Federal Election in which the issue of asylum seekers arriving by sea was a key issue and the Howard Government was emphasising the necessity for its tough policy. The suggestion arose that asylum seekers on a vessel heading to Australia had not only sabotaged their vessel to prevent the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) turning them back but had also thrown their children in the water. The idea arose mistakenly, but the narrative was perceived to have been promulgated enthusiastically by Government ministers to political advantage. When ADF personnel repeatedly attempted to correct the record internally, this was ignored, and the press became aware of the inconsistency. What eventually occurred is described by Chalmers, citing the late Michael O'Connor who was Head of the Australian Defence Association.

> *On 7 November, three days before polling day, The Australian newspaper published rumors that the allegations were untrue. Prompted by this report, acting Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) Air Marshal Angus Houston confirmed to Defence Minister Peter Reith that there was no evidence of children being thrown overboard. On 8 November, a journalist asked the Chief of Navy, Admiral David Shackleton, if children had been thrown overboard. Admiral Shackleton answered truthfully. Later that day, at the direction of the Minister or his staff, Admiral Shackleton issued a 'clarification' recanting his earlier statement. Michael O'Connor characterizes this incident as "one of a series of attempts to suborn the ADF for political purposes". O'Connor believes that the order to publish a*

> *retraction was clearly illegal – it required the Chief of Navy to lie in order to further the Government's electoral prospects.*[29]

Foster's analysis of ADF-Media relations examines this incident in detail and assesses it as having crucially damaged trust between the government and the military and created a risk-averse culture, a proposition for which he draws support from former defence minister Joel Fitzgibbon.[30] [31] Critics argue that the Chief of the ADF failed to resist being politicised and caused his subordinates to conform to the deception. This overlooks a dilemma. Had the Chief protested and offered his resignation, the political impact might have been equally malign against the then government, thus he was in a no-win position. In the toxic aftermath, defence contact with the press was 'frozen'. All communication between military and media had to be approved by the Ministers office, the media could rarely attend military conferences and officers had to have presentations cleared before attending public conferences.[32]

Normalising such control at the highest levels created distrust, exemplified by General Cantwell's 2013 description of 'the draconian control of information by the Department of Defence Public Affairs Office and the Defence Minister's office'.[33] This problem is magnified in the ADF because of a basic principle of military leadership: officers own the orders they issue. No matter how much a senior leader may object to politicised direction, if he or she does not consider it illegal or a

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[29] Chalmers, David. *Heroes and Fools-Improving Australian Civil-Military Relations,* (2003, E. DTIC Document) p. 2.
[30] *Ibid,* p. 2.
[31] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*: (Monash University Publishing; 2013), p. 23.
[32] Dobell, Graeme. 'Ministers, media and the military: Tampa to Children Overboard,' (2002), *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration* 104: 40.
[33] Cantwell, John, Bearup, Greg. *Exit Wounds Updated Edition: One Australian's War on Terror*, (2013, Melbourne Univ. Publishing) p. 326.

matter for resignation, they are obliged to carry it out with full (if forced) conviction. The appointment of highly respected senior Army officer to be the very public face of 'stopping the boats'[34] was from a Government perspective, an effective way to signal unwavering policy. It may have contributed to the success of that policy (which, it should be noted, has bipartisan support). However, this action can also be understood as the government seeking to legitimise their policy by co-opting an ADF leader. The problem that this causes for media relationships was highlighted by several journalists interviewed by the authors, who said that senior ADF members allowing themselves to be portrayed in this way compromises the trustworthiness of their statements.[35]

Press distrust of tightly managed information flows is compounded by perceptions that Government approaches extend to actively supressing negative reporting. The issue for this report is not the veracity of the allegations below but the attitudes journalists develop as a result of such media management. Matheson provides a New Zealand (NZ) example of an 'establishment' attempt to supress a story and discredit a journalist whose stories were critical of the role of the NZ SAS in Afghanistan, the secrecy surrounding their deployment and including allegations of mishandling prisoners.

> *... Jon Stephenson … gathered testimony from former SAS soldiers that they had in 2003 handed over prisoners to a US detention centre in Kandahar, known as "Camp Slappy" for its widespread*

[34] Laughland, Oliver. 'Angus Campbell warns asylum seekers not to travel to Australia by boat,' *The Guardian* (Australian Edition), 11 April 2014.

[35] These comments were made to the researchers under conditions of anonymity and cannot be further substantiated. However, they are consistent with the observations of Hugh Riminton.

> *use of beatings, and done so without recording their captives' identities, contravening the Geneva Convention.*[36]

Stories including this allegation were published from 2009,[37] until an international award winning version in 2011.[38] They included references to an interview with an Afghan Police Colonel at a NZ Army base there who said that the SAS were "very, very involved". The NZ Defence Force (NZDF) response, as later revealed by internal correspondence,[39] was to attempt to discredit the journalist by suggesting that he had been turned away from that NZDF base and had invented the visit. Various members of the establishment then commented to discredit the journalist. Defence Force Chief Lieutenant General Rhys Jones said incidents outlined in Metro were either inaccurate or did not happen and the NZ Prime Minister said that he had "*found the reporter not to be credible*".[40] This tactic eventually backfired when the journalist brought a protracted defamation case against the government. After an inconclusive first trial and before a second one could proceed, the government decided to make a very substantial out of court

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[36] Matheson, Donald '"Can't talk now, mate": New Zealand news media and the invisible Afghan war,' in: Keeble, Richard, and John Mair Editors, *Afghanistan, war and the media: deadlines and frontlines*, (2010, Abramis).

[37] Stephenson, Jon. 'Kiwi troops in "war crimes" row,' *Stuff,* Auckland, 8 August 2009. Available at <http://ww.stuff.co.nz/national/2712026/Kiwi-troops-inwar-crimes-row>

[38] Stephenson, Jon. 'Eyes Wide Shut: The Government's Guilty Secrets in Afghanistan,' *Metro,* Auckland, May 2011.

[39] Taylor, Phil. 'Defence Debacle: Afghan witness still in NZ,' *New Zealand Herald,* 26 Feb, 2016.

[40] Cheng, Derek.'PM attacks journalist over SAS torture claims,' *New Zealand Herald,* 3 May 2011.

settlement [41] and retract its claims against Johnson. [42] For journalists, this case first illustrates the kind of 'grey' issues that the military might plausibly seek to keep secret – for example, the allegation that they avoid obligations under international law by using other nationals to conduct arrests[43] – yet which even journalist who would never countenance compromising operational security might consider a legitimate matter of public interest. Secondly, given that this occurred in New Zealand, which has a reputation for probity in public affairs, it illustrates to journalists 'establishment' willingness to suppress a story by an ad-hominem attack.

Media attitudes range across a spectrum from support to deep suspicion. Unless the military have understood and are ready to engage the unpalatable, they are unlikely to allay scepticism. The most critical journalists allege that Australia's principal ally, the US military, has killed, deceived and proselytised to shape the media narrative. This proposition is soberly explored in Paterson's 2014 book, *War Reporters Under Threat: The United States and Media Freedom.* [44] Explicit cases include the NATO bombing of the HQ of Radio-Television Serbia in April 1999 which was both providing propaganda for the Serbian State and enabling CNN to give a Serbian perspective to US audiences, or the misleading military

[41] Taylor, Phil. 'Defence Force settle defamation action with journalist,' *New Zealand Herald,* 1 Oct, 2015.
[42] Taylor, Phil. 'Defence Debacle: Afghan witness still in NZ,' *New Zealand Herald,* 26 Feb, 2016.
[43] McCrone, John. *Did NZ journalism fail in Afghanistan?* Stuff 17 Aug, 2013. Available from: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/9054102/Did-NZ-journalismfail-in-Afghanistan>.
[44] Chris A Paterson, *War Reporters under Threat: The United States and Media Freedom* (Pluto Press, 2014).

intelligence brief provided to Colin Powell for presentation to the UN Security Council in 2003 to justify the invasion of Iraq.[45]

More ambiguously, since 1999 the US has attacked at least 11 other media installations and killed at least 40 media workers.[46] There are well documented reports of press being threatened, including BBC reporter Kate Adie reporting that in 2003 the US threatened to bomb the satellite uplinks of reporters who remained in Bagdad.[47] It is unequivocal that the US was deeply hostile to *Al Jazeera* for its reporting of civilian casualties and narratives that contradicted the Coalition's. The issue of whether the US strikes on their offices in Iraq and Afghanistan were deliberate is irrelevant for this discussion, although recklessness is evident.[48] What does matter when considering media-military relations is that many reporters, represented by the 'Reporters without Borders Organisation', think the strikes were intentional.[49] This speaks to trust. Furthermore, the Coalition certainly suppressed negative evidence about such incidents, including a UK government memorandum (held by the UK *Daily Mirror*) noting that President Bush had (presumably in jest) suggested striking journalists[50] and leaked gun camera video recording of an Apache helicopter killing Reuters journalists.[51] The vital point is

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45 Iyengar, Shanto. *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues*: (1994, University of Chicago Press), p. 89.

46 Paterson, Chris. 'Government intervention in the Iraq war media narrative through direct coercion, *Global Media and Communication,* 2011, 7(3): 181-6, p. 182.

47 Adie, Kate. *Transcript of interview with Irish national broadcaster Tom McGurk on the RTE1 Radio 'Sunday Show',* RTE Ireland, 9 March 2003.

48 Samuel-Azran, Tal. *Al-Jazeera and US war coverage*: (Peter Lang; 2010).

49 Finnegan, Lisa. *No questions asked: News coverage since 9/11*, (Greenwood Publishing Group), 2006, p. 101.

50 Paterson, (2011), s*upra* footnote 46.

51 Allan, Stuart, Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari. '"Come on, let us shoot!": WikiLeaks and the Cultures of Militarization,' TOPIA: *Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 2010 (24), p. 246.

that while journalists might or might not anticipate coercion, some believe that Coalition militaries classify and suppress politically embarrassing facts without operational security cause. This pattern gives journalists both a reason for suspicion and a moral justification to expose what they find.

A Shifting and often Vexed Relationship

The origins of the term 'the press' reveal a long role in both motivating conflict and clashes with the 'establishment'. In the mid-sixteenth century Gutenberg's printing press enabled the mass production of documents that challenged social order. The production of non-Latin Bibles led to the first drastic suppression of the 'presses'. The European religious wars that began around that time were also '*media wars'* where political propaganda '*came of age*' as broadsheets and pamphlets describing the atrocities of the adversary religionists in gory detail were deliberately used to whip up demands for revenge.[52] Much later, as war became industrial and required the sustained mobilisation of entire societies, the press role expanded from motivating to sustaining conflict. During WW1 and WW2, propaganda played a vital role for all sides in maintaining the will to fight.[53] An opposite, counter-mobilising role for the media is more recent, only clearly evident in the anti-colonial conflicts after 1946. As the European powers fought to retain their colonies or shape the successor Governments as they withdrew, these 'rear-guard' wars became domestically unpopular. From this grew the understanding that the media is an instrument that can undermine the popular will to fight, leading to defeat. This idea

[52] Briggs, Asa, Burke, Peter. 'Social history of the media: From Gutenberg to the Internet,' *Polity*; 2010, p. 72.
[53] Gary, B. 'The Nervous Liberals: Propaganda Anxieties from World War I to the Cold War,' *Columbia University Press*; 1999.

crystallised in the US withdrawal of their military support for South Vietnam against the Communist North.

In the eight years after committing major forces to Vietnam in 1965, the US lost 58,000 killed. In the face of massive domestic political opposition to continued involvement, the US withdrew from the conflict in 1972 despite never having been beaten on the battlefield.[54] Images of war's brutal reality brought into American homes via TV are said to have shifted popular opinion. Along with many others, General Westmoreland, the overall US Commander in Vietnam, directly blamed sensational media coverage for the result. His flawed strategy may have been a greater cause and the 'conventional wisdom' has been disproved by studies showing most press coverage was favourable or neutral – but the military was convinced otherwise.[55] Subsequently a retired US Marine General wrote "*the credo of the military seems to have become duty, honor, country and hate the media*".[56] The resultant post-Vietnam view of the media as 'enemy' drove the US near-exclusion of the media from their invasions of Grenada in 1983 and Panama in 1989. The idea was not to control what the media could report – the US First Amendment precludes that- rather to control what the press could see. The concept was called 'Security at Source'. According to Rid's book on the topic it worked. Despite '*fierce criticism'* of these measures by the media the public *'accepted a ban on information while at war'* and offered strong endorsement for both the interventions and press coverage of them.[57] The risk of

[54] Summers, Harry G. 'Interview with General Frederick C. Weyand About the American Troops Who Fought in the Vietnam War,' *Vietnam Magazine*, 1988, Summer.

[55] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*, (Monash University Publishing), 2013, p. 3.

[56] Rid, Thomas. *War and Media Operations: The US military and the press from Vietnam to Iraq*, (Routledge, 2007), p. 1.

[57] *Ibid,* p. 6.

an antagonised media critically examining the legal and ethical grounds for intervention did not materialise.[58]

By the time of the 1991 Gulf War, there was growing recognition of the political danger of press hostility in the context of sustaining international support for a Coalition mission. Still, the US military continued tight control of media on the battlefield with press pools corralled into special briefings or escorted to selected parts of the battlefield in small Media Reporting Teams with their copy vetted and transmitted by the military. This did not work well for the media and failed to compete with independent CNN reports from within Iraq itself, especially reports of civilian deaths from US bombing. A different approach was taken by the US Marines who had explicitly recognised the media as a 'Force Multiplier', that provided them with logistical support and thus garnered the best reporting of the war.[59] The rest of the military noticed and began to recognise that CNN were proving that tight control of either media or story would no longer be achievable – and the consequences of independent coverage were unpredictable. The US decision to withdraw from Somalia in 1993 following images of dead US soldiers being dragged through the streets, and the decision to bomb the Serbians in the former Yugoslavia in 1999 after massacres of Albanians were said to be due to a 'CNN effect' (although it was later shown that the media coverage followed political interest). This suggests that 24 hour TV news delivery can sway public opinion so dramatically that it obliges governments to change foreign policies: '*Press Spin'* or '*winning on*

[58] Johns, Christina Jacqueline, Johnson, P Ward. *State crime, the media, and the invasion of Panama*, (Praeger, 1994).
[59] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*: (Monash University Publishing) 2013, p. 8-11.

the media battlefield' was now recognised as crucial to strategic success.[60]

The complete change of US media policy for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is explored in Rid's book 'War and Media Operations.'[61] He credits the US military with being a learning organisation which recognised a '*success trap'* in the previously successful but inferior policy of 'Security at Source'. They took the bold decision to embed reporters within military units, to live and work among the soldiers with few formal restrictions on what might be reported, depending on the press to honour requests to respect security and privacy. Risks to operational security were accepted and military cultural resistance overridden. As the US Assistant Secretary of Defence for Public Affairs stated in 2003:

> *We need to tell the factual story—good or bad—before others seed the media with disinformation and distortions, as they most certainly will continue to do. Our people in the field need to tell our story—only commanders can ensure the media get to the story alongside the troops.*[62]

This was explicitly not proposed as a bargain where access is given in exchange for positive stories: the US policy forbade any attempt to 'prevent the release of derogatory, embarrassing, negative or uncomplimentary information'. It was a more subtle subversion. Embedding represented a more sophisticated US military message of confidence – essentially that 'we are proud of what we do and we want you to see it warts and all'. Initially

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[60] Feldman, Marc D. *The military/media clash and the new principle of war: Media spin.* (DTIC Document, 1993).

[61] Rid, Thomas. *War and Media Operations: The US military and the press from Vietnam to Iraq*: (Routledge, 2007).

[62] Foster, Kevin. 'Going Dutch or Candidly Canadian? What the ADF Might Learn from its Allies' Media Operations Practices in Afghanistan,' *Security Challenges* 2015, 11(1): 1-19, p. 1.

resistant leaders- including the Commanding General, Tommy Franks, came round when they saw the potential for an empathetic perspective to emerge.[63] But this has not led to entirely positive reporting. There have been many reports from within the military environment critical of US strategy; some critical of operations, tactics and commanders and a few exposures of US misbehaviour. It is striking, if logical, that nearly all of the 'ugly truth' stories have been reported in urban settings. That is where civilians are, so that is where such incidents happen - and where they can be seen. For example, an embedded NBC journalist reported Marines shooting Iraqi prisoners in a mosque[64] and *Time* magazine uncovered the murder of civilians by soldiers in Haditha following an insurgent roadside bomb.[65]

In spite of such incidents, embedding has been an outstanding success in the view of both the US press and the US military. The media gained access and the military gained favourable reporting that sustained public support well past the end of the invasion proper.[66] The advantage of the US embedding approach from the military perspective is not simply the psychological bonding that reporters experience, which can be shown to slant routine reporting in favour of the military.[67] It appears to be deeper and more subtle. By specifically allowing

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[63] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*, (Monash University Publishing, 2013), p. 16-17.

[64] Sites, Kevin. (cited in Editorial) 'US probes shooting at Fallujah Mosque,' MSNBC, 11:33 AEST, 16 November 2004.

[65] Kahl, Colin H. 'In the Crossfire or the Crosshairs? Norms, Civilian Casualties, and U.S. Conduct in Iraq, *International Security,* 2007, 32(1): 7-46, p. 33.

[66] Rid, Thomas. *War and Media Operations: The US military and the press from Vietnam to Iraq*, (Routledge, 2007), p. 6-8.

[67] Pfau, Michael, Haigh, Michel, Gettle, Mitchell, Donnelly, Michael, Scott, Gregory, Warr, Dana, et al. 'Embedding Journalists in Military Combat Units: impact on newspaper story frames and tone,' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 2004, 81(1): 74-88, p. 75.

reputationally damaging reports,[68] the US military allows journalists to retain their individual commitment to objective reporting, but more importantly it sets up a paradigm where critically minded embedded journalists become immersed in the tactical and operational discourse of the war. It is moot whether positive reporting of early successful counterinsurgency operations in Iraq politically enabled the 'Surge' against the advice of some senior military commanders, but the thrust of reporting supports McCelvey's argument that the most informed journalists were too busy debating counterinsurgency doctrine to challenge the US reason for being there in the first place.[69] Perhaps the best measures of the success of embedding is that many media scholars are highly critical and they regard it as having 'co-opted' journalists.[70] Remarkably, the interviews in Menning's thesis on the military-media relationship revealed that US military officers had exactly the same concern: the psychological 'Stockholm' effects of embedding compromise the 'watchdog' role of the press.[71]

Foster, who is a leading Media scholar, argues that the Australian military-media relationship has been less happy, as explored in his book on the topic.[72] His account of the Army's suspicious and antagonistic attitude towards the media during the Vietnam War is captured in the soldiers phrase: "feel free to f*** off" which he uses as the title for a chapter discussing how military culture from that period has changed little through the

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[68] Rid, Thomas. *War and Media Operations: The US military and the press from Vietnam to Iraq*: Routledge; 2007, p. 5.

[69] McKelvey, Tara. 'Too close for comfort?' *Columbia Journalism Review* 2009; 48(3): 24+.

[70] Dimitrova, Daniela V., Strömbäck, Jesper. 'Foreign policy and the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in elite Swedish and US newspapers, *Media, War & Conflict* 2008, 1(2):203-20, p. 207.

[71] Menning, Anton. 'The Military's Relationship with the Media.' (Thesis University of Kansas, 2007).

[72] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*, (Monash University Publishing), p. 2013.

intervening years. Foster notes that many reporters still describe the ADF as '*openly hostile'*, or '*absurdly secretive'* towards the media."[73] This is empirically supported. A survey of the attitudes of future ADF leaders at Staff College in 2011 showed a '*strikingly low opinion'* of the media, which appears to have been reflected in practice.[74] Foster also shows that the ADF did not follow the lead of the US, the UK, the Dutch and others in embracing openness. In operations in Iraq or Afghanistan after 9/11, the minimal access given to the press was usually limited to a stage-managed 'bus tour' approach run by ADF Public Affairs (ADFPA) despised by participants. Independent observers were unwelcome and their access to troops restricted. [75] The former Chief of Army, General Leahy, acknowledged a widespread distrust that he attributed to an organisational belief that journalists seek scandal not substance. [76] The 2008 media frenzy over a 'sex scandal' involving a touring band entertaining Special Forces (SF) soldiers in Afghanistan appears to supports his argument, [77] although the incident can alternatively be construed as an example of what happens if journalists are frustrated and unable to report meaningful stories - they will settle for sensationalism. In 2004 Hibbert asked:

> *Do the media deserve such contempt? For the most part, the media act responsibly and are willing to abide by reasonable requests made*

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[73] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*: Monash University Publishing; 2013, p. 18.

[74] Foster, Kevin, Pallant, Jason. 'Familiarity breeds contempt? What the Australian defence force thinks of its coverage in the Australian media, and why,' *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 2013, p. 23&34.

[75] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*, (Monash University Publishing, 2013), p. xiv.

[76] Foster, (2013), s*upra* footnote 74, p. 23.

[77] AAP. 'Kevin Rudd weighs into Tania Zaetta sex scandal,' *Daily Telegraph*, 22 May, 2008.

> *by the ADF. However, our research revealed numerous instances during the Iraq war of media breaking confidences (publishing information supplied in confidential ADF briefings), breaching security (running road blocks to access restricted locations) and flouting procedures (ringing senior members of the government to place pressure on the ADF to release information) that suggest that at times some journalists act unprofessionally and are not deserving of respect or trust.*[78]

Is erratic behaviour by journalists the root of the military distrust – or is military hostility and unwarranted secrecy the driver of journalistic antagonism? Press misbehaviour does not seem to have been such a problem for those similar countries who embraced embedding.

Although even retired generals say that Australia's approach to secrecy is excessive,[79] there may be reasons for Australia's approach differing from its allies. One rationalisation for the ADF culture of secrecy is that the Australian contribution in both Iraq and Afghanistan was led by the Special Forces (SF). They have a particular need to conceal personnel identity, methods and tools as well as operational sensitivities – which the press have generally respected. All this creates obvious practical problems in allowing reporters access. On the other hand, the deployment of the SF into Afghanistan after 9/11 was unequivocally a political signal of commitment to the alliance with the US. This message was quickly recognised and understood by the US administration and military, but it was only the media reports of the actions of SASR in saving US soldiers during Operation Anaconda in 2002 that alerted American lawmakers and the public to Australia's loyalty-

[78] Hibbert, Zoe, Starr, Amanda. 'Conflict Communication Management: Why Australians Didn't See Their Troops in Iraq,' *Media International Australia incorporating Culture and Policy*, 2004 (113) 66-74.

[79] Cantwell, John, Bearup, Greg. 'Exit Wounds Updated Edition: One Australian's War on Terror, (Melbourne Univ. Publishing, 2013), p. 326.

presumably the ultimate strategic effect intended. The nature and purpose of the work of the SF Task Forces since has otherwise remained virtually unreported, as has their success story of remarkable '*proactive and aggressive operations*'. What has emerged has been unavoidable (and ultimately negative) reports of own and civilian casualties and occasional sensationalism,[80] leavened by stories of outstanding heroism. Yet these accounts were largely devoid of operational context. If the public do not understand the purpose of operations, they are likely to react badly to negative events.

The reason for evading strategic discussion is explored below, but if such a level of secrecy was really needed to preserve SF mystique and method, journalists ask why was it suddenly possible in 2016 to produce the recent ABC documentary 'Afghanistan: Inside Australia's War'? This represents exactly the kind of reporting the press have wanted to do for years, and while perhaps detailed coverage had to wait till after operations were over, the press can legitimately ask: why nothing else till now? To the frustration of the participants, and the loss of an opportunity to 'shape' the US and Australian public, a chapter of Australian military history has been left almost unwritten.[81] SF secrecy can be explained, but there seems no reason that their culture should be applied to the rest of the Army. In his book dealing with the 'ADF, Media and Afghanistan', Foster suggests the ADFPA constructed a selective narrative as conventional forces deployed after the SF. Unchallenged by either independent or critical in-country reporting, reconstruction operations were portrayed to promote a benign or politically

[80] Foster, Kevin, *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*: (Monash University Publishing, 2013), p. xiv; Foster, Kevin, 'Successes and failures of documentary Afghanistan: Inside Australia's War', *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 17 March, 2016.

[81] Leahy, Peter. 'Afghanistan: We had no strategy in this war and the details were kept from us,' *The Age,* 22 February, 2016.

saleable *'version of armed social work'*.[82] If that was the intention, this was surely the ideal environment for true embedding. By restricting rather than enabling media 'story-telling', Army has ensured that the Afghanistan contribution will mostly be remembered for its casualties and dismal strategic context – and therefore quite possibly as failure. The precedent is not good, for poor relations with the media may have a lot to do with how and why Australia's contribution in the Vietnam War is remembered today.

The ADF has recognised the problem and responded, but hesitantly. When in 2009 there was eventually an initial trial of an Australian version of 'embedding', one of the participants, Ian McPhedran, wrote an open letter to the Minister scathingly describing an 'attempt to employ the journalists as conduits for military propaganda and the promotion of their mission' and that the level of chaperoning amounted to mere '*media hosting*' not embedding.[83] There are advocates for progress, as is evident from an Army Working Paper by one of the architects of the revised media engagement process (still called 'embedding') that was developed from 2010 onwards. The adjustments were modest and incremental, but notable for the philosophical stance expressed in the Deed of Agreement which follows the US approach. Information may <u>not</u> be withheld to protect reputation, a notion that directly challenges the prevailing Australian culture.[84] Still, unlike US and UK practice, all copy had to be submitted for review and an escort officer continued to accompany every journalist. Media involved in the trials attributed improvement to the attitudes of the more enlightened

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[82] Foster, (2013), s*upra,* footnote 80, p. xiv.

[83] Foster, Kevin. 'Going Dutch or Candidly Canadian? What the ADF Might Learn from its Allies' Media Operations Practices in Afghanistan, *Security Challenges* 2015, 11(1): 1-19, p. 5.

[84] Logue, Jason. *Herding Cats: the Evolution of the ADF's Media Embedding Program in Operational Areas. Canberra*: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2013, p. 34.

commanders on the ground. The words of one of these shows why.

> *Military professionals ought to seek the truth no matter how awkward or uncomfortable it is and support the media in reporting that truth. If the truth is unfavourable then we should not be surprised by the unfavourable response of the public to such reports. Quite simply, if you want the media to report on success, be successful. If you are losing a war, then the media will try to identify why things are going wrong and report on the possibility of losing. If we change the rationale for going to war halfway through, then the media will get confused or question the motive for changing the goals. If your soldiers are poorly disciplined, racist, or misogynistic then this truth will be revealed sooner or later. It's all fairly simple. Work on getting real things right, invite the media in to see it and let them report what they see.*
>
> Lieutenant Colonel Chris Smith[85]

This robust approach and an embrace of true embedding is what the working paper argues for, yet a culture of attempting to control the media message is still evident in the cautious tone of comments by other senior officers about the trial.[86] It seems that media and military are trapped in mutual distrust which prompts military concern with 'operational security' and their instinct to 'keep their distance'. This is ironic as the evidence is that while newsrooms may capriciously breach security, embedded reporters rarely do and only then by accident. Breaches do occur – such as those during the 1982 Falklands campaign where the BBC announced the imminent assault on Goose Green and revealed that the Argentine Air Force's bombs were incorrectly fused and not exploding. Yet these revelations occurred in London and did not come from the reporters with the British Task

[85] *Ibid.*
[86] *Ibid*, p. 30-55.

Force whose fates were intertwined with those of the troops. The closer the relationship with the media the less likely security breaches are.[87] Since the Australian Army has been 'embedding' there has only been one security breach by a reporter and that was caused by a mistaken approval by Defence.[88]

The underlying reasons for resistance to the press that apply to all militaries were discussed above. Logue's internally published essay, 'Herding Cats: the Evolution of the ADF's Media Embedding'[89] tactfully analyses the reasons for the Australian military having a difficult relationship with the press and makes it clear that culture is key. Brown's rather blunter analysis of the Australian Army officer culture says the problem is; 'a low appetite for risk at the highest levels of command.'[90] Risk-aversion is related to Logue's other cause, the *'often political appreciation of media coverage by Defence's policymaker's'*[91] [92] echoing Fosters caustic assessment. This implies that the real problem is organisational intolerance for any reporting that might be perceived to challenge the prescribed political narrative. Essentially ADF leaders are responding to the cues from politicians in what Cantwell calls *'draconian information control'*

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[87] Menning, Anton. 'The Military's Relationship with the Media,' (Thesis University of Kansas, 2007), p. 58.

[88] Logue, Jason. *Herding Cats: the Evolution of the ADF's Media Embedding Program in Operational Areas*, (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2013), p. 7, 18.

[89] Brown, James. 'Fifty shades of grey: Officer culture in the Australian Army', *Australian Army Journal*. 2013, 10(3): 244-54.

[90] Brown, (2013) *supra,* footnote 89, p. 252.

[91] Logue, Jason. *Herding Cats: the Evolution of the ADF's Media Embedding Program in Operational Areas*. (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2013), p. 32.

[92] Foster, Kevin. 'Going Dutch or Candidly Canadian? What the ADF Might Learn from its Allies' Media Operations Practices in Afghanistan,' *Security Challenges*, 2015, 11(1): 1-19, p. 30-55.

since 'children overboard.'[93] It is crucial to understand that this phenomenon is driven by political intention to control narratives in a changing and short notice media environment and not the senior military leadership who are duty bound to conform to the direction of the elected Government Minister. Put simply, 'military risk-averse' culture is largely a response to political demand – one that that only politicians can properly resolve.

There is subtle evidence of exactly this politicisation in the charts that Logue provides to describe the metrics used by the ADF to analyse the 'favourability' of media content about Afghanistan. Three of the eight items are not strictly indicators of whether media is reporting favourably on the military, rather they are political judgements about foreign policy. For example, the measure; 'whether the public supports the Australian presence in Afghanistan',[94] properly defined, is a metric of propaganda success. Is it the ADF's role to promote, rather than execute, government policy? The confusion contributes to what Logue calls 'a generally poor operations security understanding across the Australian force', inferring that the perceived boundaries of what should be concealed are too wide.[95] If the problem is that the concept of 'operations security' is being used indiscriminately and too politically, the problem comes from the political level.

Payne has argued that in the modern era of asymmetric conflict the media are *indisputably* an instrument of war because 'success is defined in political rather than military terms' which is dependent on 'carrying domestic and international public opinion.'[96] He is not simply saying that the media are even more

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[93] Cantwell, John, Bearup, Greg. *Exit Wounds Updated Edition: One Australian's War On Terror*: (Melbourne Univ. Publishing, 2013) p. 326.

[94] Logue, Jason. *Herding Cats: the Evolution of the ADF's Media Embedding Program in Operational Areas* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 2013) p. 25.

[95] *Ibid* p. 32.

[96] Payne, Kenneth. *'The media as an instrument of war,' Parameters* 2005, p. 35.

important to victory than in the past, rather he is suggesting, that in the post 9/11 world, what the military must do for success is no longer articulated in the tangible terms soldiers are used to. Instead of a well-defined achievable military end-state, intention has become nebulous. Strachan's book *The Direction of War* is about exactly this – the recent failure of strategy-making arising from confusing strategy with policy and failing to define outcomes.[97] The problem is explicit in Afghanistan. An Australian Task Force commander stated: "It would be very useful to have a strategy from Canberra to synchronise and prioritise whole-of-government efforts in delivering nation building effects, but no such strategy is apparent at this stage."[98] Anecdotal evidence of military frustration at a lack of a clear credible military-strategic end-state during the early 2000s' campaigns was controversially confirmed by the incoming Australian Defence Minister Fitzgibbon in 2008. He publicly acknowledged politicians' failures, lamented the difficulty of achieving agreement between allies and proclaimed that there was "no coherent strategy."[99] In 2009 President Obama acknowledged the strategy still remained confused.[100] The reasons for this failure are unclear, but it seems plausible that some political leaders across the Coalition were not prepared to commit to a limited, tangible and achievable military goal since it might contradict their shifting narratives justifying the war. Equally, larger goals that encompassed more of these motivations (such as destroying the drug trade or women's rights) would evidently be quite unachievable. The inference is not

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[97] Strachan, Hew. *The direction of war: contemporary strategy in historical perspective.* Cambridge University Press, 2013.

[98] Connolly, PJ. 'Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009,' *Australian Army Journal* 2011; 8(2):9, p. 66.

[99] Pearlman, Jonathan. 'Afghan war being botched: minister,' *Sydney Morning Herald*. February 15, 2008.

[100] McGreal, Chris, Boone, Jon. 'US launches new Afghan counterinsurgency strategy,' *The Guardian* (Australian Edition) 24 September, 2009.

military or even political planning incompetence. It is that the political context of asymmetric alliance war may tend to prevent traditional strategy-making and the resultant vacuum must then be hidden. The importance to this report is that the international press have long been aware of this failure of strategy[101] and are wary of being co-opted into a substitute effect.[102] This destroys trust. Assuming the media believe the Army is being directed to political rather than military outcomes, they will be increasingly suspicious of all Army messages.

The discussion so far has described a troubled media-military relationship for which both parties probably deserve some blame and the political establishment deserve the most. Regardless of fault, only the military can fix the problem, and it is in their interests to do so. In the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, geography, low levels of public interest and other circumstances have allowed the ADF to exercise considerable control of the media. Technology is loosening the capacity to control and will be weakest in the urban fight where the messages may be most negative. Persisting with a potentially adversarial relationship when the balance of power is shifting towards the media seems poor judgement while there is an opportunity to create a new paradigm for a new informational environment. Since embedding has been shown to improve operational security and slant reporting in favour of the military, is not engaging the press more closely a better approach? The problem is not that 'embeds' reveal secrets- they don't. The problem is that this proximity deeply compromises journalists, so many will remain outside the process and some will then breach operational security – almost always inadvertently. It appears that properly advised, well trained and professional war correspondents 'inside the tent' are

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[101] Shanker, Tom. Myers, Steven L, 'Afghan Mission Is Reviewed as Concerns Rise', *The New York Times,* 16 December, 2007.

[102] Moeller, Susan. *Packaging terrorism: Co-opting the news for politics and profit*. (Malden, Mass.: John Wiley & Sons; 2009).

far less likely to reveal information that compromises operations than those 'outside' – provided they can trust that when the military assert something is operationally sensitive they are not merely hiding embarrassing facts.

So how does the military bring reporters with integrity into the fold? The solution may be an uncomfortable one for the military. The ADF may have to reconcile itself to exchanging protection of operationally sensitive information for the right to expose all else, embracing robust criticism and learning to live with accurate portrayals of the ugliness of war. Reporters who have demonstrated a willingness to expose error are the most credible witnesses against the sophisticated propaganda of emerging enemies. The incisive questioning of strategy and capability by experienced journalists is the spur to the constant reflection that the army recognises that it requires to adapt to a changing world.

The Case for a Critical Media

Can the press be re-envisaged as a mechanism to provide both oversight and contestability? Accepting the discomfort of a critical media is hardly a new idea. General George Washington lamented *'injurious accounts'* during the Revolutionary War: "It is much to be wished, that our printers were more discreet in many of their publications."[103] Yet the First Amendment to the US Constitution permits a free press precisely because the pragmatic members of Congress understood the abuse of censorship and how openness delivers better governance. Because the military have a real need for some secrecy they may need 'truth-telling' even more.

The uncompromising criticism by William Russell of the British Army's conduct of the 1854 Crimean War in dispatches

[103] Braestrup, Peter. 'Introduction,' in: *Newsmen and National Defense: Is Conflict Inevitable?*, edited by Lloyd Mathews. New Jersey: Brassey's, 1991, p. xi.

for *'The Times'* certainly drew the ire of much of the British establishment who accused him of aiding and abetting the Russian enemy. However, his reporting also led to reform of nursing care and logistics. Lord Aberdeen's Government was held to account for its mismanagement of the war and fell, and, most significantly for the Army, necessary reinforcements were sent which enabled military victory.[104] In a similar vein, the 1915 British cabinet was opposed to admitting defeat and withdrawing from Gallipoli when there was no longer prospect of success. The British military and political establishment fiercely censored accurate reporting of the disastrous conduct of the campaign, including arresting the Australian reporter Keith Murdoch and seizing a letter from him to the British Prime Minister. Withdrawal from the Dardanelles and an end to the bloodshed ultimately flowed from Australian political intervention in response to revelations in a further private letter sent by Murdoch to the Australian Prime Minister.[105] The press may thus serve the armed forces and the Nation by revealing 'truths' that commanders want to suppress. Yet there are also 'truths' that should be suppressed. The Gallipoli campaign might have ended differently but for 'security breaches' in a Cairo newspaper. Reports in the Egyptian Gazette (which could not be censored) indicated the '*size and quality of the invading force'* and helped the Turkish commanders plan a successful defence.[106] Here lies the enduring tension of military censorship: reconciling the 'right' of the public to know against the 'risk' to lives and military success. Yet such cases provide guidance. What is about

[104] Russell, William. *Despatches from the Crimea*: (Frontline Books) 2008.
[105] Fewster, Kevin. 'Ellis Ashmead Bartlett and the making of the Anzac legend,' *Journal of Australian Studies*, 1982, 6(10): 17-30.
[106] Williams, John F. Anzacs, Gallipoli and the Germans. In: Dennis P, Grey J, editors, *The military and the media: The 2008 Chief of Army military history conference,* (Australian Military History Publications, 2009), p. 42.

to be done is almost invariably a legitimate secret; what has been done badly rarely should be.

A slavishly supportive and uncritical media is not good for soldiers. It may be good for those non-adaptive commanders and political leaders who have risen in peace but prove unsuited to war.[107] Press 'oversight' provides a check on manifest strategic error and mismanagement and introduces contestability into capability planning and grand strategy. Zhukov argues that the corrective feedback channel that a free media offers is an important warfighting advantage of liberal democracies, inclining Governments to avoid risky policy in the first instance and recognise and correct gross error faster.[108] Less obviously, balanced reporting which provides alternative critical perspectives is also likely to 'dampen down' unrealistic political and popular expectations of what military operations will achieve. Unchallenged, optimistic claims by political leaders also set the conditions for blaming the military when reality disappoints. These issues are well illustrated by the Israeli military incursion into Lebanon in 2006 to strike Hezbollah, in response to the abduction of two of their soldiers. The established Israeli media was uncritical, did not constrain politicians and provided the opportunity for new media to drive an international narrative that caused Israel great strategic damage.

Robust political debate is commonplace in the Israeli media and, reflecting national threat perceptions, the press have often been ready to discuss military shortcomings. In the years before the incursion, however, the media paid little attention to a shift of effort and investment towards reliance on air power and untested operational concepts. The uprising in the Palestin-

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[107] Dixon, Norman F. *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence.* (London: Futura; 1976), p. 20.

[108] Zhukov, Yuri. 'Examining the Authoritarian Model of Counter-insurgency: The Soviet Campaign Against the Ukrainian Insurgent Army,' *Small Wars & Insurgencies.* 2007, 18(3): 439-66, p. 441.

ian occupied territories both distracted public attention and had undermined army preparedness for conventional war. There was concern within the army, but complacent Israeli assumptions of great conventional superiority were unchallenged.[109] Preceding and during the operation almost all of the Israeli media offered support for the war and during its early stages exercised self-censorship.[110] There was negligible debate about strategy or lack thereof. Henriksen has since characterised Israeli intentions as essentially an abandonment of strategy in favour of reflexive 'punishment to deter.'[111] They did not define coherent conditions for success either militarily, or in terms of international, enemy or Israeli perception, so as the war became an international 'struggle over news frames', Israel began to lose.[112]

Hezbollah were not cowed by initial air strikes, so when their conventional resistance to the advance of the Israelis proved surprisingly effective, this was predictably cast as 'victory' by the guerrillas themselves. The international media were not necessarily pre-disposed to be sympathetic to the guerrillas but against a background of overconfident messages out of Israel, began to portray a valiant Shia David versus an Israeli Goliath. The established media was then sidelined when bloggers in the US discovered that the Israeli Government had been using

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[109] Matthews, Matt M. *We Were Caught Unprepared:The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War.* (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center; 2008), p. iii, p. 27.

[110] Dor, Daniel, Iram, Shiri, Vlodavsky, Ofer, Harel-Mizrahi, Michal, Mandel-Levy, Naomi, Rotbart, Zvika, *et al*., *"War to the last moment" The Israeli Media in the Second Lebanon War,* (Jerusalem: Keshev; The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel); 2007.

[111] Henriksen, Dag. 'Deterrence by Default? Israel's Military Strategy in the 2006 War against Hizballah,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*. 2012, 35(1):95-120, p. 96.

[112] Melki, Jad. 'The interplay of politics, economics and culture in news framing of Middle East wars. *Media, War & Conflict,* 2014, 7(2):165-86, p. 165.

doctored photographs. As an Associated Press correspondent explained:

> *…the credibility of the bloggers…skyrocketed and our credibility plummeted." Nessman added, After that everything that we did was suspect. And that makes it very difficult to cover a war, to have honest people who are trying, who are not doctoring photographs, who are not taking one side or the other, but who are trying to present the truth of what is going on there, and have everything we say be examined, which is fair, but basically be questioned as a lie, and starting with that premise that the media is lying.*[113]

This was damaging. Furthermore, because the usually pragmatic Israeli public were not expecting such reverses, the campaign became a perplexing 'failure to win' in their collective mind. The Israeli press then mirrored the shift in public opinion which led to unprecedented (and warranted) criticism of military decision-makers after the war. Ironically, Israel achieved significant military gains which, with a different initial strategy, could have been portrayed as a success.[114] Essentially, the failure of the Israeli media to engender political debate about military strategy, preparedness and quite predictable challenges meant that the preconditions for military setback were unrecognised. The media failure to criticise during operations, sometimes out of misguided patriotism, permitted continued political mis-judgments and led to political failure when elevated public

[113] Kalb, Marvin, Saivetz, Carol. 'The Israeli—Hezbollah war of 2006: The media as a weapon in asymmetrical conflict,' *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*. 2007, 12(3): 43-66, p. 62.
[114] Melki, (2014), s*upra,* footnote 112, p. 165.

expectations were confounded. As the Keshev report on the Media in the Second Lebanon War puts it:

> *Courageous, critical media reporting is meaningless when carried out in retrospect. The really difficult questions have to be asked while the war is still being waged, because that is when there is still a chance for change… If the media had emphasized the fact that various international actors had raised favourable proposals for a ceasefire in the first days of the war, we would probably not have had to consider, in retrospect, the question of why Olmert and Peretz ignored those proposals. If the media had stressed the fundamental criticism of that war, the understanding that it never had defined goals, the fact that it was launched out of a sense of insult and frustration – the war itself might well have been shorter. The political players who objected to the ground operation up to the Litani River, at the end of the war, might have succeeded in preventing that unfortunate decision, which cost the lives of 34 more soldiers. If the headlines had broadcast the fact that Defence Minister Peretz had released the IDF from the restrictions on opening fire, as the media should have done, it might have been possible to prevent some of the fearsome destruction that was sowed in Lebanon. Critical coverage which arises when it is already out of date is a meaningless ceremonial act.*[115]

Ultimately the press enable the informed political discussion that is the proper vehicle for resolving conflict between political and military interests: they provide the new perspectives that 'activate' politicians' interests. In war, Cabinet or Parliamentary debate is the legitimate correction to unsuccessful Government policy. In peace, public and political debate about military requirements and the purposes for which they exist should

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[115] Dor, Daniel, Iram, Shiri, Vlodavsky, Ofer, Harel-Mizrahi, Michal, Mandel-Levy, Naomi, Rotbart, Zvika, *et al.*, "*War to the last moment" The Israeli Media in the Second Lebanon War*, Jerusalem: Keshev (The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel), 2007, p. 12.

underpin acquiring and maintaining appropriate capabilities. In practice the public usually cares little and are happy to leave this to Defence and the government of the day. This may suit the ADF leadership, who do not want to further complicate the intra-service and inter-service politics of procurement. The approach may have to change for contemporary war among civilian populations, because equipment dictates how an army can fight and how it fights dictates the risk of harm to those civilians. In the morally ambiguous context of urban combat, equipment choice has a political dimension that should be informed by public expectations. The media have a role in identifying these.

In common with most other Western forces, Australian Army equipment is not particularly suited for urban operations. For example, Australia's fleet of M113(AS) personnel carriers remain highly vulnerable to hand-held anti-armour weapons as has been demonstrated by Israeli losses of these vehicles in urban battles over many wars.[116] New capabilities, including Land 400, (the program for new combat vehicles), will improve the situation. However, Australia does not currently possess equipment such as heavy armoured engineering equipment, remotely operated ground reconnaissance platforms, stand-off breaching munitions or appropriate smoke systems that can together reduce soldiers' vulnerability to enemy weapons and explosive devices. Does the Army need specialised equipment and new methods? Most other armies have not acquired such systems and when obliged to fight in urban terrain have used bombardment and heavy use of firepower to reduce their own casualties. [117] However, the cost of reducing their own casualties

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[116] Sayers, Nathan L. *Future Combat Vehicle Systems: Lessons from Operation Defensive Shield.* (Edinburgh SA: Defence Science and Technology Organisation; 2006) p. 84.

[117] Bowley, Dean K., Castles, Taryn D., Ryan, Alex. *Attrition and Suppression: Defining the Nature of Close Combat.* (Edinburgh SA: Defence Science and Technology Organisation, 2004).

has been an increase in civilian deaths. The ethical dilemma is obvious. A consistent policy pattern of the urban battles of the last forty years is that governments initially demand reticence and very strict rules of engagement, which are then relaxed after significant own casualties. An example is the Israeli policy shift from systematic 'room-clearance' to bulldozing buildings after 13 soldiers were killed in a single ambush in a booby-trapped house when clearing through the Jenin refugee camp in 2002.[118] Importantly this pattern is also exhibited by supposedly robust governments. One of the reasons for the Russian military disaster in Grozny in 1995 was the very limiting rules of engagement[119] initially provided. There is no reason to think that in a future urban fight the Australian Government would not impose very strict rules of engagement, nor that after substantial casualties the political demand to use firepower to save soldiers' lives might become intense. The media will have a key role to play in shaping political and public opinion about the way Army is actually conducting a future fight. They also have a key role to play now in determining whether Australia needs the capabilities to reduce the dilemma. As Carr argued[120] in 'The Conversation' the robust discussion around the submarine replacement decision illustrates how debate on defence procurement matters serves the public interest.

These ways in which the media matter for the urban fight probably play little part in most professional soldiers'

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[118] Evans, Matt. 'Framing international conflicts: Media coverage of fighting in the Middle East,' *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*. 2010; 6(2): 209-33, p. 211.

[119] Jenkinson, Brett C, 'Tactical Observations from the Grozny Combat Experience,' Army Command and Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, 2002, p. 101.

[120] Carr, Andrew. 'Submarines decision ultimately shows the merits of partisan debate on defence,' *The Conversation*, April 26 2016, <https://theconversation.com/submarines-decision-ultimately-shows-the-merits-of-partisan-debate-on-defence-57796>

perspective of the press. What is likely is distrust of, anxiety, or anger at negative reporting; resentment at any failure of Army to counter it; and a wish to tell the positive story of their own collective contribution. This attitude inevitably confronts media suspicion and an instinct to seek out and report the 'real' story.

In fact these Army and official media objectives can coincide. The Army could offer established media compelling stories and footage that would surpass what new media can deliver (indeed, more compelling and far more shocking than audiences want to know or most journalists are prepared to reveal). There is potentially a large overlap in the kind of reporting both would like to see. This will nevertheless require a rather different model of media engagement and better relationships than currently exist. There is an even more compelling reason for change: the media war is one that is stacked against the military.

Asymmetric Media Effects in Asymmetric War

Contemporary conflict may be asymmetric in many ways beyond differences in size, capability and character of the contestants. One of the most profound is the asymmetric impact of the media and its contemporary utility. In the expeditionary and counter insurgency 'wars of intrusion' waged by Western nations since World War II, the best and often only hope the weaker adversary has for victory is to target the political 'will to fight' of the domestic population of the military 'intruder'. That is how the Vietnamese defeated the greatest military power on the planet: they eroded the US popular will to continue the struggle.[121] Whether the media led or followed the anti-war narrative is contested, but they played a key part once that narrative had become negative. The images of war being beamed

[121] Record, Jeffrey. *The wrong war: Why we lost in Vietnam*: (Naval Institute Press; 1998).

into homes across the nation reinforced the casualty figures and brought the cost of the war starkly home.

Though an asymmetric adversary of the West can attack political will this way, the media is not a tool that can be wielded similarly and with similar political effect by both sides. The scope for media narratives to reduce domestic popular support for an overseas military deployment is considerable. This will differ fundamentally from the scope for alternative narratives to reduce popular support for a 'defending home team' in an occupied country. Because populations in a war zone have a greater stake in the conflict, greater background understanding, personal knowledge and contacts with direct sources of information, their responses to media reporting will be very different from uninvolved communities.

Furthermore, the threshold for media reports to generate emotive responses in communities with a greater stake is lower: people get angry at things that happen to them or people they identify with. Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains how humans divide the world into in-groups (people like me) and out-groups (the rest). In an occupied country, there is much more likely to be anger and outrage at a particular behaviour by an occupier or 'out-group' than there will be towards equivalent behaviour by the resisting 'in-group'. The 'home team' advantage is that, other things being equal, shifts of support are more likely to be against 'invaders'.

The impact or agency of shifts of support for 'home' or 'away' teams also differs. A Nation-state projecting force into another territory or a rebelling province has the option to end the action. Ultimately costs and or sustained, widespread political opposition from its domestic population is eventually likely to lead to that choice, even in non-democracies. The Soviet decision to withdraw from Afghanistan was made not because of domestic opposition to the war, but rather because the wars costs were in conflict with a reformist domestic political

agenda.[122] On the other hand, while defeating an insurgency ultimately depends on the withdrawal of popular support, violent resistance can still continue in the face of implacable majority opposition. Thus, while a collapse of support for an 'away team' eventually leads to a relatively clear cut outcome, similar loss of support for the 'home team' will have less certain effects.

These factors mean that for communities remote from war, a fight may become understood as a 'war of choice', whereas those immersed in the fight can rarely choose to be uninvolved. Thus, the media is potentially a decisive tool for a weaker adversary but is very unlikely to deliver victory to the stronger. Equally important, even if the reporting and communication itself is 'neutral' in the sense of being impartial and objective, its impact may not be. These are asymmetric effects.

The Greater Media Impact in Cities

An asymmetric impact of the media will be most manifest in populated urban areas because wars of the future will occur there. The inevitability flows from worldwide urbanisation, conflict among and between urban populations and the rational choice of adversaries to seek the protection and concealment that civilian populations and structures provide. The media will also matter more here because they will have more problems to witness – those created by what Australian doctrine describes as the three complexities of fighting there: physical, human and informational.

The physical challenges of the cityscape are not new: Sun Tzu counselled avoiding attacking cities. Today however, cities

[122] Mendelson, Sarah E. 'Internal Battles and External Wars: Politics, Learning, and the Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan,' *World Politics*, 1993, 45(3): 327-60.

are far bigger in area, and in height, with the result that they present an utterly immense number of three-dimensional enclosed structures above and below ground, any one of which can be used to hide people or things. This presents severe, sometimes insuperable, force-to-space problems for relatively small contemporary armies that must search and clear terrain. This is compounded by the requirement to deal with increasingly sophisticated weapons and explosive devices.

The human complexity of population presence and warring parties will overlay physical complexity and the cover of structures as handicaps to troops. It is difficult to manoeuvre and hard to neutralise adversaries who can fight from protected positions and who are difficult to distinguish from non-combatants. Full firepower often cannot be brought to bear because targets are too close, there are intervening obstructions or because of the presence of civilians or protected structures. This is a terrain that inherently permits a weaker enemy to resist more effectively; progress will typically be slow, involving extensive destruction, high casualties on both sides and especially amongst non-combatants.

The informational complexity that arises from the presence of media and the widespread availability of contemporary IT recording and transmitting tools is probably the biggest challenge. The implications are certainly not yet clear, although the recordings of combat in Syria uploaded by fighters in near real-time, the micro-blogging by civilians in cities during street battles conflict,[123] or soldiers defying orders to upload images of their 'kills'[124] give a preview of the way social media

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[123] Monroy-Hernández, Andrés, Danah Boyd, Emre Kiciman, Munmun De Choudhury, and Scott Counts. 'The new war correspondents: The rise of civic media curation in urban warfare', in: *Proceedings of the 2013 conference on Computer supported cooperative work*;(ACM, New York, 2013), pp. 1443-1452, p. 8.

[124] Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari. '*Body horror on the internet: US soldiers recording the war in Iraq and Afghanistan*,' *Media, Culture & Society*, 2009, 31(6): 921-38, p. 921.

might give unprecedented pictures of the urban battlefield. Undoubtedly the press will bring the robot cameras and UAVs that they are just beginning to exploit,[125] and in a city, reporters can often gain access to the combat zone in a way that would be impossible without buildings and people. The US media's (not just military) attempts to discredit the accounts of an *Al Jazeera* journalist who reported from behind insurgent lines in Fallujah in 2004 perfectly illustrates the problem.[126] His accounts of civilian suffering did not just challenge the army line but also those of the embedded journalists. Liberal democracies are unlikely to permit their militaries to physically exclude the media as the Russian and Sri Lankan military did in recent wars, but even if they did, the ubiquitous smartphone or equivalent will remain in the hands of both fighters and non-combatants.[127]

The historical brutality of urban war is unchanged but the technological genie that reveals its enduring nature is out of the bottle. When public expectations of surgical warfare (often encouraged by the prior declarations of reticence by political leaders) encounter serious resistance in a still-populated area, the dissonance may be acute. The ugly realities are maimed children, widespread destruction and soldiers returning in body-bags- this has never yet been avoided. To clear a populated urban area without 'collateral damage' would require an unprecedented willingness to build a specialist force and sacrifice its members- no nation has yet done so. However, many armies have ordered their soldiers into battle under policies of restraint that applied until their own casualties become politically intolerable and rules

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[125] Goldberg, David, Corcoran, Mark, Picard, Robert G, *Remotely piloted aircraft systems & journalism: opportunities and challenges of drones in news gathering,* (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism University of Oxford) 2013, p. v.

[126] Mansour, Ahmed. *Inside Fallujah: The Unembedded Story*. Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Books, 2009.

[127] Robinson, Piers, Goddard, Peter, Parry, Katy, Murray, Craig. 'Testing Models of Media Performance in Wartime: U.K. TV News and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq,' *Journal of Communication.* 2009, 59(3):534-63, p. 541.

of engagement changed. Whether immediate, or delayed until this policy shift occurs, there is an inevitable level of civilian casualties, bloodshed and destruction which is minor in historical terms, but may appear to the public to be a moral, military or strategic disaster. Though there is a tendency to exaggerate civilian casualties,[128] the actual historic figures are horrific enough: 80,000 Russian civilians died at Stalingrad, 125,000 Germans in Berlin and 100,000 Filipinos in the liberation of Manila.

The Negativity of Urban Narratives

Unless urban areas are virtually undefended (as the cities of Iraq surprisingly proved to be in 2003) the historically normal costs in casualties and destruction of conducting offensive operations will probably seem high to the contemporary public. The political effect will be negative. Indeed, the subliminal messages of reporting urban war can lead to a negative impact even if what is being portrayed is in fact, and is being reported as, a military success. The turning point of US public opinion against the Vietnam War is generally agreed to be the 1968 Tet Offensive.[129] Up to, and indeed well past, this point in the war the US military claimed to be winning, and in attritional terms or 'kill-ratios', may have been. However, the US public saw no evidence of success in TV news reporting from the field. When the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC) mounted a concurrent offensive across many of the cities of South Vietnam the American public and opinion leading elites were profoundly shocked. The most prominent action was the seizure of the city of Hue. In fact there and elsewhere, the US counterattacked and won decisive military victories amid press coverage that was

[128] Eckhardt, William. 'Civilian Deaths in Wartime,' *Security Dialogue* 1989; 20(1): 89-98.
[129] Schmitz, David F. *The Tet Offensive: Politics, War, and Public Opinion*: (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

increasingly sympathetic as brutal massacres by the VC and NVA were discovered. However, the shock of coordinated attacks by 80,000 Vietnamese across the whole country followed by the month-long destructive nature of the fight in Hue dealt a lethal blow to US public support for the war. This is usually attributed to the negative messaging from the media during and after Tet but since most reporting soon began to describe either American successes or VC outrages – both of which might logically increase support for the war – it is likely that shift of opinion was due to the dissonance between US military briefings and reality prior to Tet. In this view the Vietnam defeat is at least partly a failure to have an effective media strategy and the perceived dishonesty of government spokespeople.

The problem of negative messages has been recognised by military leaders and thinkers but the military's own culpability is seldom identified and solutions are even less obvious. Consider these telling words from Ralph Peters describing the seminal First Battle of Fallujah in 2004*:*

> *The [US] Marines in Fallujah weren't beaten by the terrorists and insurgents, who were being eliminated effectively and accurately. They were beaten by Al Jazeera. The media [are] often referred to off-handedly as a strategic factor. But we still don't fully appreciate [their] fatal power. . . . In Fallujah, we allowed a bonanza of hundreds of terrorists and insurgents to escape us—despite promising that we would bring them to justice. We stopped because we were worried about what already hostile populations might think of us. The global media disrupted the US and Coalition chains of command. . . . We could have won militarily. Instead, we surrendered politically and*

called it a success. Our enemies won the information war. We literally didn't know what hit us.[130]

This is an important commentary as part of an important article in which Peters argues for faster conduct and resolution of combat operations to beat the news cycle but his use of this example is disingenuous and grossly oversimplifies the role of the media in the battle for Fallujah. The decision to first assault that city in early 2004 was a political one made against the advice of the Marine commander on the ground, Lieutenant General James Conway, who argued that it would be counter-productive and that the force was not prepared for a major urban battle.[131] The political imperative for the White House to override this military advice was fuelled by US domestic outrage at the murder of four Blackwater contractors. By this stage in the occupation another four deaths had no military significance. The event became a lightning rod for emotional reaction after footage of their burnt bodies hanging from a bridge was indiscriminately presented across US TV networks. The domestic media fuelled a self-righteous demand for vengeance and this enticed military leaders to make promises of 'bringing to justice' without discussion of the possible consequences and costs of exacting such revenge.

Peters [132] overlooks the role of US media in triggering the fight and then portrays the foreign media as 'the enemy' because they were critical of the US conduct of the fight once it was underway. Had the US media been critical of having that fight, or at least shaped expectations of its difficulty, the history of the Iraqi insurgency might have been different. The assault on Fallujah was a watershed. It was the moment when resentment

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[130] Peters, Ralph 'Kill Faster,' *New York Post*, 20 May, 2004.
[131] Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. 'Key General Criticizes April Attack in Fallujah' *Washington Post*. September 13, 2004.
[132] Peters, (2004), s*upra,* footnote 130.

against a Coalition occupation, that was not fulfilling its promises, became hostility. It was the moment erratic resistance morphed into a popular insurgency that could no longer plausibly be explained as the action of Baathist 'diehards' and the death throes of a discredited regime. The battle itself was an insurgent propagandist's dream. It united in anger previously warring factions right across Iraq who had been vying for power and position in a post-Saddam Iraq. The outrage motivated collections of medical supplies, money and blood for the 'defenders of Fallujah' and remarkably, collections were made for Sunni Iraqi fighters in the westernmost cities of Shia Iran- the traditional enemy. Peters infers that having started the fight it should have been prosecuted to a victorious conclusion. This makes military sense but the politicians who again overruled the military leaders and stopped the fight were not so much worried about what he calls 'already hostile populations' but rather the real risk that the majority of the Iraqi population would join the hostile minority, the Iraqi government would fall apart, and with it the whole Iraq reconstruction project.

Insights from Unpalatable Truths

What then is the useful lesson about the media for militaries from Fallujah? Is it simply that the media, or at least some parts of it such as Peters' bête-noir *Al Jazeera*, will present unfavourable reporting that will have militarily inhibiting political effects and so, as he argues, operations should be concluded more rapidly? If that argument led to developing the capability to conduct urban tasks faster, it might have merit. However, there is no political appetite for the massive investment required to build a specialised urban force that can achieve speed. Fallujah is also a clear example of what happens when you simply rush an urban assault with a conventional force. Urban warfare is inherently ugly and the prospects for the

military somehow avoiding or disguising that truth are remote, as the previous pages have argued.

Perhaps the lesson is to do with the strategic political risks presented by an uninformed and uncritical media? It would have been quite improper for any US officers who recognised the risks of the impending assault on Fallujah to have sought to voice their concerns at that stage but the failure of the reporters on the ground to have pursued the story of the local commander's reluctance to attack is remarkable. It would seem plausible that they too were swept up in the vengeful mood. Certainly there was little or no analysis of the likely challenges presented in the media.

Worse was the prior failure of the US media to convey the evident reality that there was growing opposition to the occupation and flawed US behaviour was fuelling the opposition. There had been several incidents of US troops shooting civilian demonstrators dead. In Falluja itself, seventeen were shot during a violent protest demanding that the Americans give back a school that was being used by the military.[133] The circumstances are disputed but the domestic narrative in Iraq was that it was unreasonable for the US troops to remain and that they responded disproportionately to the threat. US counterinsurgency specialists had critically analysed[134] how support in Northern Ireland for the Provisional IRA exploded in 1972 when the British Army shot thirteen demonstrators on 'Bloody Sunday' after a decision to deploy a unit known for its aggressiveness.[135] The consequences of US troops in Fallujah shooting a similar number of civilians in similar circumstances was predictable.

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[133] Reeves, Phil. 'US troops 'used excessive force' at Fallujah protest,' *The Independent,* London, Tuesday 17 June 2003.

[134] Wilson, Daniel M., Peacemaking: the effectiveness of British strategy in Northern Ireland, 1969-1972, (Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 1992).

[135] O'Dochartaigh, Niall. 'Bloody Sunday: Error or Design?' *Contemporary British History*. 2010, 24(1):89 - 108 p. 102.

This was the story that the 'enemy' media was telling. Had it been told to the US public earlier, then the images of crowds cheering the charred bodies of the Blackwater contractor's bodies might have served as a warning about where the conflict was headed.

It is perhaps unreasonable to have expected the embedded US media on the ground to have anticipated the intensity of the urban battle, when apart from the local Marine commander, few in the US military seem to have done so. It seems that the US higher command was not only reacting to US domestic outrage but believed it was necessary to signal resolve and commitment[136] to restoring law and order, which they had notably failed to do immediately after the invasion.[137] They appear to have ignored Iraqi advice and it seems likely that many of them believed their own statements that this would be a matter of 'going in to arrest a few murderers'. The earlier failure of Saddam Hussein's forces to live up to their promise to resist the invaders in urban areas presumably bred complacency about such fights among US soldiers and commentators alike. However, it is notable that media anchors and 'expert commentators' back in the US conformed with the mood of outrage and ignored both the 'popular resistance is growing' narrative that was evident[138] not just from foreign media outlets such as *Al Jazeera* but evident in the pattern of what was still being called 'pockets of resistance'. There was no discussion of the inevitable consequences of fighting in a city against a

[136] Malkasian, Carter. 'Signaling resolve, democratization, and the first battle of Fallujah,' *Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 3 (2006): 423-452.
[137] Diamond, Larry. 'Building democracy after conflict: Lessons from Iraq,' *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 1 (2005): 9-23, p. 10.
[138] Hashim, Ahmed. *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency in Iraq*. (Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 90.

determined resistance. Arguably the US media was an unwitting enabler of the insurgency that would claim so many US lives.

The relevant lesson of Fallujah appears to be that, as Peters argues, the media have 'fatal' power in an information war that we are not prepared to fight. However, it is not the power of an adversary media that is the main danger; rather it is the power of an uninformed domestic media to suddenly shift policy against the national interest. To wage information war, the military must better understand the processes of how that media power operates, especially in the sensitive urban context where the potential for negative messages of destruction and civilian loss is so acute. It is manifestly not the case that the media are the enemy, nor is critical reporting of one's military necessarily a bad thing – and turning a blind eye to faults is foolish. This is not just the well-rehearsed argument of the press as a moral watchdog but is also one that a critical press is potentially both protective and an agent to drive adaptive change in the army. Certainly it seems evident that national interests are ultimately best served by a media that is informed in military matters. Given that the understanding of urban warfare is modest even in the military itself, one cannot expect the media to have more than a basic knowledge. If this knowledge gap matters to the military, then the military itself must fill it.

It is rational for nations and armies to seek to avoid the known material and moral challenges of urban war. It is less rational that few nations make significant material preparation to do so, given that this weakness increases the likelihood of adversaries initiating fights in cities. This neglect extends to issues of conflict reporting.

Chapter 2: What Shapes a Story – and What Makes it Matter?

This chapter draws on the literature to explain the processes of media influence and examines theories of public and political opinion forming and shaping. It explains how reporting is constrained or indexed by norms that are the product of political interplay between media, elites and the public, highlighting the exception of certain dramatic events that 'activate' public interest and set conditions for sudden shifts of political interest or opinion. Impulsive political decision-making may occur in response to public outrage triggered by civilian or own troops casualties. It appears that the risk of politically volatile responses to urban war events might be reduced by constructive engagement and activities that educate journalists in the broad methods, risks and possible failures of military operations.

To assess or improve the way the military engages with the media we first need to understand the theories of how the press operates, how stories are created and what determines the effect they have – or do not have. The press appears to have enormous latent power. As Luhmann observes: "Whatever we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media."[139] The media shapes what society is thinking by:

- First '*setting the agenda'* or choosing which events to report.
- Secondly, it '*frames*' the narrative – shaping what audiences think about an event.

Media-effects research indicates that news coverage in the traditional media was generally uncritically accepted as legitimate

[139] Luhmann, Niklas. *The Reality of the Mass Media*, translated by Kathleen Cross. Stanford, (CA: Stanford University Press 2000), p. 1.

and trustworthy,[140] although this appears to be rapidly changing under the influence of new media and disinformation – the so-called 'fake news' effect. However, despite a declining public trust in media, there is little sign that audiences are being more critical in their consumption of information. Compounding their power to shape thinking, the media do not just transmit information, they mediate. They operate as a '*common carrier'* of two-way communication between people and government, telling the government about public opinion and the crucial, related issue of voting intentions. How press power is used matters. What motivates that use matters.

Since the 18th Century the press have often seen themselves as the sceptical '*watch-dogs'* of society, ready and able to call the powerful to account and act as a counter-force to the State.[141] Research confirms journalists do indeed often have idealistic, albeit varied, motivations. One study describes how reporters in the UK see themselves as *'Bloodhounds'* hunting a story, in contrast with those in Germany who are '*Missionaries*' who aspire to shaping the political narrative for the greater good.[142] The paradox is that the great political power of the press is only rarely exploited to challenge the status quo. In practice journalists appear organisationally 'beholden to the preferred meanings of their media organization, their news sources, and their geographic community's power structure'.[143] In turn, the media as a whole are heavily influenced by the powerful few or

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[140] *Ibid*, p. 462.

[141] Jensen, Eric. 'Between credulity and scepticism: envisaging the fourth estate in 21st-century science journalism,' *Media, Culture & Society,* 2010, 32(4): 615-30, p. 618.

[142] Köcher, Renate. 'Bloodhounds or Missionaries: Role Definitions of German and British Journalists,' *European Journal of Communication.* 1986; 1(1): 43-64, p62.

[143] Jensen, Eric. 'Between credulity and scepticism: envisaging the fourth estate in 21st-century science journalism,' *Media, Culture & Society*, 2010; 32(4):615-30, p. 627.

'elites' in the social system, such as owners and editors, popular commentators, political leaders, political spokespersons or the dominant special interest group concerned. All but a few pressure groups in the last category have a vested interest in opposing major change to social order.

The evidence for 'conformity' comes from a large body of empirical research. It seems the news is pervaded with 'system supporting themes' that suggest that 'the system works and it is fair, those who challenge it are wrong and the status quo is much preferred to change'.[144] This reflects both that humans need order (for the alternative would be anarchic) and that journalists are part of a social system. Analysis demonstrating this conformity has used different methods across diverse publications, examining text, sound or video recordings and categorising different variables – types of 'frames', 'themes', 'rhetorical devices' or even the different types of people quoted. In all this work it is clear that the perspectives of social elites dominate the mass media.[145] [146] This includes war reporting. For example, in a study of UK media reporting on the 2003 Iraq war, stories were categorised as '*elite-driven*', '*independent*' or '*oppositional*'. The results provided a rich picture of diverse views that included strong anti-war perspectives, especially in 'quality' newspapers, but nevertheless the great majority of stories and editorial comment reflected elite views.[147] These elites might, at the time, have been characterised as 'reluctantly pro-war' based on successful 'vote for war' in Parliament where many members of

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[144] Kanjirathinkal, Mathew, Hickey, Joseph V. 'Media Framing and Myth: The Media's Portrayal of the Gulf War,' *Critical Sociology* 1992, 19(1):103-12, p. 105.
[145] *Ibid*, p. 104.
[146] Durfee, Jessica L. '"Social Change" and "Status Quo" Framing Effects on Risk Perception: An Exploratory Experiment,' *Science Communication*, 2006, 27(4): 459-95, p. 461.
[147] Robinson, Piers, Goddard, Peter, Parry, Katy, Murray, Craig. 'Testing Models of Media Performance in Wartime: U.K. TV News and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq,' *Journal of Communication* 2009, 59(3): 534-63, p. 534.

the ruling Labour party rebelled against military action but the vote passed. This is consistent with the understanding that in conflict the domestic press tend to 'defer to government war objectives', 'serve the military rather well' or even act as a 'propaganda tool of government'. Possible reasons include over-reliance on official sources, patriotism and fear of being accused of undermining the war effort.[148] Mainstream media opposition to war is slow to form, follows the lead of political elites and cautiously references public opinion.

One of the explanations for why media 'facilitate and promote the 'elite' definition of a situation' is Bennett's idea of 'indexing'.[149] The hypothesis is that journalists first tie or 'index' the frames of their stories to the source material provided to them and secondly to the range of viewpoints being expressed in official circles.[150] This changes the practical meaning of objectivity. Dimitrova calls it 'contextual objectivity' – which exists within 'a certain socio-political environment and is sensitive in the context in which journalists operate'. What this abstract sounding academic idea really means is that 'honest criticism' occurs within a limited range, and is likely to focus on 'legitimate journalistic targets' – for example civilian casualties, because they are evidently 'bad'. Indexing reduces the scope of critique to only include views within the current range of

[148] Zollmann, Florian. 'Bad News from Fallujah,' *Media, War & Conflict* (2015), p 1.; Goddard, Peter, Piers Robinson, and Katy Parry. 'Patriotism Meets Plurality: Reporting the 2003 Iraq War in the British Press,' *Media, War & Conflict* 1, no. 1 (2008): 9-30, p. 10.

[149] Kanjirathinkal, Mathew, Hickey, Joseph V. 'Media Framing and Myth: The Media's Portrayal of the Gulf War,' *Critical Sociology*, 1992, 19(1): 103-12, p. 104.

[150] Gavriely-Nuri, Dalia, Balas, Tiki. '"Annihilating framing:"' How Israeli television framed wounded soldiers during the Second Lebanon War' (2006), *Journalism*, 2010, 11(4): 409-23, p. 411.

consensus and dissensus.[151] The effect is that *'perspectives critical of government actions may remain unreported if these are not debated in official circles'*.[152] In a related observation, Durfee suggests that rather than being 'watchdogs' most of the time the mainstream press operate as 'guard-dogs' of the powerful and the established social order.[153]

> *… the guard-dog media occasionally attack an individual in power, but they focus the blame on the individual, not the system. Social protests or advocates of radical social change may present a threat to the social system. Whereas watchdog media would objectively explore protesters' social critique, the guard-dog media cover social change from the perspective of those in power. Guard-dog media highlight the deviance of the protesters, diminishing their contributions and effectiveness, insulating the power structure, and defusing the threat.*[154]

Chomsky takes the harshest view of the media as 'system supporting'[155] and argues that they 'manufacture consent' for governments by a process where news media discourses are driven by elite groups, conform broadly to, or even reinforce, state policies and marginalise alternative views.[156] Why does the

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[151] Robinson, Piers, Goddard, Peter, Parry, Katy, Murray, Craig. 'Testing Models of Media Performance in Wartime: U.K. TV News and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq,' *Journal of Communication*, 2009, 59(3): 534-63, p. 555.

[152] Zollmann, Florian. 'Bad news from Fallujah,' *Media, War & Conflict*, 2015, p. 3.

[153] Durfee, Jessica L. '"Social Change" and "Status Quo" Framing Effects on Risk Perception: An Exploratory Experiment,' *Science Communication,* 2006, 27(4): 459-95, p. 461.

[154] (Attributed to McLeod and Detenber) *ibid,* p.461.

[155] Kanjirathinkal, Mathew, Hickey, Joseph V., 'Media Framing and Myth:The Media's Portrayal of the Gulf War,' *Critical Sociology,* 1992, 19(1):103-12, p. 105.

[156] Herman, Edward S., Chomsky, Noam, *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media,* (Random House, 2010), p. 460.

press conform? Thomas Carlyle provided a clue when he famously named them the most powerful 'Fourth Estate' of Parliament. People remember that he referred to the power of a 'tongue' to speak to the people,[157] but he was also identifying the press as a part of government.

Whether the press are 'embedded' in government is moot, but the whole news generation cycle is a dynamic and iterative 'constant process of framing the news in response to competing requirements of leaders and the public'.[158] Durfee points out: 'Journalists are not simply autonomous beings who frame stories as they see fit. Rather, they are part of a social system'.[159] Like anyone else, reporters desire recognition and approval for their work and seek to avoid rejection. They will presumably be alert for the exceptional story – perhaps an exposé - that will build reputation. Yet most of the time they must choose issues and develop perspectives with conscious or unconscious reference to social norms and the views of audiences, editors, colleagues and elites, including politicians.[160] There are four major factors:

- Legal;
- Dependence on Sources and Access;
- Social and Normative;
- Editorial and Commercial.

Laws to protect against libel, prohibit incitement to violence and control national-security information constrain the public right to know in even the most liberal democracies. There was little

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[157] Jensen, Eric. 'Between credulity and scepticism: envisaging the fourth estate in 21st-century science journalism' *Media, Culture & Society,* 2010, 32(4): 615-30, p. 618.

[158] Baum, Matthew A, Potter, Philip BK. 'The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis,' *Annu Rev Polit Sci.* 2008, 11:39-65, p. 41.

[159] Durfee, Jessica L. '"Social Change" and "Status Quo" Framing Effects on Risk Perception: An Exploratory Experiment,' *Science Communication,* 2006, 27(4): 459-95. p465

[160] *Ibid,* p. 465

media resistance to secrecy provisions in security law until 9/11 when a tranche of legislation included measures that some journalists believe are illegitimate and designed to limit scrutiny. This includes, for example, the National Security Legislation Bill 2014 that penalises reporting of some Special Intelligence Operations (SIO) intelligence with up to 10 years imprisonment.[161] It seems unlikely that any but an extraordinarily reckless journalist would be prosecuted under this or related Acts. This is less because one should trust the assurances of the Attorney General than because many in the media would welcome a test of the law in a context where it might plausibly fail. What does appear likely are attempts to intimidate reporters with threats of prosecution for this or other offences related to classified information. During research interviews reporters describe such intimidation occurring occasionally[162] yet this is less significant than the control that the military exercise as a 'source'.

Journalists rely heavily on government sources for the information which they use to build stories. This is true for all areas but especially parliamentary politics. This creates a mutual dependency.[163] The reporter needs timely information, desires regular titbits and hopes for an occasional scoop. Politicians, their advisers and senior civil servants can provide these things but in return they seek positive reporting, or subdued critique. The effect is that mainstream media reporting often begins from and is 'almost always shaped by the national political interests and the views of the elite'. The higher workloads being placed on a shrinking and increasingly generalist pool of reporters will exacerbate this. The effect is even more pronounced in war

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161 *Ibid*, p. 465.

162 These comments were made to the researchers under conditions of anonymity and cannot be further substantiated. This is discussed in a later chapter.

163 Finnegan, Lisa. *No questions asked: News coverage since 9/11*, (Greenwood Publishing Group; 2006), p. 70.

when the media, government and military become manifestly interdependent.[164]

In the home country the only significant source of information during war is often the government. In the area of operations, the military, in effect on behalf of government, may be able to completely control journalists' access; independent movement will be dangerous and without access to a 'big picture' reporters may miss opportunities for stories. On the other hand the government can offer briefings, transport, logistic support and a degree of protection.[165] Most journalists are obliged to work with the military and accept both the imposed operational security requirements and some degree of self-censorship dictated by maintaining a relationship with the 'hosts'.

Press self-censorship is also routinely dictated by social norms. Most obviously, it is typically not permissible to show images or provide graphic descriptions of violent death and injury, and this extends to war. Unless public mood is ready to shift or crystallise, horrific reporting is rejected as illegitimate. Other normative restraints may override 'press freedom'. Their power is well illustrated by a Swedish example. Scandinavia leads the world in press freedom,[166] yet rather than risk being perceived as racist, the press and elites demonstrated self-censorship by tacit agreement not to report a 2014 two-year phenomenon of assaults on women by immigrant men.[167] The most potent and relevant norm is patriotism. A body of research

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[164] Dimitrova, Daniela V., Strömbäck, Jesper. 'Foreign policy and the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in elite Swedish and US newspapers,' *Media, War & Conflict,* 2008, 1(2): 203-20, pp. 204, 207.

[165] Miskin, Sarah. Rayner, Laura. Lalic, Maria. Brief No 21 2002-03 – 'Media Under Fire: Reporting Conflict in Iraq', Canberra: Parliament of Australia, 2003, p. 13.

[166] Index, Press Freedom. *Reporters without borders*. URL: <http://en rsf org/spip php. 2003>.

[167] Arpi, Ivar. 'It's not only Germany that covers up mass sex attacks by migrant men... Sweden's record is shameful,' *The Spectator*, 16 January 2016.

shows that the press are less objective when reporting a war where their nationals are involved.[168] Furthermore, objectivity is often resisted by the public. Particularly early in a war, a 'rally round the flag' effect[169] may not merely constrain the press from criticising the 'home team' but may demand partisanship in the name of patriotism. In 1982 during the Falklands/Malvinas War, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher led substantial public criticism in the UK of the BBC's refusal, in the name of impartiality, to refer to British troops as 'ours'.[170] Similarly, in 1991 the UK Daily Mail castigated the BBC and labelled them the 'Baghdad Broadcasting Corporation' for showing graphic coverage of the removal of the bodies of some of the hundreds of Iraqi civilians incinerated in the Coalition bombing of the Amiriyah (al-Firdos) shelter.[171]

Editors determine which stories are chosen for publication, so reporters pick topics (agendas) and interpretations (frames) accordingly. Most noteworthy events can be related to issues where preferred political viewpoints already exist in the newsroom. These preferences are determined by factors including previous stories, the political dictates of an owner, the ideological 'brand' or the perceived preferences of the target market demographics. Are such preferences policy? Vocal critics like Manne assert that owners like Murdoch wield extreme political power, especially in Australia given his domination of the metropolitan media, but giving him due credit for doing so openly.[172]

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[168] Nossek, Hillel. 'Our News and their News: The Role of National Identity in the Coverage of Foreign News,' *Journalism*. 2004, 5(3): 343-68, p. 344.
[169] Baker, William D, Oneal, John R. 'Patriotism or opinion leadership? The nature and origins of the "rally round the flag" effect,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 2001, 45(5): 661-87.
[170] Walters, Peter. "The Crisis of 'Responsible' Broadcasting: Mrs Thatcher and the BBC," *Parliamentary Affairs* 42, no. 3 (1 July, 1989): 380-98, p. 380.
[171] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*: (Monash University Publishing, 2013) p. 10.
[172] Manne, Robert. 'Why Rupert Murdoch Can't be Stopped,' *The Monthly* [Internet], November 2013.

Murdoch's power to shape the media message was shown when he began to advocate the invasion of Iraq and almost all of the 175 editors he employed worldwide followed suit.[173] When the Hobart Mercury did not 'get the message', written instruction followed, with reassignment for a senior editor who objected on principle.[174] Importantly, this direction included markets where public opinion was already against the war. While Murdoch has the resources to ignore loss of circulation, it seems that, curiously, his organisation suffered no significant commercial penalty at the time, nor later as public opinion swung against the war worldwide. This is at odds with what we might expect from studies showing that generally in politics there is 'an economically significant preference for like-minded news'. In other words people buy papers that express political views they agree with.[175] There is a clue in the contrasting actions of the UK Daily Mirror which maintained an overtly anti-war stance (though sympathetic to the troops) throughout the war. While this reflected British majority opinion before the invasion, there was a 'patriotic' opinion shift effect once the war started and the paper suffered a significant loss of circulation.[176] This suggests that the patriotic effect may serve to overcome commercial considerations and make pro-war attitude for the press safer than an anti-war attitude. This echoes what Mueller in 1970 labelled the '*rally*

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[173] Greenslade, Roy. 'Speaking with their master's voice,' *Guardian Weekly*, 17 February, 2003.

[174] Manne, Robert. 'Murdoch's war: How a lovestruck teenager, an angry man and an ambitious baron made sure bad news was no news on the path to Iraq,' *The Monthly* [Internet], November 2005.

[175] Gentzkow, Matthew, Shapiro, Jesse M. 'What Drives Media Slant? Evidence From U.S. Daily Newspapers,' *Econometrica*, 2010, 78(1): 35-71, p. 35.

[176] Goddard, Peter, Robinson, Piers, Parry, Katy. 'Patriotism meets plurality: reporting the 2003 Iraq War in the British press,' *Media, War & Conflict*, 2008, 1(1): 9-30, p. 25.

round the flag', a temporary spike in public support that political leaders automatically get during international crises and war.[177]

Reporting war is expensive and difficult and taking a stance risks antagonising elites or the public; being 'not anti-war' is a safe default position. During the war in Vietnam, Australian news outlets did not want to publish stories critical of the government position and consequently required self-censorship from reporters and denigrated anti-war perspectives.[178] Such disengagement may be a deliberate tactic, but editors may simply judge that there is insufficient interest from audiences. It was evident that as the war in Afghanistan developed there was weak editorial commitment to reporting and "no appetite for sustained and detailed coverage except when there was an extraordinary event".[179] This of course describes the conditions under which only sensationalist reporting gets published, which is the earlier complaint of General Leahey about the media. The Army should consider whether public lack of interest (and thus tendency to sensationalism and exceptionalism) may flow from a lack of interesting stories caused by a lack of opportunities to write them. As it stands, negative events are likely to predominate and even if reported 'sympathetically'; distort the picture, limiting opportunities to shape a narrative and forcing Army to be reactive and often defensive. Furthermore, ugly stories of urban war will likely go 'straight past the keeper' with little rewriting, making editorial policy redundant. Before considering how much this matters and what strategies might assist, it is

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[177] Baker, William D, Oneal, John R. 'Patriotism or opinion leadership? The nature and origins of the "rally round the flag" effect,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 2001, 45(5): 661-87, p. 664.

[178] Foster, Kevin. *Don't Mention the War: The Australian Defence Force, the Media and the Afghan Conflict*, (Monash University Publishing, 2013), p. 29-31.

[179] Foster, Kevin. 'Going Dutch or Candidly Canadian? What the ADF Might Learn from its Allies' Media Operations Practices in Afghanistan,' *Security Challenges,* 2015, 11(1): 1-19, p. 7.

important to understand the processes involved between events occurring and changes of political opinion.

Opinion, Agenda-setting and Framing

Academic understanding of the interacting processes of opinion, policy and media has become more complicated over time. The major research fields have been agenda-setting, which is about the salience of different issues and framing, which is about the emphasis in salience of different aspects of these issues. Put more simply, agenda-setting is determining which topics audiences think about and framing determines what audiences think about those topics.[180] Opinion is a subjective view or judgement formed about something, and does not have to be based on fact or knowledge. It is part of the agenda-setting and framing process – and its result. In 1961[181] Rosenau suggested that public opinion develops as part of a four-step iterative process in which 'opinion makers' and 'opinion leaders' play a vital role.

1. News and interpretations in media are read and adapted by opinion makers.
2. Opinion makers assert their opinions.
3. Opinions and speeches are then reported.
4. Opinion leaders in the general public pass on opinions.

The process starts when events are reported by the media. He suggested that certain 'opinion leading elites' in society interpret events and express their opinions, which are then reported by the media and picked up and echoed by other 'local elites' in the community who are valued as 'opinion leaders'. This model highlights the role of key individuals but does not explain what determines what is initially put on the media agenda nor the

[180] De Vreese, Claes H. 'News framing: Theory and typology,' *Information design journal+ document design*, 2005, 13(1): 51-62, p. 53.
[181] Rosenau, James N. *Public opinion and foreign policy: An operational formulation*. (Random House, 1961).

processes involved in any view being developed. For this, psychology must be considered.

The Psychology of Opinion

In society, individuals interact and observe others to adapt their behaviours, modify their judgements and make decisions. Opinion development is a social process that occurs among friends, family members or work colleagues and is integrated with consuming press products and, more recently, new media. Individuals are exposed to a steady flow of opinions and filter and integrate this social information to adjust their own beliefs. The result may be consensus, fragmentation or polarisation of opinion. For example, it is known that sharing extreme opinions (such as racial prejudice) tends to strengthen those views. Recent research by Moussaid *et. al.* demonstrates that collective opinion does not converge towards the mean, rather it is formed by two major 'attractors' of opinion. The first is the 'expert effect' which is induced by the presence of a highly competent individual in a group and the second is the 'majority effect' which is caused by a critical mass of lay people sharing similar opinions. When these two effects compete it appears that there has to be a presence of about 15% of experts to overcome the 'attractive' effect of a large majority.[182]

The underlying engine of opinion development appears to be that individuals fear social isolation; therefore they observe the environment continually to learn which views are prevailing and which views are declining. This has been labelled 'the spiral of silence' – people with declining views are less likely to express them. People learn what the prevailing or dominant societal views of issues are from the media, with those represented as

[182] Moussaïd, Mehdi, Kämmer, Juliane E, Analytis, Pantelis P, Neth, Hansjörg. 'Social influence and the collective dynamics of opinion formation,' *PLoS One*, 2013, 8(11):e78433, p. 1-7.

either 'expert' or 'majority' having greater weight. The importance of any view being expressed may simply be inferred from the way it is presented or it may be supported by explicit evidence and 'expert opinion'. A key idea is that by presenting views as highly dominant or expert the media can have a significant influence on wider public opinion. The way in which politicians or other commentators are presented will influence whether or not observers judge them as expert and therefore accord more weight to their views.[183]

This media effect on public opinion is enhanced by what is called presumed influence. Studies show that people believe media reporting has a greater effect on others than themselves. Consequently, though observers may not be personally and directly persuaded and so influenced by a report, they may believe others will be. In other words, they presume that the media has influence. Crucially, therefore the power of the mass media or any particular report may not be great because it may not directly influence the public but elites, including politicians and experts, may believe that it will. These elites may adjust their behaviour on the presumption that the media has or will exert influence regardless of whether that is the case. Thus they may

[183] Christie, Thomas B. 'Framing Rationale for the Iraq War: The Interaction of Public Support with Mass Media and Public Policy Agendas,' *International Communication Gazette*, 2006, 68(5-6): 519-32, p. 523.

change their views, not by being persuaded, but by presumed influence.[184] [185]

Agenda-setting

> *"The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about".*[186]

Agenda-setting describes the process of determining what topics will be news. At first glance it appears to be all about the media, because they evidently shape and filter reality by concentrating on particular topics, leading the public to perceive these as more important.[187] The idea that the media set the agenda became the basis of a new field of research in the 1960s. Initial work was on '*public agenda-setting'* which demonstrated correlation between the salience of topics in the media and on the agenda of public opinion.[188] Gradually it became clear the process was more complicated. If the media set the public agenda, what determines the set of issues the media communicate? This question led to recognition of a process involving not just the media themselves but the reciprocal influence of policymakers, other elites and the public. This is '<u>media</u> *agenda-setting',* also called '*agenda-building'*

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[184] Huck, Inga, Quiring, Oliver, Brosius, Hans-Bernd. 'Perceptual Phenomena in the Agenda Setting Process,' *International Journal of Public Opinion Research,* 2009, 21(2): 139-64, p. 144-5.

[185] Walgrave, Stefaan, Van Aelst, Peter. 'The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory,' *Journal of Communication*, 2006, 56(1): 88-109, p. 100.

[186] (Cohen 1963) in: Cohen, Bernard Cecil, *Press and foreign policy*: (Princeton University Press, 2015), p.13.

[187] Walgrave, Stefaan, Van Aelst, Peter. 'The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory,' *Journal of Communication*, 2006, 56(1):88-109, p. 89.

[188] McCombs, Maxwell E., Shaw, Donald L. 'The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media,' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1972, 36(2): 176-87.

where the term building indicates reciprocation. Established public and political agendas shape media topic choices because journalists seek to gain audiences by meeting their interests. Concurrently, policymakers are often able to influence the media agenda because of a symbiosis; the former need publicity but understand and can meet journalist's needs for newsworthy information. Additionally, the internet has given netizens agenda-building influence as journalists follow issues that are being blogged about or posted on bulletin boards.

This study is concerned with how the media influence policy and so is especially concerned with how the media and the public influence politicians' agendas, which is '*policy or political agenda-setting'*. This is the province of political scientists who tend to argue that the press actually tend to simply report what is going on in government rather than having an independent effect on government agendas.[189] We will return to that idea later. Christie argues that governments do respond to the media but indirectly via the path of public opinion. This is based on the spiral of silence idea discussed earlier, except that rather than considering opinion formation in a small social group the notion is that media, government and public interact 'socially'. This application of the model of agenda-opinion congruence proposes that the media may fear isolation at the newsstands or in television ratings and the government fears isolation in the

[189] Walgrave, Stefaan, Van Aelst, Peter. 'The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory,' *Journal of Communication*, 2006, 56(1): 88-109, p. 90.

form of voter rejection, therefore the public can in fact have significant impact on the policy agenda.[190]

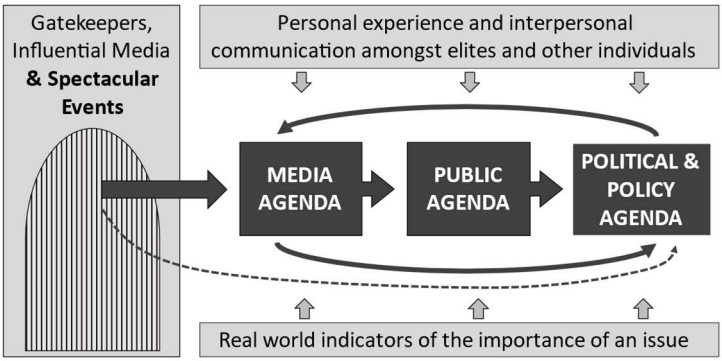

Figure 1: The Agenda-Setting Process (after Rogers and Dearing)

Rogers and Dearing make this clearer with a model explaining agenda-setting as an interactive process between the three competing interests of the media, the public and the policymakers. They propose that when a potentially newsworthy event occurs it will enter directly into the process if it is spectacular, otherwise gatekeepers of information will decide whether the event is even considered. These gatekeepers are usually within the media, for example newsroom editors, but can sometimes be government actors who have privileged information. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

For example, an event passes through the gateway on the left, and enters the media part of the process (left-hand rectangle) and if it is ranked highly enough it emerges onto the public agenda but is also communicated directly to politicians by the media (lower curved arrow). If the reporting arouses sufficient

[190] Christie, Thomas B. 'Framing Rationale for the Iraq War: The Interaction of Public Support with Mass Media and Public Policy Agendas,' *International Communication Gazette* 68, no. 5-6 (October 1, 2006): 519-32, p.523.

interest and awareness that the issue becomes high on the public agenda (centre rectangle), it is likely to start to influence the policy agenda (right-hand rectangle). Politicians then feed their policy agendas back to the media (upper curved arrow). This whole process is influenced by the personal experience and social interactions among the elites and media (top box) as well as factors that can be observed in the world that suggest importance (bottom box), such as other actors responding to the event. The gatekeeper may also be a government actor such as a diplomat or a military officer overseas who is witness to an event and directly informs the policy agenda. This is shown by the dotted arrow.

Framing

> *In times of conflict, language assumes a role of heightened importance. As scholars of propaganda observe, staging and sustaining a war often depend on the marshalling of public emotion that the visceral impact of propagandistic language can achieve. This language has little to do with disseminating information. Information is, at best, a distraction and, at worst, an impediment to propaganda's fundamental work of focusing public attention and ensuring that emotion dominates and directs public discourse.*[191]

When the agenda-setting process has determined which issues are presented to an audience, framing tells them what to think about it. Psychologists demonstrate that the way that logically identical questions are asked or 'framed' powerfully alters the answers. For example, both doctors and patients respond more favourably to the use of surgery as a treatment for cancer when statistics are expressed in terms of survival rates rather than

[191] Steuter, Erin, Wills, Deborah. 'The vermin have struck again': dehumanizing the enemy in post 9/11 media representations,' *Media, War & Conflict*, 2010, 3(2): 152-67, p.152.

mortality rates.[192] A frame is a mental short-cut, a 'packed idea' that presents, organises and makes sense of events, also suggesting what is at issue, how to interpret it and even what solutions might be.[193] [194] Frames are constructed from fragments of information, not chosen by chance. Framing is either 'intentional or shaped by dominant influences, rarely value free or neutral and very much open to manipulation by parties with an interest'. The process enables politicians and journalists to exert political influence over each other and the public and to mobilise support or demobilise non-elite challenges.[195] [196] [197] While trying to understand media influence, we are interested in two different things about framing: how it is done and the effect.

De Vreese suggests framing is a process with two stages: frame-building, which is where media factors determine how the frame is structured and communicated, and frame-setting which

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[192] Iyengar, Shanto. *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues*: (University of Chicago Press; 1994), p. 12.

[193] Durfee, Jessica L. "'Social Change" and "Status Quo" Framing Effects on Risk Perception: An Exploratory Experiment,' *Science Communication*. 2006, 27(4): 459-95, p. 463 Carpenter, Serena. 'U.S. Elite and Non-elite Newspapers' Portrayal of the Iraq War: A Comparison of Frames and Source Use,' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2007, 84(4): 761-76.

[194] Carpenter, Serena. 'U.S. Elite and Non-elite Newspapers' Portrayal of the Iraq War: A Comparison of Frames and Source Use,' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2007, 84(4): 761-76, p. 764.

[195] Kanjirathinkal, Mathew, Hickey, Joseph V. 'Media Framing and Myth: The Media's Portrayal of the Gulf War,' *Critical Sociology*, 1992, 19(1): 103-12, p. 104.

[196] Steuter, Erin, Wills, Deborah. 'The vermin have struck again': dehumanizing the enemy in post 9/11 media representations,' *Media, War & Conflict*. 2010, 3(2): 152-67, p. 153,

[197] Melki, Jad. *The interplay of politics, economics and culture in news framing of Middle East wars*. 2014, 7: 165-86, p. 167

is the interaction between media frames and the audience. This is shown at .

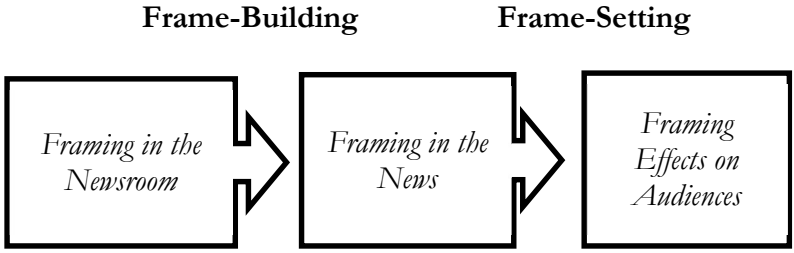

Figure 2 - The Frame-Setting Process (after de Vreese)

Frame-building occurs 'in the newsroom' where editorial policy, values and interaction between journalists, elites and social movements shape the frame. The result of frame-setting is manifest in the news product. The frame-setting process depends upon the audience member's knowledge and predispositions as these determine their interaction with the frame. The result is an interpretation and evaluation of issues and events. Individually, this may alter attitudes and collectively can shape social processes, especially opinion forming.[198]

There are two distinct psychological processes. First, as a message is received, its salient elements activate certain thoughts and ideas from memory. Second, now that these thoughts and ideas have been recently brought to mind they are more accessible and influence subsequent judgements: the sequence of a set of frames shapes the cascade of thought. Consequently, news framing can *'encourage particular trains of*

[198] De Vreese, Claes H. *News framing: Theory and typology*. Information design journal+ document design. 2005, 13(1): 51-62, p. 53.

thought about political phenomena leading audiences to arrive at more or less predictable conclusions'.[199]

The structure of the frame describes what is or is not included in the story, how many details are provided, where they are placed and the emotional tone, as well as the use of metaphor and rhetoric. Metaphors offer a tool for efficiently packaging information and shaping perception in a particular way. They are especially powerful if audiences are unaware of their effect and they can dangerously distort the way they understand the world. For example, news media may risk intensifying the conflict they are reporting by their use of metaphor and rhetorical representation because these '*tend to decontextualize violence, focusing on its irrational elements and overlooking the reasons for conflict and polarization'*.[200] Steuter and Wills analysed newspaper headlines worldwide after 9/11 from 2001 to 2008 and identified that in the Western media there was a consistent pattern of dehumanising metaphor which represented the enemy as animal, vermin or metastatic disease. Such representations bias public perception, distort political decision-making and enable flawed policy responses. Historically, their unchallenged use has preceded oppression or genocide[201] and it is plausible that the use of these and similar metaphors within the construction of a 'war on terror' contributed to the elite, media and public in the US offering uncritical support for foreign policy and strategies that have subsequently failed.

Messages may use episodic or thematic frames. An episodic frame focuses on a single specific event or issue depicted as a particular instance. For example, poverty can be portrayed

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[199] Durfee, Jessica L. '"Social Change" and "Status Quo" Framing Effects on Risk Perception: An Exploratory Experiment,' *Science Communication.* 2006, 27(4):459-95, p. 465.

[200] Steuter, Erin, Wills, Deborah. '"The vermin have struck again"': dehumanizing the enemy in post 9/11 media representations, *Media, War & Conflict,* 2010, 3(2): 152-67, p. 165.

[201] *Ibid,* p. 161.

by depicting a homeless person, a single mother, a laid off worker or a specific criminal act. A thematic frame places issues and events in an analysed context, possibly presented by an expert. A thematic portrayal of poverty might give societal context as well as provide historical trends in poverty or crime overall. For reasons of time, TV and radio broadcast use episodic framing and are therefore what[202] Lynegar calls *'a 21 min headline service'* [sic] with minimal analysis. For example, of the hundreds of reports of terrorism in the 1980s, virtually none examined the political or other antecedents. However, episodic frames are not only used for efficiency, they also lead to perceptions of individual responsibility or 'blaming the victim' because the perception is that the event is an extreme local example and therefore threatening. On the other hand, thematic framing provides societal or structural explanations.[203] To illustrate this, analysis of reporting of protest events shows that if the stories are framed episodically on individual protesters and incidents rather than thematically including the political context, audience response is more anxious or hostile to the protesters.[204]

'*Reframing*', also referred to as counter-framing, is when a media narrative is consciously and deliberately altered by use of a competing frame. This is normally a slow process and would appear to operate on the basis of views expressed by individuals who come to be judged as 'experts'. For example, from the very outset a small group of dissenters in Western societies presented the Iraqi war as based on a lie- immoral and illegal. Importantly, they also predicted negative consequences. Initially the limited news coverage of this group was hostile and episodic. However, their dire predictions were noted by the public, not least because

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[202] Iyengar, Shanto, *Is anyone responsible?: How television frames political issues*: (University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 2.
[203] *Ibid*, p. 2, 17.
[204] Durfee, Jessica L. '"Social Change" and "Status Quo" Framing Effects on Risk Perception: An Exploratory Experiment' *Science Communication*, 2006, 27(4): 459-95, p. 466.

of ridicule and denials by pro-war elites. It appears that when the insurgency in Iraq developed and casualty numbers climbed, the public reconsidered the dissenter perspective and their narrative was slowly adopted by some elites and this moved the 'index' of debate.[205] 'Annihilating framing' is a related concept that describes proactive media framing that 'blurs basic components of an object or event to exclude it from the public consciousness.' An example is the Israeli media television coverage of wounded soldiers during the second Lebanon war in 2006 which focused on the professionalism of the medical Corps and obscured the injuries and personal suffering of the soldiers. This had the effect of reducing the political impact of reporting.[206]

Clearly the choice of frames is important but practical considerations apply. Perry suggests that there are three factors that make the choice of frames easier for editors and journalists:[207]

- frames recommended by elites, especially politicians – primary sources for information and interpretation
- frames suited to the procedures of media production
- frames based on the audience's cultural infrastructure – in other words frames that are culturally congruent

Cultural congruence simply describes how readily the frame is accepted and endorsed. It requires words and images that are 'noticeable, understandable and emotionally charged'. If there is agreement with the view expressed in a frame then framing

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[205] Klein, Adam G, Byerly, Carolyn M, McEachern, Tony M. 'Counterframing public dissent: An analysis of antiwar coverage in the US media,' *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 2009, 26(4): 331-50, p. 331.

[206] Gavriely-Nuri, Dalia, Balas, Tiki. 'Annihilating framing': How Israeli television framed wounded soldiers during the Second Lebanon War,' (2006), *Journalism* 2010, 11(4): 409-23, p. 409.

[207] *Ibid*, p. 411.

becomes invisible.[208] Congruence dictates the ease with which a news frame can proceed through the stages of the framing process with similar (and intended) reactions at each step.[209]

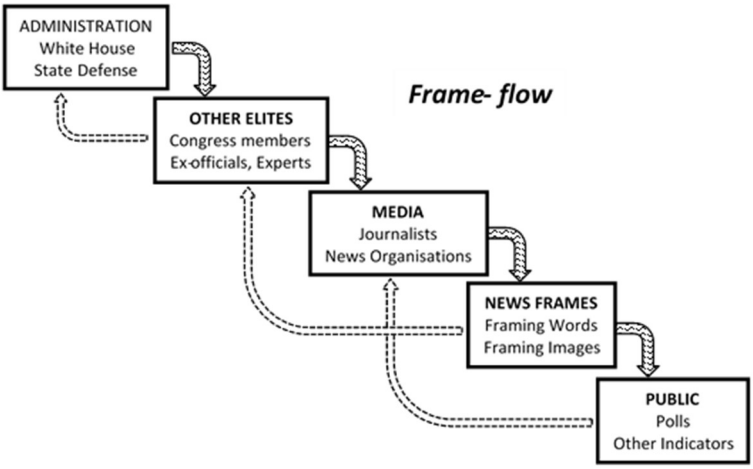

Figure 3 - The Cascading Flow of Successful Frames (After Entmann)

Entmann's cascading model [210] illustrates how culturally congruent frames move through the political process. Figure 3 uses the example of messages coming from the White House (in this case in the immediate aftermath of 9/11) to show the role of frames in a cascading flow of information. Rather like a waterfall, messages flow from the top. The most effective culturally congruent frames survive and are developed, added to

[208] Dimitrova, Daniela V., Strömbäck, Jesper. 'Foreign policy and the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in elite Swedish and US newspapers,' *Media, War & Conflict,* 2008, 1(2): 203-20, p. 205.
[209] Gavriely-Nuri, Dalia, Balas, Tiki. '"Annihilating framing": How Israeli television framed wounded soldiers during the Second Lebanon War (2006)' *Journalism* 2010, 11(4): 409-23, p. 411.
[210] Entman, Robert M. 'Cascading activation: Contesting the White House's frame after 9/11,' *Political Communication*, 2003, 20(4): 415-32.

and filtered as they move down, influencing opinion at every stage. An example is the frames embedded in the President's famous '*you are with us or against us*' phrase, which was culturally congruent despite being evidently false as a point of logic. The role of other elites, especially ex-officials and 'experts', is important. By adopting and endorsing rather than challenging the President's frames, these were then more readily adopted by the media who also reported that elite endorsement (they showed elites using the frames). The resultant adoption of the frames by the public was reflected in a strong political rally effect for the President that was revealed in polls and then reported by the media (upward dotted line). Another backflow effect is the way that the frames embedded in words used by the media are adopted and reused by elites (second upward dotted line). These elites also feed-back frames to the administration itself. There is an overall positive feedback effect on opinion within the cascade because of the shaping influence of both 'experts' from above and a 'majority' from below.

Certain individuals can have greater influence on framing than others. For example, a particular news anchor may be so trusted and respected that he or she is considered an expert among elites and the frames embedded in his or her opinion are more readily adopted by other elites in the public. This may seem obvious; however the reciprocal effect is crucial. Other media, politicians and the public observe whether or not the frames contributed by an individual are adopted and when they are this becomes the basis for regard and status. This describes how and why *shock jocks'* evocative use of populist (and 'invisible') frames, especially metaphor and rhetoric, leads to them gaining influence – shock gets them noticed and being noticed gains them importance.

This brings us to a reasonable picture of the process of how the media, elites and public interact in an agenda-setting and framing process that shapes public and elite opinion. We

now need to look at how media reports might translate to policy shift.

Theorising the Media Influence on Policy

Despite a large body of media research investigating the various links between events, the media, the public and decision-makers responses,[211] the process has too many variables to prove particular reporting causes particular policy outcomes. Even the apparently clear cut cases of policy shift after the 'Black Hawk Down' or 'Blackwater Bridge' atrocities might conceivably be a case of events providing the White House with an excuse to enact policies already chosen. Fortunately, we do have useful explanations of when media are likely to have policy influence in a military context.

Whenever news is actually 'new', meaning the event is outside the realm of personal and societal experience and has not been previously discussed by elites, there is an important window of opportunity for 'media guidance'.[212] If the politicians do not pre-empt them, the press can set the public agenda and the frame. Within this, 'unexpected, dramatic, and disturbing occurrences' provide particular opportunities for 'relatively independent and critical news narratives'. This is what Lawrence coined 'Event-driven news'; coverage that is 'spontaneous and not managed by officials'.[213] He highlighted that it is a phenomenon that particularly occurs in war when incidents including 'civilian casualties and friendly-fire incidents' produce stories that escape the established narratives of government and media. The 1991 US Air Force bombing of the Amiriyah (al-

[211] Baum, Matthew A, Potter, Philip BK. 'The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis,' *Annu Rev Polit Sci.* 2008, 11:39-65, p. 41.
[212] Graber, Doris A. *Mass media and American politics*, (Sage, 2009), p. 29.
[213] Lawrence, Regina G. *The politics of force: Media and the construction of police brutality*, (Univ of California Press, 2000), p. xi.

Firdos) shelter in Iraq, described earlier, is a prime example of how a morally ambiguous event generates a new agenda item – in this case 'civilian casualties'. New frames cascade onto public consciousness and create the newsroom conditions where other critical coverage is used. In the 1991 case, other instances of US bombing error then started to be reported. Very importantly from a military point of view, Robinson's analysis of event-driven news suggests that the criticism that emerges rarely translates into challenging the substantive justifications for the war, rather it is procedural, in other words the military get blamed.[214]

Event-driven news is by definition highly exceptional. Mostly, public opinion tends to follow established agenda and frames. Under certain circumstances however, events or issues that are less exceptional but dissonant may still 'activate' public attention and lead to a demand for more information from the media. These are typically things that appear to upset the status quo and in war include combinations of:

- casualties;
- elite discord;
- expert commentators deviating from the government position;
- evidence that delegating responsibility to decision-making elites is not going well;
- evidence that leaders have spun the facts beyond credulity.

Once elite and public attention is activated, shifts in public opinion about policy may begin. As an example, the unexpected reverses suffered by the Israeli army at the hands of Hezbollah in 2006 gave US journalists an opportunity to independently frame stories so that they departed from the established pro-

[214] Robinson, Piers, Goddard, Peter, Parry, Katy, Murray, Craig. 'Testing Models of Media Performance in Wartime: U.K. TV News and the 2003, Invasion of Iraq,' *Journal of Communication*, 2009, 59(3): 534-63, p. 540-541, p. 554.

Israel narrative.[215] 'Activation' is a slow process even if the events are dramatic. It took months of stories about the Watergate break-ins that ultimately led to the impeachment of US President Nixon before the scandal became a public agenda item.[216]

The process is also unpredictable. Although it is clear that casualties attract attention to foreign policy and may then turn the public sharply against it, there is disagreement about when and how much this will occur.[217] A key question is why the public become concerned. One explanation is that the media 'tend to frame casualties in terms of flag draped coffins, grieving families and local losses which makes the foreign crisis seem close and immediate'.[218] Reports 'provide a hook to link in other more general stories about the conflict' which may cause the public to consider whether a war is justified.[219] Mueller argued that public tolerance for casualties follows a logarithmic function in which early in a conflict, small numbers of casualties produce large drops in support.[220] Fever and Gelpi say tolerance is a function of the 'expected probability of success' and this idea

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[215] Melki, Jad. 'The interplay of politics, economics and culture in news framing of Middle East wars. Media,' *War & Conflict*, 2014, 7(2): 165-86, p. 180.

[216] Christie, Thomas B. 'Framing Rationale for the Iraq War: The Interaction of Public Support with Mass Media and Public Policy Agendas,' *International Communication Gazette*, 2006, 68(5-6): 519-32, p. 523.

[217] Baum, Matthew A, Potter, Philip BK. 'The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis,' *Annu Rev Polit Sci.* 2008, 11: 39-65, p. 54.

[218] Aldrich, John H, Sullivan, John L, Borgida, Eugene, 'Foreign affairs and issue voting: Do presidential candidates "waltz before a blind audience?" *American Political Science Review,* 1989, 83(1): 123-41.

[219] Baum, Matthew A, Potter, Philip BK. 'The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis,' *Annu Rev Polit Sci.* 2008, 11: 39-65, p. 54.

[220] Mueller, John E. *War, presidents, and public opinion.* New York: Wiley, 1973.; Mueller, John E. 'The Iraq Syndrome,' *Foreign Affairs.* 84 (2005) p. 54.

is supported by other studies.[221] Berinsky challenges this by pointing out that 'expected probability' is itself shaped by factors like values (such as nationalism), elite rhetoric and media framing.[222] Baum cites Larson, Kull and Ramsey to be much more specific and say that if things are 'not going well' that is the trigger – so casualties that appear to be a result of something going wrong have special impact.[223] The key point for this study is that the way casualties are framed is critical. Current practice sees a focus on dignified ramp ceremonies and sober eulogy. Supplementary stories that show how, why and where a soldier died may have an important social role – commentary from comrades is especially powerful. Obviously the manner in which announcements are made is crucial- the words tell the audience 'what sort of casualty' event this is and so can set a press agenda. Very careful 'framing policy' is required. Well-intentioned words of comfort inadvertently can send a subliminal signal of exceptionalism: 'something went wrong'. For example, expressing 'the reason they died' in terms of an operation's strategic purpose risks politicisation. The attendance of senior politicians at ceremonies has similar risks. What seems very clear is that if casualties occur without an established 'frame' or explanation that both anticipates them and asserts the necessity of sacrifice, then negative public reaction is far more likely.

Importantly, media can have an impact on policy without any public involvement because of the 'presumed influence of the media' effect discussed earlier. Politicians may not care about what the media care about but they certainly want

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[221] Feaver, Peter D, Gelpi, Christopher. *Choosing Your Battles: American Civil-Military Relations*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

[222] Berinsky, Adam J., Druckman, James N. 'The Polls--Review: Public Opinion Research and Support for the Iraq War,' *Public Opin Q*. 2007, 71(1): 126-41, p. 138.

[223] Baum, Matthew A, Potter, Philip BK. 'The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis,' *Annu Rev Polit Sci*. 2008, 11: 39-65, p. 54.

to be seen to care. The whole process of agenda setting dictates that issues that get significant coverage in the media are issues that might make a difference politically. Politicians seek to impress the people of their agency and importance by being seen to respond and take action; not responding might be considered incapacity or indifference. It is also important that action is taken as quickly as possible because the media's issue attention cycle is short. If a prompt response is not possible it may make no sense to react at all as the public will forget. The quicker the response the higher the chance of maximising media exposure and connecting with the public; instant issue adoption is politically attractive. Furthermore, in politics it can be preferable to proclaim merely symbolic decisions as these show commitment and reassure the public but avoid the effort and cost of substantive policy measures.[224] This reflexive tendency in politics is dangerous for the military because the moral certainty that horrific events may arouse in politicians who do not have experience of war enables them to overrule military advice and direct policy change. The previously discussed attack on Fallujah in 2004 is a clear example.

Activation of public attention or even a shift of public opinion certainly does not necessarily influence policy in the short term. The Howard government supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003 in defiance of public opposition, although with strong support from the Murdoch Press. The US Bush administration ignored both public and media disapproval of the conduct of the occupation after 2004, resisting all calls to change policy. What influences whether press and public have policy influence? Robinson suggests that what matters is whether the government has reached policy certainty and whether there is any elite debate. He says that if the government is determined

[224] Walgrave, Stefaan, Van Aelst, Peter. 'The Contingency of the Mass Media's Political Agenda Setting Power: Toward a Preliminary Theory', *Journal of Communication*, 2006, 56(1): 88-109, p. 101.

not to change policy, neither the news media nor public opinion have much influence, regardless of the level of media attention in a crisis. Conversely, if there is elite debate and the government are less committed to a particular policy, media do have significant influence.[225]

Level of Elite Consensus	Media-State Relationship	Role of the Media
Elite Consensus	Media operate in a sphere of consensus	Media 'manufacture consent' for official policy
Elite Dissensus	Media operate within a sphere of legitimate controversy	Media reflect elite dissensus
Elite Dissensus AND Policy uncertainty	Media take sides and become active participants	Media function to influence government policy

Table 1 - The Policy-Media Interaction Model (after Robinson)

This interaction is shown in Table 1. If the government has fully established their policy they will stick to it - elite consensus as shown on the top row. If the elites have consensus then the media will tend to support them and 'manufacture consensus' and if they do not then media criticism only makes leaders intransigent. If, as shown in the second row, the elites have dissensus then the media report both sides of the controversy but this will still have little direct effect on government even if it may begin the process of shifting public opinion. In this case the government may try to engage the public and seek their support

[225] Robinson, Piers. 'Theorizing the Influence of Media on World Politics: Models of Media Influence on Foreign Policy,' *European Journal of Communication,* 2001, 16(4): 523-44, p. 523.

on the issue to avoid the defection spreading to a wider group of credible elites.[226] On the other hand, if government are uncertain and there is elite disagreement the media do start to make a difference.[227]

These ideas of event-driven news, activation and politicians' reflexive behaviours have implications for the military but, before these are examined, a small selection of the evidence for the theories should be explored.

The Evidence for Media Influence on Wartime Policy

Initial understanding of the ambiguity of media effects in conflict came from research on the Vietnam War The US withdrawal can be linked to the drop in public support from about 60% in 1965 to 35% from 1968 onwards. At the time there was a common view that this drop in support was mainly due to negative TV coverage. However, in 1984,[228] Halin's analysis demonstrated that the media had actually responded to a shift in public opinion and critical coverage followed a shift in elite or 'opinion maker' discourse. Even then, it was rarely argued that the war was fundamentally wrong or immoral. A notable example of such an 'opinion maker' was the CBS anchor-man Walter Cronkite who was known as the '*the most trusted man in America'*. He visited Vietnam in 1968 after the North Vietnamese Tet Offensive and then filed a report saying that he did not think the war could be won, which is reputed to have led President Johnson to decide "we have lost middle

[226] Baum, Matthew A, Potter, Philip BK. 'The relationships between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: Toward a theoretical synthesis,' *Annu Rev Polit Sci.* 2008, 11: 39-65, p. 55.
[227] Fitzsimmons, Dan. 'Coherence in Crisis: Groupthink, the news media, and the Iraq War,' *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 2008, 10(4).
[228] Hallin, Daniel C. 'The media, the war in Vietnam, and political support: A critique of the thesis of an oppositional media,' *The Journal of Politics,* 1984, 46(01): 1-24.

America". This critical discourse only emerged after the US administration had become split between 'hawks' and 'doves'.[229] To see why this split occurred, in 2003 Mueller[230] compared opinion poll data and casualty figures from the Korean and Vietnam wars, finding that significant casualty levels were what predicted the drop in elite, and thus ultimately public, support for the war. A similar effect can be observed in respect to the war in Iraq. Pew and Gallup polls show that US public opinion in favour of the decision to use force in Iraq declined between 2003 and 2005 amid increasing media criticism of military strategy. However, it was critical statements by US Congressman John Murtha in November 2005 that appear to have released the wave of media coverage first creating real pressure on the US administration to withdraw. However, this had little effect and changes to the strategy on the ground were driven by operational dynamics, not negative media reports.[231]

Christie looked at whether and when government and media agendas were in alignment during the Iraq war and identified that at times of high public support for the war, media and government agendas were correlated, but not at times of low public support. This does not prove whether the media senses the low level of public support and so ceases to reflect government statements so faithfully or whether the disagreement between media and government agendas is

[229] Goddard, Peter, Robinson, Piers, Parry, Katy. 'Patriotism meets plurality: reporting the 2003 Iraq War in the British press,' *Media, War & Conflict,* 2008, 1(1): 9-30, p. 10.

[230] Mueller, John, and the Mershon Center, 'American public opinion and military ventures abroad: Attention, evaluation, involvement, politics, and the wars of the Bushes' *Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association,* Philadelphia, August 2003).

[231] Fitzsimmons, Dan. 'Coherence in Crisis: Groupthink, the news media, and the Iraq War,' *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 2008, 10(4), p. 39.

actually what drives the lower level of support.[232] However, if it is the latter, that would presumably require sustained anti-war reporting by the media before the shift, which other studies demonstrate was absent. This suggests the media followed the public. Goddard's 2008 study began with a broad review of US and British research on the 2003 Iraq war, which in aggregate showed the media in war were 'faithful servants…..constantly publicizing official frames of conflict and either ignoring or discrediting challengers'.[233] He then conducted a substantial content and framing analysis of the UK press for the same war period. This revealed that the agendas of the various newspapers were all remarkably similar and dominated by coverage of the ongoing battle with coalition personnel likely to be reported neutrally. There was substantial diversity of opinion and tone but this generally reflected rather than led public opposition; the overall bias remained 'pro-establishment'. This view was echoed by Robinson et al who analysed British media coverage of the Iraqi war slightly differently, characterising reports into one of three positions: elite driven, independent or oppositional. They discovered that reporting generally supported the elite driven model; in other words it was supportive of the coalition. Nevertheless, like Goddard, they also discovered significant support for the other positions, most especially arising from event driven news (discussed earlier).[234] These studies also reflect the unusual situation in Britain where there are a significant number of national newspapers with distinct political

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[232] Christie, Thomas B. 'Framing Rationale for the Iraq War: The Interaction of Public Support with Mass Media and Public Policy Agendas,' *International Communication Gazette,* 2006, 68(5-6): 519-32.

[233] Goddard, Peter, Robinson, Piers, Parry, Katy. 'Patriotism meets plurality: reporting the 2003 Iraq War in the British press,' *Media, War & Conflict*, 2008, 1(1):9-30, p. 11.

[234] Robinson, Piers, Goddard, Peter, Parry, Katy, Murray, Craig. 'Testing Models of Media Performance in Wartime: U.K. TV News and the 2003 Invasion of Iraq,' *Journal of Communication*, 2009, 59(3): 534-63, p.556.

positions, which allows for critical reporting to emerge more easily. Analysis of these showed similar broad effects but gave insights into the relationship between papers at different 'quality levels'. Carpenter's examination of 2003 war coverage compared the use of official or alternative sources across a range of US elite and non-elite newspapers, where the alternative sources were local Iraqi civilians or soldiers and official sources were representatives of government. This showed an unsurprising reliance on official sources with attendant bias of framing in favour of government. It also revealed elite news sources set the agenda for non-elite publications and, unexpectedly, it also appears that non-elite publications focus on the softer human interest elements of war. It seems that in avoiding detailed analysis the latter fall back on episodic frames which, as discussed earlier, are likely to favour a status-quo perspective.[235]

Other research confirms that the generally *'faithful servant'* reporting demonstrated in the UK and US media is an international phenomenon. Journalists' reporting is geographically biased towards the communities they (or rather their employers) come from. Melki carried out a study comparing how Arab, Israeli and US television networks framed the 2006 Israeli incursion into Lebanon to attack Hezbollah. This demonstrated the stark difference in conflict framing based on region and driven by political, economic and cultural factors surrounding the media in each area: the Arab media was as consistent in supporting the line of Arab governments against Israel as the Israeli press were the opposite.[236] Dimitrova's study compared 2003 Iraq war reporting in two 'western' nations with an analysis of the framing tone and use of sources in elite Swedish and US newspapers. This clearly demonstrated differences in reporting

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[235] Carpenter, Serena. 'U.S. Elite and Non-elite Newspapers' Portrayal of the Iraq War: A Comparison of Frames and Source Use,' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2007, 84(4): 761-76, p. 770.

[236] Melki, Jad. 'The interplay of politics, economics and culture in news framing of Middle East wars,' *Media, War & Conflict*, 2014, 7(2): 165-86.

both of the conflict itself and of related matters such as anti-war protest. It suggests that because in the US 'only certain aspects of war reality were highlighted, the public in the two countries acquired different knowledge and attitudes towards events and that this limited audience interpretation and public debate in the US'.[237] The US audience received a very particular version of 'truth'. Similar strong bias is clear in Zollmann's study of how the US, UK and German National press covered the US/Coalition assault on the Iraqi city of Fallujah in November 2004. He used full text thematic content analysis to show that the press generally overemphasised the US perspective that the operation was necessary to defeat the insurgency, disregarding the perception of local sources that the US were conducting a collective punishment that targeted the Iraqi civilian population. Importantly for this study, critical coverage focused on tactical conduct not the strategic decision to attack. Again the potential 'fault' lies with the military.[238]

The clear pattern from these studies is one of a pro-government narrative in the domestic media of countries in the early stages of a war. As war progresses, both media and public support may reduce but this is a slow process and is tied to changes in elite perspectives. There is a range of variables associated with this elite opinion shifting against war, but the 'activation' of public interest by casualties is strongly implicated. Public opposition to war will only have a rapid political effect if both the government is uncertain (policy uncertainty) and there is elite dissensus. This was not the case for the Coalition member countries in the various Iraq war studies above. Public opposition took considerable time to be reflected in shifts of political policy, but military policies may have shifted faster –

[237] Dimitrova, Daniela V., Strömbäck, Jesper. 'Foreign policy and the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in elite Swedish and US newspapers,' *Media, War & Conflict*. 2008, 1(2): 203-20, p. 215.

[238] Zollmann, Florian. "Bad News from Fallujah," *Media, War & Conflict* (2015).

with sensitivity to casualties increasing and limiting the nature of operations. Other researchers also noted that the 'index' of critique permitted the press to question procedural aspects of the conflict well before the war itself could be strongly challenged. This, like the phenomenon of 'event-driven' news which (by definition) can have unpredictable impact, is of great interest.

This study's primary concern is urban operations and some useful observations can be drawn thus far. Event-driven news appears to be a particular problem for urban operations and there is a need to build political, media and public understanding of any military operations (but especially unfamiliar urban ones) well ahead of their occurrence. Military doctrine needs to be established at the political level early in order to minimise policy uncertainty and those who will provide explanatory 'expert voices' for the media need to be established as experts ahead of time. These observations suggest further questions to be answered empirically:

- Does framing in urban operation reflect typical patterns in other wars?
- Is event-driven news an acute issue in urban operations?
- Is tactical critique prominent?
- When do military policy changes occur?

Chapter 3: Analysis of Frames in Reports of Urban battles

This empirical part of the study is described in this chapter. It seeks a better understanding of the messages conveyed by the media during urban war by means of framing analysis. This technique identifies and codes the dominant themes in a large set of reports. This coverage is drawn from

- eight international newspapers;
- accounts of three pairs of contemporary urban battles fought on the same terrain.

In each of these six cases the fight was between a conventionally more powerful 'invader' and an 'insurgent defender' and these labels are used for objectivity and clarity. Each of the pairs of battles was a first and second instance of the same protagonists fighting over the same ground at a different time: the first and second battles of Grozny; the first and second battles of Fallujah; and two Israeli incursions into the Gaza strip (all described later). This approach offers analytic advantages in case comparison between each of the pairs of battles as there are far fewer variables between them. The newspapers were chosen to provide a representative international selection of 'quality' mainstream publications from four countries relevant to an Australian audience, with a more conservative and a more liberal example from each of the US, the UK, Australia and China. The last country was expected to provide a 'reference point' as it has no involvement in any of the conflicts at issue, nor is enmity apparent in related Chinese policy. The interest lies in the patterns of reporting and their shifts during battles and determining the extent to which previous media research findings remain valid for urban conflict. In line with theories

described earlier it is assumed that the frames that dominate reporting reflect editorial choices.

This chapter describes data collection and analysis approaches before outlining and discussing the findings of thematic quantitative analysis of frames. The next part provides a tabular analysis of the reporting of each battle, with each analysis preceded by a short description of the fighting. The third part is the rhetorical analysis which also uses a tabular approach.

Data collection

The data was collected using the Factiva database on the Macquarie University library website from the following publications: *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *China Daily* and *People's Daily*. The last is in Mandarin and the other seven newspapers are English-language newspapers.

The data collection strategy was first to search for news articles related to the battles, using dates and keywords related to the geographic battle names, then to filter results manually and inclusively to serve the research questions. Essentially this involved a judgement that the article in question did indeed, mainly or entirely, deal with urban combat; some articles dealing with International Relations, or only making incidental mention of the battle, were thus excluded. Articles were collected for a 40 day period starting from the initial assault and sorted into four-day blocks of time. This covered the major invader offensive combat operations in all six battles. 786 articles were identified. It was not expected that every related article would be found; cross-checking findings later uncovered several missed articles. However, since all collection was done by the same research assistant who had no prior knowledge of the topic,

selection biases should have been constant across all eight publications.

Analytic Approaches

This research project seeks to investigate the persistent patterns of the urban battle reporting in selected newspapers. The main tool for examining the data is framing analysis. Framing generally is discussed earlier in this report, but to recap, a frame is an 'internal structure of the mind' and frames are 'devices embedded in political discourse'.[239] Van Gorp identifies that a frame itself is 'a specification of the idea that connects the different framing and reasoning devices in a news article'.[240] The purpose of framing analysis is to unpack or reveal the interpretive packages that shape the meaning of an issue, by identifying 'symbolic devices'[241] or 'framing devices'[242] and 'reasoning devices'[243] that are embedded in news texts. The approach helps to resolve the questions of 'How do language choices invite us to understand an issue or event' and 'how news

[239] Kinder, Donald R., and Lynn M. Sanders. 'Mimicking political debate with survey questions: The case of white opinion on affirmative action for blacks.' *Social cognition* 8, no. 1 (1990): 73-103, p. 74.
[240] Van Gorp, Baldwin. 'Where is the frame? Victims and intruders in the Belgian press coverage of the asylum issue,' *European Journal of Communication*, 2005, 20(4):484-507, p. 487.
[241] Gamson, William A, Lasch, Kathryn E. *The political culture of social welfare policy,* (1981).
[242] Gamson, William A, Modigliani, Andre, 'Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach,' *American Journal of Sociology,* 95, no. 1 (1989): 1-37.
[243] Van Gorp, (2008), *supra,* footnote 240.

frames act to affect the political consciousness of news audiences'.[244]

News text can be analysed either inductively or deductively. Semetko and Valkenburg explain that '*the inductive approach involves analysing a news story with an open mind to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames*'.[245] It builds from 'ground level' and therefore is 'grounded' with the frames of an issue slowly emerging from the process of content analysis itself. The frames induced by researcher are generally issue-specific to the particular topic of enquiry (episodic frames). This method is labour intensive, often based on small samples, and can be difficult to replicate. In contrast, a deductive approach involves *'predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news*'. [246] Unlike the inductive approach, it can be replicated easily and cope with large samples. This typically uses existing frames from previous research. A combination of inductive and deductive approaches has been also proposed by framing scholars. Van Gorp suggests the combining of inductive framing analysis (IFA) and deductive content analysis (DCA).[247] This way inductive framing analysis constructs a repertoire of 'tailored' frame packages, while the deductive content analysis provides techniques for validating the reliability of the results. This project uses his two-pronged or hybrid approach in order to both seek insights from new frames

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[244] D'Angelo, Paul, Kuypers, Jim A. *Doing news framing analysis: Empirical and theoretical perspectives*: (Routledge; 2010), p. 298.

[245] Semetko, Holli A, Valkenburg, Patti M. 'Framing European politics: A content analysis of press and television news,' *Journal of Communication,* 2000, 50(2): 93-109, p. 95.

[246] *Ibid,* p. 95.

[247] Van Gorp, Baldwin. 'Strategies to Take Subjectivity out of Framing Analysis,' in: *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*, edited by Paul D'Angelo and Jim A Kuypers, (Routledge; 2010) 84-109, p. 85.

and compare findings with past research across a large set of samples.

To better understand the frames used in the text the thematic structure and rhetorical structure of stories, the most useful of Pan and Kosicki's four structural dimensions, were also analysed.[248] Thematic structure analysis identifies the core ideas or themes used within a story to facilitate audience comprehension. The most salient themes normally determine the primary perception of audiences about an issue. Rhetorical structure analysis considers the stylistic choices journalists make: how they use language symbolically to invoke images, to bring focus to a point, and to more generally heighten the vividness of a report.[249]

The two-pronged approach to the thematic examination allowed the two researchers to begin the deductive and inductive analysis concurrently. The 'grounded' analysis to induce new themes from the data was conducted by the first researcher before looking at any of the combat-related media analysis literature in order to avoid being influenced by previous researchers' choices. Coding involved reviewing articles to first confirm relevance (some were excluded at this point) and then determine the main theme: 'what is this about?'. The judgement considered the main notions embedded in article titles, headlines and leads that variously might condense the core meaning of the entire text. For each story this notion was assigned a label, for example 'tactical shift by the invading army'. Distinct new themes gained a new label while stories that shared the same theme were assigned together. Once all stories were labelled, further iterative

[248] Pan, Zhongdang, Kosicki, Gerald M. 'Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse,' *Political communication* 1993;10(1): 55-75.
[249] *Ibid.*

categorisation merged slightly different but similar themes until there were about twenty distinct new or 'grounded' themes.

The deductive approach began with the second researcher identifying established frames from the most relevant studies, which were then provided to the first researcher as 'candidates'. After examination, the seven operational definitions of frames derived by Carpenter[250] from previous studies (especially Dimitrova's)[251] were chosen and adapted by merging two similar frames of the seven. The 'responsibility' frame was subsumed into a 'diagnostic' frame to provide the six main themes as shown in Figure 4. These six main themes were then used to organise the twenty–odd sub-themes that had been induced by the first researcher. The result of this two-pronged approach was themes at two levels – main themes based on the literature and sub-themes based on grounded induction.

Findings and Discussions – Thematic Structure

Once the thematic structure of the stories had been determined, the rhetorical structure was analysed. This considered the metaphors, depictions, tones and catchphrases used in a story as well as stylistic choices in the representation of the issue. Rhetorical depiction was classified according to the newly determined categories of themes and sub-themes. Metaphor was broken down into two components – tenor and vehicle – and each shown on a table with relevant excerpts providing the context of the

[250] Carpenter, Serena. 'U.S. Elite and Non-elite Newspapers' Portrayal of the Iraq War: A Comparison of Frames and Source Use,' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 2007, 84(4): 761-76, p. 767.

[251] Dimitrova, Daniela V., Strömbäck, Jesper. 'Foreign policy and the framing of the 2003 Iraq War in elite Swedish and US newspapers,' *Media, War & Conflict*, 2008, 1(2): 203-20, p. 213.

metaphors. This analysis is described further below, after discussion of the thematic analysis findings.

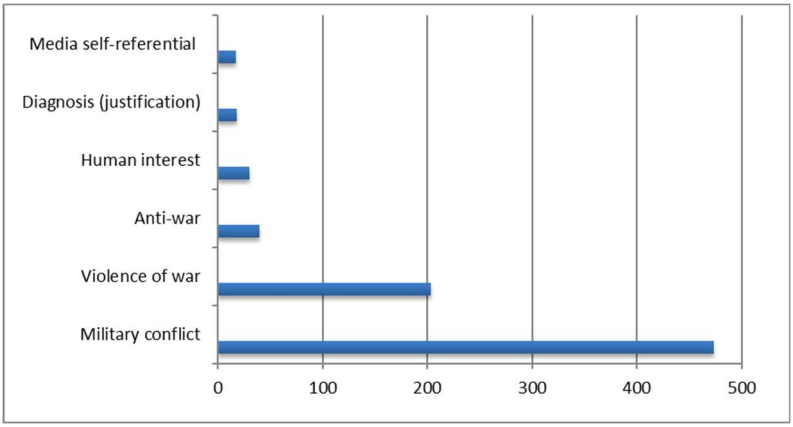

Figure 4 — Main themes in urban warfare reporting from the eight newspapers

The distribution of the main themes of the newspaper reports is shown in Figure 4. It is important to note that the analysis concerns the main frame(s) of each story and other frames remain within. Within articles coded for military conflict and violence of war themes for example, there were still critical voices about the war. Comments in American newspapers labelled actions in the two Grozny and Gaza battles war crimes, while the British newspapers made harsh comments about Israel's operations in the two Gaza battles and *The Times* described actions in one Fallujah battle as a war crime.

The dominant frame across all reporting is the military conflict frame. This is an 'emphasis on the military conflict and action among individuals, groups, or institutions' and accounted for 60% of articles. The second frame is the violence of war frame which is 'emphasis on injuries or casualties and the destruction or aftermath caused by war' which accounted for 26% of articles. These two themes comprised 86% of the coverage of

the urban battles with the other frames necessarily being relatively small. The anti-war frame refers to 'an emphasis on the opposition to war' which accounted for a mere 5%, with the human interest frame identifying 'emphasis on the human participants in the event' a similar 4%. The diagnostic frame which is '*emphasis on what caused the event or problem'* accounted for 2.3% and the media self-referential frame, which is '*emphasis on the news media',* an equally low 2.2%.

The concentration on the themes of 'military conflict' and 'violence of war' is consistent with previous studies of war reporting in 'quality' newspapers. Comparison needs to be done with care as some of these use statistically different methods: proportions within studies can be compared but not exact percentages across studies. There is slightly greater use of the *military conflict frame* and reduced use of the *violence of war frame* in this study's analysis of urban battles compared to the ratio for the Iraq war generally (urban battle 60&26% and general war 52&29%) in Carpenters study.[252] The direction of the shift of emphasis away from the violence frame is surprising but the effect is not big enough to draw conclusions. There was a much clearer contrast between our findings and other studies for the other four themes. These themes represented a much smaller proportion of all stories in our study than in Carpenter's, with her human-interest themes providing 34% of stories compared to our 4% and her anti-war themes 13% compared to our 5%. The human interest difference is particularly curious and unexpected since urban war potentially provides greater scope for interaction with people, while the horror of urban war might be expected to increase anti-war narratives, or certainly not reduce them. One possible explanation is that because our research design concentrates on intense periods of conflict it

[252] Carpenter, Serena. 'U.S. Elite and Non-elite Newspapers' Portrayal of the Iraq War: A Comparison of Frames and Source Use,' *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly,* 2007, 84(4): 761-76.

excludes the anti-war discussions prior to hostilities as well as the 'lulls' in war during which reporting may fill-in with human interest stories but this should only account for a small difference. By considering the next level of examination (covered below) it seems to suggest that a 'human interest' perspective remains, but has been subsumed into casualty stories. The conclusion at this main-theme level of analysis is that broad pattern of themes in stories of urban war reflect those in war more generally, with a possible shift to simplistic reporting. The latter is important because it suggests that far from the expected focus on emotive stories that abound in urban war, the media may be 'de-tuning' their reports.

The next stage in our analysis examined the sub-themes of each of the six major themes in turn. Recall that grounded analysis produced twenty-odd sub-themes which were assigned to the most appropriate main themes. As already discussed, four of the main themes only contained relatively small number of stories in total, and three of these the anti-war, media self-referential and human interest frames were only divided into a small number of sub-frames. On examination, their arithmetical distribution did not seem to offer further insights. For example, the 'human interest' frame broke down into two roughly equal sub-frames: one concerning civilian victims and the other describing the residents' hard life on the battlefield. However, these stories are revisited for the rhetorical analysis below. The three other main themes that did have substantial and differentiated sub-sets are considered below.

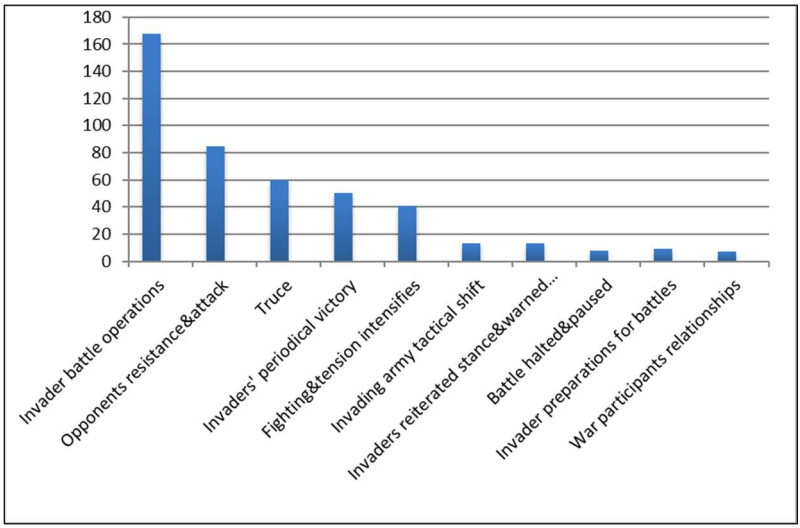

Figure 5 - Sub-frames of the 'military conflict frame' in urban war reporting

Figure 5 demonstrates that 49% of the reporting within the 'military conflict frame' defined as battlefield operations between invaders and insurgents. Of this, 31% of the stories dealt with 'an invaders battle operations on the battlefield' sub-frame. These 'battlefield operations' frames concerned functional aspects such as weapons, explosion, destruction of infrastructure, attack, flames on the street and so on and so forth. An example of such a frame, in one story about the first Fallujah battle, the *Washington Pos*t reported, 'US warplanes on Wednesday dropped 500-pound laser-guided bombs and fired powerful howitzers at what military officials said were Sunni Muslim insurgents who had fired on Marines ringing this city'.[253]

Half as much coverage (18%) was focused on the opponents' resistance and attack against invaders. An example

[253] Chandrasekaran, Rajiv. 'Key General Criticizes April Attack in Fallujah' *The Washington Post*, September 13, 2004.

of such a story in *The Times* explained 'The 15 Marines were trapped in a house, surrounded by hundreds of Iraqis armed with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles, their armoured vehicle in flames on the street outside. Each man was down to his last two magazines'.[254] In similar vein, in the first Grozny battle, *The New York Times* described that 'Rebels beat back a Russian force'. [255] An overall emphasis on the battlefield operations of invaders and insurgents, with about twice as many stories dealing with the former, is unsurprising and reflects, among other things, that there were very few journalists with any of the insurgent groups as well as the bias towards 'own' troops previously described in the literature.

What was surprising was to discover that truce was the third sub-frame of the military conflict and accounted for 13% of stories and occurred in all battles except for Second Fallujah, and most often in First Fallujah and Second Gaza. While the military literature dealing with these battles does discuss the phenomenon of truces, the tendency is to treat it as something unique to a particular battle. Our findings suggest that truces may be frequent features in future urban battles, which armies should prepare for.

What was even more interesting was that the majority of the coverage (57%) described that a ceasefire failed and was critical of the reasons for the failure. This compares with 18% of the coverage describing negotiations for a ceasefire while only 8% of the coverage reported that a ceasefire was achieved. The rest of the small number of news articles covered the stories of calls for a ceasefire from invaders and the international community as well as the situation during the truce period. The relationship between these stories is important because it suggests that the

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[254] Hider, James, 'A savage dance of death in the alleys of Fallujah,' *The Times*, November 10, 2004.
[255] Specter, Michael, 'Rebels beat back a Russian Force,' *The New York Times*, January 3, 1995.

media interpret ceasefires as heralding an end to hostilities, rather than the historical norm of a lull in fighting for some usually humanitarian purpose. These unrealistic media perceptions are likely to lead to a critical interpretation of commanders attempting to continue with their assigned missions.

The next most significant sub-theme discovered was 'Invaders' periodical victory or the claim of victory', which accounted for 11% of stories spread across all six battles. Such frequency was inherently illogical and surprising. (n=50/473) [KEY –This indicates that 50 stories were related to victory or claims of success out of 473 dealing with battlefield operations] as an example, *The Washington Post* claimed that 'Troops gaining grip in sections of Fallujah'.[256] The coding included items where the term victory was used but the theme was not necessarily positive in tone, for example in Second Fallujah, *The Sydney Morning Herald* stated in an article titled 'Victories rooted in barren ground'. [257] It is evident from the history of all six battles that there were few occasions before the end of each that could properly be described as a significant intermediate victory (and obviously only the very last reports could be total victories). The 'victory claim' phenomenon seems to be a response by military commanders to political or public pressure for evidence of progress. This aligns with Peter's 'fight faster' argument discussed at the beginning of the report and, like truces, deserves military attention. It is also useful to contrast the 'victory claim' phenomenon with a tendency not to report insurgent attacks and actions as victories of any kind, although the six battles are punctuated with engagements that might objectively be construed that way. Interestingly, although many articles mentioned reverses suffered by the Russians during First and

[256] Constable, Pamela. 'Troops gaining grip in sections of Fallujah, *The Washington Post*, April 7, 2004.
[257] McGeough, Paul, 'Victories rooted in barren ground," *Sydney Morning Herald,* November 13, 2004.

Second Grozny, a mere three were focused on explaining that the invading army conceded or retreated (as opposed to suffering heavy losses) when they did both in First Grozny. Superficially, this last bias against communicating insurgent success may seem helpful to the invaders but, as discussed elsewhere, falsely optimistic impressions risk dangerous expectations being placed on militaries.

The fifth sub-frame under the military conflict frame is 'fighting and tension intensifies' which accounted for approximately 9% of stories (n=41/474). The remaining five sub frames each account for a small number of stories, 2-3% each. The first sub-frame deals with 'invaders' tactical adjustment' (n=13), 'invaders' preparation for battles' (n=9), 'battle halted and paused' (n=8), and 'war participants' relationships' (*i.e.* American Marine and Iraqi forces) (n=7).

The 'intensification' frame is a logical consequence of truces failing but, like 'leaders reiterating stances' and even 'tactical adjustments', appears to be shaped by military announcements intended to give an impression of progress; most such stories cite officials. Again, this is evidence of the pressure western armies may be put under by media (the Russians appear to have learned from First Grozny and deliberately excluded most media from the battlefield in the Second).

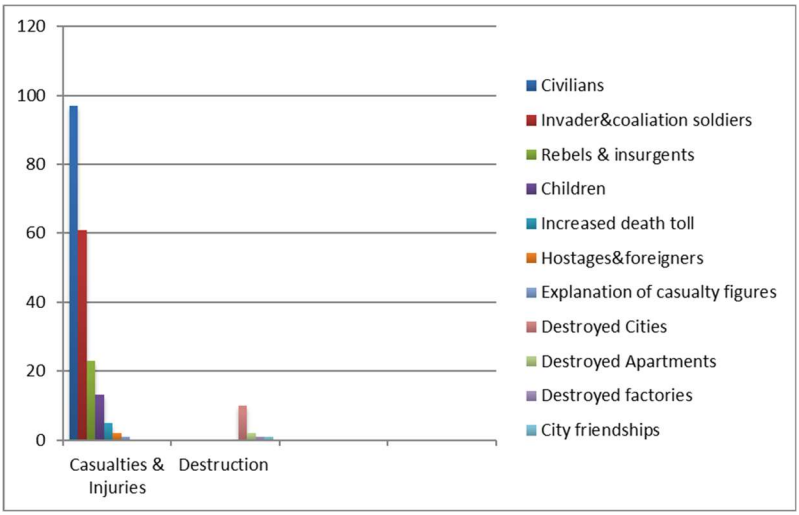

Figure 6 - Sub-frames of the 'violence of war' frame

This analysis of the military conflict frame indicates that these dominant frames in reporting are unbalanced in favour of the invading army in a ratio of 231:88 – similar to what has been shown in other studies. On closer examination the reporting tone differs further. There is strong (and expected) positive press bias of tone towards 'own troops' and to a lesser extent 'allies'. However it seems that when the media are free of the requirement to avoid appearing unpatriotic (or anti-Israeli[258] in the US), strong critical tone emerges. As an example, the UK press were sometimes critical of US, Israeli and Russian tactical conduct whereas the US press were rarely critical of US actions and less critical of Israeli action than the UK press. This unsurprisingly confirms that when correspondents are not reporting on their 'own' troops they are more likely to cover an enemy's perspective or activity, but also suggests there is a

[258] Reflecting Israel's status as a formal ally of the US.

natural shortfall in all reporting about enemy actions. The military themselves could fill this gap.

'Violence of war' is the second main theme in the reporting of urban warfare. Figure 6 shows there are two groups of sub-frames, those dealing with 'casualties and injuries' (93%) and those dealing with 'destruction' (7%), showing a clear focus on humanitarian concerns within the selected print media. Among 'casualties and injuries', there is an important difference in spread among different categories. The majority of the reporting (51% out of the 'casualties and injuries' sub-themes) covered the casualties and injuries of civilians and children, but not in a proportion reflecting the massive preponderance of civilian compared to military casualties in all of these urban battles. Similarly, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly, reports of the death and injuries of civilians in newspapers were un-emotive, focussing on numbers and avoiding descriptions of suffering or fear. We know that emotive stories about and pictures of injured children evoke public sympathy for war victims and stir anti-war sentiment: photographer Nick Ut's 1972 photo of a naked burned Vietnamese girl running from a napalm attack is a case in point. In all of the battles analysed, detailed reports of civilian death and suffering were available to news agencies and were used by organisations taking a stance strongly critical of the invaders (such as *Al Jazeera* in the Fallujah battles) but were rarely used by the analysed print sources. Reporting 'downplaying' bias is also evident in the detached tone of the approximately 32% of 'casualties and injuries' stories of invading soldiers, and even the 12% covering casualties of opponents. It is clear that the newspapers analysed exhibit the bias and self-censorship that other research predicts. Across all the articles analysed only one sought to explain the reason for

the urban combat death and injury toll. Again, there is an opportunity for 'expert' military commentary to fill this gap.

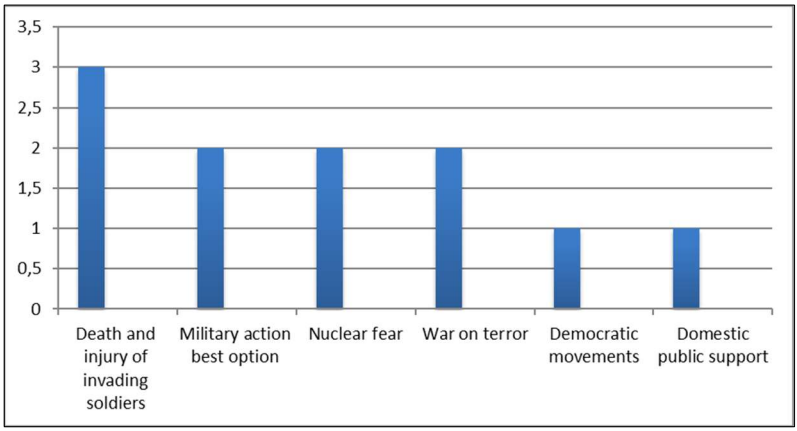

Figure 7- Sub-frames of the diagnostic frame (justification)

The diagnostic frame was little used in the reporting of the six battles – see Figure 7. Earlier, the researchers explained that the restriction of the timeframe of the six battles might have an impact on the ratio of the diagnostic frame. The possibility is that invading states attempt to make more effort to justify their decision to wage war prior to invasion. Hence, there may have been more reporting justifying the war decision during the pre-war period not covered in this study. Only 18 news articles explained the reasons for the battle or war and of these, the six explanatory sub-frames were 'the death and injury of invading soldiers', 'military action is the best option', 'nuclear fear', 'war on terror', 'democratic movements' and 'the domestic public support'. Not only is this a low figure, but the analysis was shallow (fighting to avenge prior death of soldiers is a sunk-cost proposition) and focused on the strategic level. There were no articles that sought to offer a comprehensive rationale for the

battle. This, yet again, represents a gap which could be filled by militaries.

Tabular Analysis of Frames – Approach

The use of different frames over time and their thematic shifts during battles was analysed with a table per battle. A row corresponds to each of the eight newspapers and a series of columns representing each four day period from the beginning of the battle. Each article from the dataset was then plotted on the table using a shorthand code for the corresponding theme and subtheme, with the main theme identified with a capital letter, followed by a subscript abbreviation identifying sub-themes. For example: Anti-war = Antiw, Human interest = Huma, Diagnostic = Diagn and Media self-referential = Press. 'The Military conflict' and 'Violence of war' themes were further divided into subthemes identified by letters as shown below. For ease of reading, factors strongly associated with the invaders were coloured blue and those associated with the insurgents – red. This is shown at Table 2.

Below, each battle is introduced and then the analytic table is provided followed by findings and discussion.

The military conflict frame	The violence of war frame
MBatt: Invader battle operations on the battlefield	**VCivi:** Civilian casualties (+ children)
MInsu: Insurgents resistance & attack	**VInva:** Invader & coalition casualties
MTruc: Truce	**VInsu:** Rebels & insurgents
MVict: Invader's periodical victory & claim of victory	**VDeat:** Death toll increased
MIncr: Fighting & tension intensifies	**VHost:** Hostages & foreigners
MTact: Invader tactical shift (or increases force levels)	**VExpl:** Explanation of casualty figures
MWarn: Invader leader reiterated fighting stance (warned)	**VDest:** Destruction of cities
MHalt: Battle halted & paused	**The main frames**
MRela: War participants' relationships	**Antiw:** Anti-war frame
MPrep: Invader preparations for battles	**Huma:** The human interest frame
MRetr: Invading army retreated and rebels take control	**Diagn:** The diagnostic frame
	Press: The media self-referential frame

Table 2- Frame Codes for Tabular Analysis

The First Battle of Grozny 1995-1996

After the USSR collapsed in 1991, the Chechens could not be placated with increased autonomy and refused to sign the Federation Treaty. When they declared independence under President Dudayev, Moscow initially attempted to assert control by force and, after failing, resorted to clandestine support of opposition factions in an undeclared civil war. In October 1994, opposition militia advancing on the Chechen capital of Grozny

were defeated by Dudayev's forces. Federal Russian provision of over fifty armoured vehicles and air support for a second coup attempt in November ended in a rout with most of the vehicles destroyed, many fighters being captured and Russian involvement exposed. This catastrophe led the Russians to issue an ultimatum and order the Army to prepare to 'restore constitutional order'. In December, a Russian advance into Chechnya by three large armoured columns initially faltered as commanders resigned in protest, civilians blocked the roads and soldiers deserted before eventually reaching the city. Although restraint was ordered, and there was grave concern for the safety of the ethnic Russian population, the poorly trained Army was doctrinally reliant on indiscriminate firepower. After a week besieging and bombarding Grozny the Russian army assaulted on New Year's Eve. The plan was for four armoured columns to concurrently converge on the city centre. Coordination failed. The unprepared and understaffed force advanced mounted in long vulnerable columns and drove into well prepared ambushes. Initially only the Northern column penetrated and the defenders swarmed to attack it. The result was a catastrophe. Over two hundred armoured vehicles were destroyed, over a thousand soldiers killed, several hundred taken prisoner and morale collapsed. It required massive reinforcements, enormous use of artillery firepower, a change to systematic tactics of clearing house by house and two months, for the Russians to eventually gain control of the city. The Russians lost the information war early by refusing to deal with the press, while the Chechens welcomed them and provided detailed information. Media, international and Russian public opinion all became extremely critical, with the blame focused on the military. While politicians were culpable in forcing military leaders into a premature fight

with a cobbled together organisation and without intelligence, this is not typically the understanding of the conflict.[259] [260] [261]

The analysis in Table 3 (pages 137-138) shows that there was no coverage of First Grozny in *The Australian* or *China Daily* with the other six newspapers unsurprisingly using mostly military conflict frames in the confused initial period (13/15)[KEY – indicates 13 stories of 15 used the military conflict frame]. *The Times* reported Russian claims of victory made at a time of actual unmitigated disaster, which is illustrative of problems of reliance on official sources. Interestingly, the dominant frame throughout deals with invader military operations from the invader's perspective. This is despite the Russians not providing even 'official spin' while the Chechens engaged the media. Furthermore, there was considerable sympathy for the Chechens in the West. This appears to illustrate the *pro-status* quo bias in all reporting that Chomsky and others accuse the media of. Certainly, *The Washington Post's* use of that frame contrasts with *The New York Times'* greater focus on civilian casualties; however the *Post* shifts to frames dealing with the insurgents towards the end of January. This might be a response to a crystallising of public opinion in favour of the insurgents.

[259] Oliker, Olga. *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat.* (Santa Monica: Rand Arroyo, 2001).
[260] Jenkinson, Brett C. 'Tactical Observations from the Grozny Combat Experience,' Army Command and Staff College, 2002.
[261] Thomas, Timothy L. 'The Battle of Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat,' *Parameters*, 1999, 29(2): 87-102.

DTG → **Paper ↓**	19941231- 19950103	19950104- 0107	0108- 0111	0112-0115	0116-0119	0120-0123	0124-0127	0128-0131	0201- 0204	0206-0208
Actions	Russian columns ambushed. Brigade isolated and de-stroyed. Chechens counter-at-tack. Cha-otic battles.	Chechens begin to withdraw but fierce fight for Presidential Palace be-gins. Rus-sians re-sume bom-bardment	All regroup. Russians declare ceasefire on 10th but still attack Palace	Russians pre-empt end of ceasefire on 12th to attack and seal off city	Massive bombardment. North, centre of city and Place secured by Russians	Chechens redeploy to new front line in South	Russians begin to attack the South	Systematic clearance by Russian continues	Russians gain confidence and secure key points	Chechens withdraw leaving harassment forces behind
Washing-ton Post	MBatt MBatt MInsu MBatt	Press Huma Huma MBatt	MBatt Press MBatt	MBatt MBatt MBatt	MBatt MBatt	MInsu MInsu MInsu	MInsu MInsu	MBatt		MPrep MBatt
New York Times	MInsu	VCiv	VCivi VCivi	MBatt	MTruc	MIncr	MBatt Press	MIncr Huma	MBatt	
The Times	MVict MInsu MVict		Antiw MTruc	MTruc Huma MBatt	MBatt MTruc	MVict Press	Press	MBatt MInsu Huma		MPrep, VCivi
The Guardian	Huma MInsu	Press MRetr		MBatt	MTruc, MVict		MIncr	MIncr		
The Australian										
Sydney Morning Herald	MBatt Press MBatt	MRetr Antiw MRela		MBatt MBatt	MInsu					MVict

China Daily										
People's Daily	MBatt, MVict	MBatt	MBatt MBatt MVict	MBatt				MBatt		MBatt

Table 3 - Dominant Frame of Articles during First Grozny

There were sporadic reports questioning press coverage or the war itself with anti-war voices in *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Times* criticising the '*bungled*' military operation in Chechnya. What is striking about the table is how erratic the reports are. There is little consistency between publications and patterns of frames bear little relationship to the actual pattern of operations. For example, *The New York Times* does not focus on insurgent success at the beginning of the battle but at the end when the Russians are actually beginning to recover. The true pattern of the battle was fairly clear within a few days so the failure of the main messages in the press to reflect reality is curious.

Second Battle of Grozny 1999-2000

In 1996 the Russian leadership abandoned the peace process in Chechnya. 1500 Chechen fighters infiltrated Grozny, isolated the Russian positions, surrounded them with mines and called for their surrender. Armoured columns sent to relieve the 7000 trapped soldiers were ambushed and the stand-off led to a cease-fire and the end of the first Chechen war. Independent Chechnya was unstable and became increasingly radical with militant factions proclaiming Jihad to free the Caucasus. Chechens planted bombs in Moscow and in 1999 an 'Islamic International Brigade' invaded the Russian republic of Dagestan from Chechnya. The Russians responded by invading and then cautiously surrounding Grozny with a large and well prepared force and shelling for several months. They controversially warned that any who did not flee would be killed and then began a slow and systematic attack. Their new tactics were to probe with reconnaissance elements and when engaged to back off 300 metres and use massive artillery and air bombardment. They then deployed snipers to overwatch positions before systematically clearing the rubble with small groups of infantry. The Russians also learned the media lessons, created an organisation to 'shape public consciousness', engaged the friendly press and excluded

others. This saw Russian public support survive despite international hostility.[262] [263] [264]

For analysis the battle was again divided into ten 4-day stages. Table 4 (pages 141-142) shows that there was no reporting in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *China Daily* and again that the majority of the coverage (56/70) focused on the 'military conflict' theme. Nine articles dealt with casualties themes. A typical *Washington Post* article at the fourth stage reported that 'mortar volleys and small arms fire persisted on the outskirts of Grozny today despite Russia's announcement of a temporary halt to air and artillery bombardment'.[265] Themes of reports bear much closer relationship to actual events than in First Grozny, reflecting a much slower and consequently clearer chain of events.

Both *The New York Times* and *The Times* reported that the Russian military conceded after its troops met strong opposition in the first few days of the fighting. This is a misreading of the new tactics; the Russians were now probing and then pulling back to flatten opposition with artillery. There is no incentive for armies to correct such misunderstandings; they don't want their enemies to understand their methods. There is again a discernible difference in tone between the US papers; *The Washington Post* sustains a focus on the Russian operations while

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[262] Oliker, Olga. *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat.* Santa Monica: Rand Arroyo, 2001.

[263] Jenkinson, Brett C. 'Tactical Observations from the Grozny Combat Experience,' Army Command and Staff College, 2002.

[264] *Thomas, Timothy L.* 'Grozny 2000: Urban Combat Lessons Learned,' *Military Review,* 80, no. 4, Jul-Aug *2000.*

[265] Williams,Daniel, 'Assault on Grozny Stalled; Unexpected Resistance Slows Russian Offensive,' *Washington Post*, December 29, 1999.

DTG → Paper ↓	19991226-1229	19991230-20000102	0103-0106	0107-0110	0111-0114	0115-0118	0119-0122	0123-0126	0127-0131	0201-0205
Actions	Russians begin clearing sectors on three axes breaching outer De-fences.	Systematic clearance by sectors, air-power de-stroying 15 strongpoints	Fighting intensifies and slows to 100m per day progress.	Combat focusses on four central areas.	See-saw battles in centre.	See-saw battles in centre.	Symbolic Minutka Square captured.	Chechens begin to withdraw.	Russian deception lures many Chechens into ambush.	Chechens withdraw.
Washington Post	MBatt MBatt MRela	MVict, MBatt MBatt	MBatt MBatt	MTruc	VInva	MBatt	MBatt MInsu	VCiv	MVict MRela	MVict
New York Times	MBatt MRetr MBatt	VInva VInva	MInsu MInsu		MIncr MVict	MBat	MBatt		MInsu MInsu	MVict MVict
The Times	MBatt MRetr	MVict	MIncr MBatt	MVict VInva	MBatt MTact		MVict VInva		Press MIncr, Huma	VInsu VInsu MVict Press MVict
The Guardian	MBatt MBatt		MBatt MBatt	MIncr MInsu	VInva	MIncr	MBatt MInsu MRetr			VCivi
The Australian	MBatt		MIncr				MVict	MInsu		
Sydney Morning Herald										

China Daily										
People's Daily	MBatt			MTruc			MBatt MBatt			

Table 4 - Dominant Frame of Articles during Second Grozny

The New York Times gives the insurgent perspective a greater priority. There are no very marked contrasts between US and UK papers, although there are a greater number of stories in the former and a slightly more diverse set of frames in the latter. What is interesting is the various editorial decisions 'not to report'. For example, *The Guardian* reported at the seventh stage that 'Russian general falls into Chechen hands,'[266] but no other paper gave this major Russian setback space. This was the biggest battle of its kind since WW2 and yet in Australia only one paper covered it and then only lightly. What bleeds does not always lead if you can hide the bleeding till it is old news, which the Russians did well.

First Fallujah 2004

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003 the occupying US forces initially considered the city of Fallujah to be nominally pro-American and did not occupy it. When they did begin to move into the city a series of controversial incidents involving civilian casualties during demonstrations was followed by an influx of insurgents and a gradual escalation in violence, in the face of which US forces eventually withdrew. In April 2004 four armed US contractors were ambushed and killed and their bodies burned and hung from a bridge; images were released worldwide. Moral outrage in the US led to political direction to 'Pacify' the city with major offensive operations, overruling the US Marine Corps commander's less aggressive strategy of 'surgical' raiding and cooperation with local leaders. After three days of assault supported by tanks and artillery and airstrikes the US gained control of 25% of the city but the attendant destruction and civilian casualties prompted international and domestic outrage and triggered violent action across Iraq. This moment defined

[266] Gentleman, Amelia. 'Russian General fall into Chechen hands,' *The Guardian*, 21 January, 2000.

the start of the insurgency. Political considerations dictated a ceasefire and protracted negotiations. These were punctuated by violent breaches before the US withdrew in May and, at the request of the Iraqi Government, passed control to a newly formed US-armed Militia Brigade. This subsequently handed its weapons over to the insurgents by September.[267]

There were far more reports about First Fallujah than the Chechnya battles. This was true across all papers but especially US papers which obviously reflects US involvement. As shown in Table 5 (pages 145-146), the battle was divided into seven stages for the thematic shift analysis as the battle was relatively short and the US troops withdrew within this timeframe. The difference in tone between the US papers is discernible in *The New York Times* reporting civilian casualties and offering an anti-war frame early in the battle while *The Washington Post* had three articles justifying action right at the beginning. In the lead up to the battle, *The New York Times* relatively soberly reported that '*An Enraged Mob Kills Contractors*'[268] while *The Washington Post* published a front page photo of the contractors bodies being beaten by the mob and called for US commanders to 'step up the counteroffensive against the Sunni insurgency'. This paper continued with hostile perspectives focused on insurgent success while *The New York Times* remained more detached.

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[267] Matthews, Matt M. *Operation AL FAJR:Study in Army and Marine Corps Joint Operations*, (DTIC Document; 2006); Peace Direct. *Learning from Fallujah: Lessons identified 2003 – 2005*, (London: Peace Direct; 2005); West, Bing. *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*, (New York: Bantam Books; 2005).

[268] Gettleman, Jeffrey. 'An Enraged Mob Kills Contractors' *The New York Times,* March 31, 2004.

DTG → Paper ↓	20040404-0407	0408-0411	0412-0415	0416-0419	0420-0423	0424-0427	0428-0430
Actions	Fallujah encircled blockaded strikes & assault begin 25% secured.	Fighting erupts across Iraq. Pressure from governing Council forces US ceasefire on 9th.	Insurgents control city -incidents breach ceasefire Mosque bombed on 13th.	More incidents but ceasefire appears to consolidate by 19th.	Joint Iraqi-US patrols begin	Insurgents attack US positions on 27th. Air strikes in response.	US prepare to hand over to 'Fallujah Brigade'.
Washington Post	Diagn Diagn VInva MInsu MHalt MInsu MInsu MVict VInva Diagn	MVict VInva VInsu MInsu Huma MTact MPrep MRela MBatt MTruc MTruc	MInsu MInsu MInsu, MBatt MBatt MTruc	MTruc MHalt	MInsu VCivi MInsu VCivi	MInsu MInsu VCivi VInva MInsu	VCivi VInva MBatt VInva
New York Times	VCivi VInva VInva	Antiw MBatt MRela MTruc	MPrep MBatt MBatt VCivi VInva VInsu	MTruc MVict	MInsu MBatt MTruc MInsu	MInsu VInva VInva MBatt MBatt	MBatt MBatt MBatt MBatt, MTact
The Times	MHalt VCivi VInva Antiw	MBatt VCivi MPrep MWarn MPrep Diagn	MTruc Press	MBatt	MInsu VCivi	VCivi MRetr	MBatt VInsu
The Guardian	Antiw VCivi Diagn			(Antiw)	(Antiw)		
The Australian	Diagn	VCivi VInva MBatt VCivi VInva		Huma MTact MHalt	VCivi	MBatt VInva MBatt VCivi MBatt	

Sidney Morning Herald	MHalt	Diagn	MTact MTact	MInsu			
China Daily			MIncr				
People's Daily	MBatt VCivi MInsu	MBatt, MInsu	VInva		MBatt	MBatt	MBatt MInsu VInva

Table 5 - Dominant Frame of Articles during First Fallujah

On April 8th the latter published an article expressing suspicion and criticism about motives for the battle. It mentioned, 'the barrage of violence that has seized Iraq over the last few days has jolted many Americans, causing deep anxiety and prompting many people to re-examine their positions on how the United States is handling the war'.[269] A similar divergence is evident in the actual tone in Australian papers. *The Australian* re-published an indignant article titled 'Honour the slain by crushing mob'[270] justifying the battle, while *The Sydney Morning Herald* provided a sober analysis of what was driving the insurgency: 'Twin fuses set Iraq alight'.[271]

What is most remarkable from the table is that *The Guardian* had three highly critical pieces as the battle started and then no more. One was by Jonathan Steele who wrote from Fallujah and provided an account of the brutal actions taken by the US Marines in the days that preceded the eruption of popular hatred towards the dead contractors.[272] Another was an editorial observing that 'none of these actions even pretends to be concerned with winning hearts or minds'.[273] However, there were no other articles from *The Guardian* in our dataset. This was puzzling, so a further search was conducted, and discovered two other highly critical articles by Jo Wilding on 16 April[274] and Rory McCarthy on 24 April[275] that may have failed to be

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[269] Belluck, Pam. Davey, Monica; *et al*., 'The Struggle for Iraq: the Nations Mood: as Violence escalates, some changes of heart on war,' *The New York Times*, 8 April, 2000.

[270] Kristol, William, 'Honour the Slain by Crushing Mob,' *The Australian,* 6 April, 2004.

[271] McKeough, Paul, 'Twin Fuses set Iraq Alight,' *The Sydney Morning Herald* 9 April, 2004.

[272] Jonathan Steele , 'Driven by national pride', *The Guardian*, 2 April 2004.

[273] Editorial. *The Guardian,* 6 April, 2004.

[274] Wilding, Jo 'Getting aid past US snipers is impossible', *The Guardian,* 16 April, 2004.

[275] McCarthy, Rory. "Uneasy Truce in a City of Ghosts," *The Guardian*, 24 April, 2004.

collected because of an alternative spelling of 'Falluja'. Nevertheless, for this liberal paper not to publish many more stories continuing their editorial line is very strange. A possible answer lies in Roan Bennert's article in the same paper; '*Who will speak out*'[276] expressed distress and confusion that the left of British politics would not stand up for previously declared principles. This is strong evidence of the theory that media publications will not step outside the 'index' of acceptable debate defined by the elites, which is in turn constrained by a popular 'rally effect' (it should be noted that in due course the elites and then the public did become anti-war).

Second Fallujah 2004

After the US withdrawal from Fallujah, insurgents concentrated there under the presumed leadership of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Over 4000 fighters fortified the city with extensive barriers, fighting positions and booby-traps while most civilians fled the city. In November 2004, the Coalition began offensive operations to clear the insurgent stronghold. A major conventional operation by Iraqi, US Marine and US Army units supported by bulldozers, tanks, artillery and airstrikes systematically cleared the city of determined insurgents over nine days of heavy combat. Mopping up continued into December in the extensively damaged city and control was subsequently maintained despite occasional bombings. However, many insurgents appear to have escaped to resume the fight elsewhere in the Province, which within two years was in their thrall.[277]

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[276] Bennert, Roan. 'Who will speak out?' *The Guardian*. 16 April, 2004.

[277] Matthews, Matt M., 'Operation AL FAJR: A Study in Army and Marine Corps Joint Operations,' (DTIC Document; 2006); Peace Direct, *Learning from Fallujah: Lessons identified 2003 – 2005,* (London: Peace Direct; 2005); West, Bing. *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle for Fallujah*, (New York: Bantam Books, 2005).

DTG → Paper ↓	20041107--1110	1111-1114	1115-1118	1119-1122	1123-1126	1127-1130	1201-1204	1205-1208	1209-1212	1213-1216	1217-1223
Actions.	Fallujah again encircled & blockaded. US and Iraqis systemati-cally assault.	Torture chambers discovered. Large area handed to Iraqi control.	US continues to battle pockets of resistance and clear bunker complexes.	Mopping up.	Mopping up.	Mopping up.	Mopping up.	Mopping up	Mopping up.	Mopping up	Last pockets of resistance cleared.
Washington Post	VCivi VInva Diagn MIncr MTact MBatt	MVict MPrep MBatt MInsu MBatt MVict MInsu	MVict Press MInsu MInsu MTact VCivi	MVict Huma MInsu MTact	MRetr	MInsu	MInsu VCivi	MVict MInsu VInva MInsu VInva VCivi MVict VInva	MInsu MInsu VCivi MInsu	MBatt VInva MBatt VInva MInsu VCivi	MInsu VCivi
New York Times	MInsu MInsu MBatt MHalt MBatt MInsu Diagn MVict MVict	MVict MBatt MInsu MInsu MBatt MTact MInsu MInsu	MInsu MInsu MBatt MInsu	VCivi MBatt VCivi MInsu Press	VCivi VInva VCivi VInva MBatt	VCivi MBatt VCivi VInva VCivi	MInsu VCivi VInva MInsu VCivi VInsu	MInsu VCivi MBatt, MInsu	VInva	VInva VCivi	MRela VCivi VCivi

The Times	VCivi MBatt MBatt MBatt MBatt Antiw MVict MInsu VInva	MBatt MInsu MBatt MVict	MVict MBatt MBatt		MBatt		VCivi			VInva	
The Guardian											
The Australian	MVict MInsu VInva MInsu	VInva MVict MInsu		VCivi			Press				
Sydney Morning Herald	MInsu	Antiw MVict									
China Daily											
People's Daily	MInsu VCivi VInva MBatt MBatt	MVict	VInva							VInva	VInva

Table 6 - Dominant Frame of Articles during Second Fallujah

Second Fallujah was divided into eleven stages because although most of the fighting was over within ten days, mopping up took a month, as is clear from Table 6 (pages 149-150). *The Times*, *The Australian* and *People's Daily* reporting dropped off quickly, reflecting the reduced intensity of combat, but coverage unsurprisingly continued in the US papers. Commentary at the beginning of the battle reflected existing stances. *The Washington Post* justified the attack on the basis that: 'Negotiations between the interim Iraqi government and insurgent leaders who control Fallujah have broken down'.[278] *The New York Times* was more cautious and sought to reassure readers with an op-ed from a retired General: 'We will not do what the Russians did to Grozny, the capital of Chechnya: level the city and completely strip it of its form and shape; Our goal is to bring democracy and liberty to Iraq'. [279] *The Sydney Morning Herald* was more suspicious and critical, and published a news editorial entitled '*Assault on Fallujah an uncertain path'* [280] The themes of stories used continued to reflect these approaches although there was a far more even balance between invader and insurgent focus. *The New York Times* coverage was only really distinguished by more stories dealing with civilian casualties. The reporting was notable for the empathetic pro-troops accounts of the fighting provided by embedded journalists.

First Gaza 2008-2009 (Cast Lead)

In 2005, the Israelis unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza strip and the following year Hamas won the majority of seats in the Palestinian legislature. When Hamas refused to recognise Israel

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[278] Spinner Jackie. '52 Killed in Spate of Attacks in Iraq', *Washington Post*, 7 November 2004.
[279] Marks, James. A. 'Rebels, Guns and Money,' *New York Times.* 10 November, 2004.
[280] Editorial. 'Assault on Fallujah an uncertain path' *Sydney Morning Herald,* 10 November, 2004.

or renounce violence, the US cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) and armed the opposing Fatah faction, leading to a coup by Hamas. Between 2006 and 2007 there were frequent armed clashes along the border between Israel and Gaza with thousands of rockets being fired by Palestinian groups and extensive shelling by Israel. An Egyptian-brokered truce gradually unravelled in 2008 and late in December an Israeli Air Force, Navy and Army (Artillery) bombardment (Phase I) began as ground forces massed on the border. In early January three brigades crossed the border to encircle and isolate urban areas but paused for several days before beginning to systematically clear selected areas (Phase II). As the Israelis penetrated further into urban areas, rockets continued to be fired into Israel while in Gaza there were increasing civilian casualties. A hospital and a UN compound were hit by Israeli fire and a humanitarian crisis loomed as Palestinians under curfew ran out of food and other supplies. Two weeks into their offensive and after tactically defeating Hamas, destroying much of their stock of rockets and most of the smuggling tunnels into the Sinai, Israel decided not to mount a 'Phase III' and declared a unilateral ceasefire and Egyptian-led negotiations began.[281]

The patterns in Table 7 (pages 153-154) suggest a remarkably even choice of frames across the various publications, with the only clear difference across parallel publications being more concern about civilian casualties in *The Guardian* than *The Times*. From previous patterns it was expected that early emphasis on diagnostic coverage in *The Australian* would probably seek to justify the invasion and examination of the actual tone of individual articles confirmed this interpretation.

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[281] Johnson, David E. *Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation; 2011. 264 p.; 'Breaking the Silence: Soldiers' Testimonies from Operation Cast Lead, Gaza 2009,' Jerusalem, <breakingthesilence.org.il> 2009.

DTG → Paper ↓	20081228-1231	20080101-0104	0105-0108	0109-0112	0113-0116	0117-0120
Actions	Airstrikes on Gaza, rocket attacks on Israel in response. Infantry and armour blockade of Gaza.	Airstrikes continue, Naval bombardment. 3 mounted Brigades led by Engineers enter and bisect Gaza.	Israelis enter population centres, further air strikes and short halt on 7th for humanitarian purposes.	Israelis push in to Gaza city suburbs.	Israelis push deep into Gaza city, using heavy artillery fire from the 15th.	Israel announce unilateral ceasefire on the 17th.
Washington Post	MInsu VCivi MBatt VCivi	Diagn MBatt MBatt	Huma MInsu Huma MIncr MTruc VCivi MVict	MWarn, MVict	MTact	MTruc MVict
New York Times	VCivi MBatt MIncr MRetr	MBatt	MTruc Huma VCivi MTruc	Press MWarn MVict	Antiw	
The Times	VCivi Huma VCivi Antiw MInsu VDeat	VInsu MInsu MBatt	Diagn MBatt MBatt	MTact	MHalt MTruc	
The Guardian	MIncr VCivi MBatt VCivi MTruc, Antiw	MInsu VCivi VInsu MTruc MTact Press MTact	MVict VCivi Huma MIncr VCivi, VCivi, Antiw	VCivi MIncr	VCivi Huma VCivi (C) Antiw	

The Australian	Diagn MBatt MWarn MInsu Diagn	Diagn MVict	MBatt MRela VInsu	MIncr MIncr	MVict MPrep MTruc	MBatt MVict
Sydney Morning Herald		MBatt	MIncr VCivi	MIncr	MTact MIncr	
China Daily				Antiw		
People's Daily	VCivi	MBatt VCivi (C)	M_{Truc}, M_{Incr}	MTruc Press		

Table 7 - Dominant Frame of Articles during First Gaza

The Washington Post showed a pro-Israel and anti-Hamas stance using the former President George Bush's statement to the public in a news article, titled, '*Hamas provoked Attacks, Bush says; "President accuses group of adding to civilian deaths from Israeli strikes*".[282] The basic tone of the article was that the Palestinian Islamist movement provoked Israeli military action and thus increased the death toll of civilian populations. By contrast, the last news article published in *The New York Times* during the war period denounced the offensive invasion by Israel. The article claimed, 'The strikes intensified condemnation of Israel, already heated because of the number of civilian deaths, and further strained fraught relations with the agency that provides aid to Palestinian refugees'.[283] So these publications seem to have continued to reflect their general political stances, although there is no sign of that in frame patterns.

In contrast, the cluster of diagnostic frames used in *The Australian* were in fact predictive of the pro-Israel justification of the military incursion as necessary to stop Hamas rocket attacks and to avoid further Israeli civilian casualties.[284] Similarly the imbalance identified in the frames in the UK papers reflects the actual tones of articles, although *The Times* was only lukewarm in its support for Israel. On 29 December 2008, it released a feature article titled 'Bitter harvest; Israel had little choice but to respond to the Hamas attacks. But its deadly action shatters hopes for the already battered Middle East peace plan'. This described Israel's attack as 'the deadliest series of air assaults in the history of the 60-year old conflict'. However, a contrary voice supporting the military incursion appeared in *The Times* after a week's fighting. The analysis in this article revolved around the

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[282] Raghavan, Sudarsan and Eggen, Dan. 'Hamas provoked attacks, Bush says, President accuses group of adding to civilian death', *Washington Post*, 3 January 2009.

[283] Kershner, Isabel *et al.* 'Israel shells U.N. site in Gaza, Drawing fresh condemnation', *New York Times*, 16 January 2009.

[284] *The Australian*. 'Israelis Threaten Gaza Invasion', 27 December 2008.

idea that the military incursion was part of '*War on Terror*' and justified as an action 'disabling the military forces of Hamas as a whole and particularly its ability to continue launching missiles into Israel and to continue smuggling arms into Israel and Gaza.'[285] As the number of articles about civilian casualties would lead us to expect, *The Guardian* was more critical of the Israeli military operation in Gaza, with three anti-war news articles being released. It said, 'Israel has inflicted a bloodbath on the Gaza Strip that matches the darkest days of the Iraq war.'[286] A dozen news articles were concerned about casualties of civilians and opponents. One news article particularly reported that the intensified fighting killed 43 school children in a UN school and all coverage about casualties was focused on civilians and opponents rather than invading soldiers.

Second Gaza 2014 (Operation Protective Edge)

In 2011, Hamas and Fatah reconciled and in November 2012, after a period of escalating Israeli Palestinian exchanges, the former mounted operation 'Pillar of Defense' which was an intense 8-day bombardment of targets in the strip which ended in another Egyptian-brokered ceasefire agreement. This ceasefire generally held, despite some Palestinian rocket attacks and Israeli airstrikes in response, and Israel maintained its blockade of Gaza in violation of the agreement. The ceasefire broke down in June 2014 in the face of Israeli opposition to reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers in the West bank by or with the tacit approval of Hamas. An Israeli crackdown in the West Bank also saw airstrikes on Hamas targets in Gaza and this was followed by an escalating exchange of rocket fire and airstrikes. In early July, Israeli air bombard-

[285] Lotan, Lior. 'Military Incursion Should be Seen as Part of War on Terror', *The Times*, 5 January 2009.
[286] Milne, Seumas. 'Israel and the West will Pay a Price for Gaza's Bloodbath', *The Guardian*, 8 January 2009.

ment resumed and in the middle of the month the Israelis mounted a major invasion of Gaza to destroy the Gaza tunnel systems dug towards Israel. This continued until early August. Several thousand Palestinians and 66 Israeli soldiers were killed and there was extensive destruction. [287] [288] [289]

The reporting landscape of the Second Gaza battle in these eight newspapers as depicted in Table 8 looks quite different from the previous examples. The coverage is greater and deals more with frames of truce, diagnosis, civilian casualties and destruction, while the patterns differ less between papers. The impression from the patterns is of less partisan reporting, so article tone was investigated to check. *The Washington Post* released eight news articles that focused on the casualties of civilians and soldiers. Significantly, this included Gazan residents' life stories and their loss during the warfare, so the tone was less pro-Israeli than previously.

[287] White, Jeffrey. 'The Combat Performance of Hamas in the Gaza War of 2014,' (Combatting Terrorism Center, West Point, 2014.

[288] Shamir, Eitan. 'Rethinking Operation Protective Edge,' *Middle East Quarterly* 2015.

[289] Kurz, Anat, Brom, Shlomo. *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge*, (Tel Aviv: The Institute for National Security Studies, 2014), Report No.: 9657425735.

DTG → Paper ↓	20140708-0711	0712-0715	0716-0719	0720-0723	0724-0727	0728-0731	0801--0804	0805-0808	0809-0812	0813-0816	0817-0820	0821-0826
Actions'	Israeli Air-force and Navy bom-bard Gaza, Hamas fire rockets.	Israelis raid Gaza Shelling continues.	5hr cease-fire Israe-lis defeat cross bor-der raids & shoot down UAV	Insurgents killed infil-trating from tun-nels Cache in hospital destroyed.	More tun-nels de-stroyed 16hr Cease-fire then bombard-ments con-tinue.	Israelis call up more re-servists. More soldiers killed by IEDs Ceasefire announced.	Ceasefire broken by capture of Israeli officer. Massive area bom-bardment follows.	Ceasefire for several days then fire resumes	Three day ceasefire.	Ceasefire continues.	Exchang es resume.	Rocket fire from Lebanon and Gaza before final ceasefire .
Washington Post	Huma MBatt Huma VCivi	VCivi VInsu MBatt	VCivi VCivi VCivi MIncr	VCivi MTruc MTruc MTruc	VCivi (C) VCivi	MIncr MVict Antiw	Huma MTruc		MTruc		MTruc	MIncr Huma VInsu MWarn Antiw
New York Times	MIncr MIncr	VDest Antiw	MTruc MTruc MBatt MBatt Diagn MBatt	MTruc Antiw Press VCivi	VCivi	Diagn MIncr	MIncr VCivi VCivi VCivi (C)	MVict MTruc	MBatt MTruc	MTruc	MTruc	VInsu MWarn VDest VInsu
The Times	MBatt MInsu VCivi	MWarn MBatt	MTruc, VCivi (C), MTruc MIncr	VCivi VCivi Antiw MIncr	Huma Antiw Huma VCivi	MWarn VDest Antiw	MWarn Diagn MTruc VDeat Huma Diagn		MTruc	VInsu	MTruc MTruc	VInsu VInsu MWarn

The Guardian	VCivi Huma MBatt MInsu VCivi	Huma MWarn	MIncr VCivi (C) MBatt MTruc	VCivi VCivi VCivi VCivi VCivi, Huma	Antiw VCivi MTruc	MTruc MBatt VCivi, VCivi (C) Antiw	VHost MWarn Antiw Huma	Antiw	MTruc		MTruc MTruc	MTruc VInsu MWarn VDeat
The Australian	MBatt MIncr MWarn	MBatt	MIncr MBatt	VCivi (C)	MInsu, Diagn	MIncr	VDeat					VInsu
Sydney Morning Herald	MBatt	MBatt		MBatt		MIncr	VDest Antiw MTruc MTruc MTruc	MTruc		MTruc		VInsu
China Daily	VInsu MBatt VDeat	MVict MVict	MIncr MBatt MIncr		MTruc VCivi	MBatt Huma, MBatt VCivi	MIncr		MTruc MTruc	MTruc	MVict	VInsu MTruc VDest VCivi (C)
People's Daily	MBatt MIncr	MBatt	MTruc			VCivi	VCivi		MTruc			MTruc

Table 8 - Dominant Frame of Articles during Second Gaza

The New York Times had editorials at the third and the sixth stage of the battle which attributed the blame for initiating the war to Hamas' bombardment as well as an article from the battlefield criticising (Israeli) brutality and destruction; again, more balanced. Similarly, *The Times* had three news articles in a row critical of the Israel incursion. For example on 31 July, it reported that '*Israel is accused of war crime'*.[290] On the other hand, it released a feature article that said 'Hamas is using its own people as human shields and sacrifices, to enable it to continue firing rockets at Israeli civilians and to increase its own civilian casualties in order to turn western opinion against Israel.'[291]

This greater balance was not universal. *The Guardian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* were more critical and focused on casualties of civilians and human interest, with emphasis on an Israeli strike on a UN school that was condemned as a '*war crime'* by the UN. Conversely *The Australian* showed a supportive stance towards Israel in an editorial, titled '*Reports from Gaza need a more balance perspective'.*[292] The presence or absence of bias patterns in the tabular analysis correlates with bias in tone within publications.

Cross Battle Comparison

Only tentative deductions can be made from cross-case comparison because of modest sample sizes and the number of other variables, yet it is possible to detect a greater willingness of a national media to be more critical of armies with whom their nation has no strong relationship. The UK, Australia and the US

[290] Philp, Catherine. 'Israel is Accused of War Crime after School Shelling Kills 20 Refugees', *The Times*, 31 July 2014.
[291] Phillips, Melanie. 'You're Not Getting the Real Truth about Gaza'*, The Times*, 4 August 2014.
[292] *The Australian*, 'Reports from Gaza Need a More Balanced Perspective', 26 July 2014.

media appeared to be decreasingly less critical (in that order) of the Israeli and American military, but all roughly equally critical of Russia. This is unsurprising. Social interaction theory predicts that we don't criticise those who we perceive as allies in times of conflict. What is much clearer is that on investigating the unexpected frequency of press reports of truces, it was found that they occurred in five of the battles and clearly had a significant impact on the conduct of operations. It is evident and unchallenged that Israeli operations in these and other battles were repeatedly curtailed as a result of international pressure which flowed from media reporting. This was also the case in First Fallujah – however the intense and decisive pressure in that case arose from reports in the Arabic media creating outrage across Iraq and the Middle East.

Rhetorical Analysis and Depiction

As explained earlier, rhetorical analysis considers the stylistic choices journalists make: how they use language symbolically to invoke images, to bring focus to a point and to more generally heighten the vividness of a report. The analysis used is the qualitative analysis software – Nvivo. Analysis began by searching the news coverage of each battle, identifying the most frequently used words related to descriptions of battles (the selection mainly focused on nouns, adjectives and verbs) and comparing these most frequently used words between cases (battles). The word frequency was limited to the first 1000 words in the frequency hierarchy and approximately the first 100 words in the frequency hierarchy for detailed analysis. The main insight from the 1000-word frequency was that descriptive words were generally at a very low frequency. Comparing the 100-word frequency results showed that terms for 'invading countries', 'invaders', 'invaded countries', 'cities' and 'opponents' were the most frequently used words and differed by case, but otherwise the media discourses of these six battles were very similar. Fre-

quent words were categorised into two major themes – the military conflict frame, and the violence of war (casualties) frame and human interest frame. Under the military frame, the media discourse covered the 'executors of battles' (actors) who conducted battles, 'weapons', 'battlefields' and 'battle operations'. Under the violence of war and human interest frames, the discourse focused on the 'humans' that were involved in the battles, the 'objects' that were destroyed in the battles and the 'descriptions' of the destruction of human beings and objects. This breakdown is shown at Table 9.

Frames	Sub-frames	Words
Military conflict	Executors of battles	Fighters, soldiers, military, troops, forces, army
	Weapons	Tanks, artillery, grenades, rockets, tanks, weapons, arms, weapons, missiles
	Battlefields	Ground, street
	Battle operations	Bombs, attack, firing, killing, control, battling (battle), command, operations, violence, explosion, security, offensives, assault, ends, launching, strike, conflict, ceasefire, conflict, assault, hitting, airstrikes, warnings, negotiation, captured
Human interest and casualties	Human	People, civilians, body, children, residents
	Objects	City, building, village, hospitals, house, homes, shelter
	Descriptions	Wounds (wounded), dying, losses, death, deadly, injured, destroyed

Table 9 - The most frequently used words (>100) in the media discourse

Taking these identified words, every case of that word was searched for in all the texts to discover where descriptive words were attached to that word, and identified if these words have certain connotations or evoke readers' perceptions. The results are represented at Table 10 (pages 163-166).

	1st Grozny	2nd Grozny	1st Fallujah
War/ battle/ conflict	Extremely unpopular war; massive military crime; ferocious battle; fierce battle	A heated war; a long-term, low-intensity war; painful terrorist war A full-scale partisan war; fierce battle; seesaw battle; bloody battle; intense battle; heaviest battle; bitter battle; fierce but stationary battles	War on terror; Holy war against the American invaders; aggressive military actions; decisive battle; bloody battle; bitter battle; bloody conflict
Force/ soldiers/ fighters	Potent force		Offensive forces
Artillery/ Tanks/ weapons/ rockets	Intense artillery barrage; heavy artillery, massive artillery	Devastating artillery; intense artillery; huge artillery barrage	
Bombs/ fire	Heavy bombs; terror bombing; indiscriminate bombing/ devastating artillery fire	Ceaseless bombing; restless bombing; highly destructive vacuum bombs; fierce defensive fire; heavy artillery fire	
Attack/ strike/ assault	Blistering attack; ferocious attack; disastrous assault; fiercest assault	Intense attack; despicable attack; a controlled and unstoppable attack/Fierce assault; disastrous assault	Deadliest roadside bombing attack; extraordinary attacks; anti-American attacks; hit-and-run attacks; high-quality attack; armed attack
Fighting/ killing/ operations	Heaviest fighting; Looting, robbery; unmotivated killings	Heavy fighting; fierce(est) fighting; furious street fighting; intense fighting; bitter fighting; antiterrorist operation; counterterrorist operation; hazardous operation; mopping-up operations	Ferocious house-to-house fighting; offensive military operations; aggressive operations; massive operation; a peaceful ending to the impasse
Cease fire/ end			A dismal end

(Continued from page 163)

	1st Grozny	2nd Grozny	1st Fallujah
Civilians/ children/ people /families	Innocent people; panicked civilians; terrified villagers		
Bodies			Burned bodies; dead bodies
Casualties		Heavy casualties; high(est) casualties; significant casualty toll; serious casualties; worst casualties	
Villages/ buildings/ streets/ house		Battered buildings; destroyed building	
Wounded/ injuries/ death/ losses		Seriously woun-ded; severely wounded; heavy losses; huge losses; significant losses; massive losses	

	2nd Fallujah	1st Gaza	2nd Gaza
War/ battle/ conflict		Foolish war; war against terror; destructive war	War crime; horrendous war crime; a form of "genocide"; destructive war; a war of attrition; appalling conflict; bloody conflict
Force/ soldiers/ fighters	Seriously wounded soldiers; die-hard fighters; foreign jihadist fighters	Massive force; the Middle East's strongest army	
Artillery/ tanks/ weapons/ rockets		Burning tanks; powerful weapons; a terror weapon; offensive weapon	Powerful rockets

(Continued from page 164)

	2nd Fallujah	1st Gaza	2nd Gaza
Bombs, fire	Suicide bombings		Suicide bombings; terrifying bombing; heavy (iest) bombing; intensive bombing ;heavy fire
Attack/ strike/ assault	Devastating attacks, Deadly strikes; disastrous assault; restless assault; violent assault; deadly assault	Terrorist attacks; suicide attacks; Monster attack; massive attack; intensive attack; retaliatory strikes; deadliest strike	Fearful of revenge attacks; most audacious attack; most shocking attacks; most awful missile attack; retaliatory strikes; lightning strikes; unprecedented strike
Fighting/ killing/ operations	Heaviest fighting; fierce fighting; intense fighting; highly trained and well-organized fighting; hard fighting; sporadic fighting; offensive operations; American psychological warfare operations; largest operation; intensified operations; aggressive operations; troop-intensive operations; the most complex and risky operations	Fiercest fighting; intense fighting; heavy fighting; most serious fighting.	Hamas terrorist operatives; aggressive ground operation.
Cease-fire/ end		Rapid ceasefire; defunct ceasefire; humanitarian ceasefire; swift ceasefire; immediate ceasefire; a sustainable and durable ceasefire; bitter end; immediate end	Immediate; unconditional humanitarian ceasefire; permanent ceasefire; lasting ceasefire

(Continued from page 165)

	2nd Fallujah	1st Gaza	2nd Gaza
Civilians/ Children/ people/ families		Panic-stricken children	Innocent civilians; injured civilians, dazed and panicked people; displaced people; crying children; shocked families; shocked and traumatised families
Bodies	Burned bodies; concrete and dead bodies; mutilated body; disembowelled body; beheaded bodies; headless body; decapitated bodies; armless and legless body		
Casualties			
Villages/ buildings/ streets/ house	Empty streets; deserted streets; most dangerous streets; deadly streets; cracked streets; rubble-strewn streets; debris-covered streets; narrow, twisting streets; bomb-blasted streets; terrifying streets; booby-trapped streets; booby-trapped house; deserted houses; darkened house; deserted buildings.		

Table 10 – Depictions of the six battles

The descriptions of the six battles were very much focused on the military conflict frame. In the two Grozny cases, the war launched by Russia was labelled as 'unpopular', a 'military crime' and a 'painful terrorist war'. This is very different from the descriptions of the two Fallujah battles, which were clearly

identified as part of the 'war on terror' by American invaders. The media discourse clearly indicates that the Russian invasion in Chechen was unjust and incursive while in contrast the American invasion in Fallujah was depicted as just and defending the Iraqi people. The two Gaza wars were however depicted differently. The first Gaza battle was portrayed as part of 'war against terror' but also viewed as 'foolish' and 'destructive', in contrast, the second Gaza war received much more criticism and the tone used was very negative. The media defined it as 'war crime', 'a form of genocide' and 'a war of attrition'. The Israel Military bombed the UN school during the battle, which generated media-led international condemnation which reached right up to the UN Secretary General, who called for an urgent ceasefire.

The descriptions of 'battle' or 'conflict' are richer in the media discourse of the Grozny wars but the illustrative words share some similarities. Reporters used 'fierce', 'ferocious' 'heaviest', 'intense', 'aggressive', 'decisive', 'bloody', 'bitter' and 'appalling' to describe the battle. The depictions of the first Fallujah battle were milder than those of the Grozny and Gaza battles. The intensity of the rhetorical lexicon using terms such as 'fierce', 'ferocious', 'heaviest' and 'appalling' was greater when 'aggressive', 'bloody' and 'bitter' were used in the discourse of the first Fallujah war. These descriptions portray a ruthless image of the invaders and startle or evoke emotion in the readers.

Relatively few descriptors were used for actors or 'battle executors' – examples being 'potent', 'offensive', 'massive' and 'strongest'. Reporters did not exaggerate by using terms like 'mighty' army or force for either sides. There was similar lack of variety manifest in the descriptors for military weapons with 'devastating', 'heavy', 'huge', 'massive', 'powerful' and 'offensive' selected to illustrate weapons such as artillery, tanks and rockets.

The table shows that 'military action' had the most diverse lexicons and the greatest number of descriptive words. The verbs 'bomb', 'attack', 'strike', 'fight', 'assault', 'kill' as well

as the noun 'operation' were frequently used to portray the battles. In the two Grozny battles, the media discourse presented a 'ceaseless', 'destructive' and 'indiscriminate' bombing image. The rhetorical choices – 'blistering', 'despicable', 'looting', 'robbery' and 'unmotivated' – portrayed the invader (Russia) as a merciless robber or pirate image. Their battle operations on the battlefields were 'disastrous', 'fiercest' and 'ferocious'. These images served to stir up antipathy in readers, and make them believe that Russia was conducting an unjust war. By contrast, the media used some very similar expressions to illustrate operations during the two Fallujah battles. However, these negative and critical descriptions were mainly used to depict the insurgents' actions. For instance, the media chose the words 'deadliest', 'anti-American', 'hit-and-run', 'devastating', 'disastrous', 'restless' and 'violent' – to illustrate the insurgents' attacks on American Marines. This sketched a victim image of American Marines and tended to lead the readers to believe that they were fighting for justice. This victim image was linked to the 'ferocious' fighting and operations conducted by those Marines to then shape a heroic image.

In a similar way, the descriptions of military actions in the two Gaza wars also focused on the opponents' malicious, animal-like attack. For instance, the media depicted the Hamas actions as 'terrorist' and 'monster' attacks. They conducted 'massive', 'intensive', 'deadliest', 'terrifying' and 'awful' attacks and bombings. Such rhetorical choices with negative and critical connotation obviously portrayed a ruthless, evil image of enemies (Russia, Iraqi insurgents and Hama terrorists) and subtly outlined a moral and heroic image of the American military and its allies.

The depictions of casualties and death probably have the most powerful potential for sympathy from the readers and to evoke antipathetic emotions towards the war. Interestingly, there were very few depictions of injured or dead soldiers in the media discourse. Instead, the news coverage just reported the

number of casualties. The lexicon choices for the illustration of casualties of civilians were similarly limited. For instance, there were very few depictions of civilians in the two Fallujah wars (when there were many casualties among them). A few adjectives such as 'panicked' and 'terrified' were used to describe the civilians and villagers in the two Grozny battles and in the Gaza cases media reporting zoomed in on children to paint a 'panic-stricken' and 'crying' picture of 'innocent children'. The adjective 'traumatised' powerfully showed a devastating consequence that a war brought to the local families. The two Grozny wars had some depictions of causalities and injuries such as 'heavy', 'high(est)', 'significant', 'serious', 'severely', 'massive' and 'worst'. A few more negative words including 'horrific', 'fatally', 'badly', 'critically 'and 'bloody' were discovered in the media discourse in the two Gaza wars. Most of the illustrations were relatively neutral, for example – '*the bodies of 20 foreign fighters*'[293] – and generally, the media discourse didn't use descriptive words of casualties and injuries in the Fallujah battles. However, there were some detailed descriptive lexicons used to describe bodies in stories in the second Fallujah case. Evocative terms like 'mutilated' and 'disembowelled' referred to a western woman's body found by American Marines, reported by *The Washington Post*.[294] Similarly an 'armless and legless' body of a blonde woman was found by American Marines, reported by *The Times*. The media also depicted 'beheaded', 'headless' and 'decapitated' bodies. For instance, four 'beheaded bodies' in civilian clothes were found by US troops. *The Washington Post* quoted Hastings, 'it tells you something about the enemy and the level of extremism that pos-

[293] Spinner, Jackie. Vick, Karl, and Fekeiki, Omar. 'U.S. Tries to Corner Fallujah Insurgents; Evidence of Guerrilla Atrocities is Found' *Washington Post,* 12 November, 2014.

[294] Spinner, Jackie. 'Fighting in Fallujah Nears End; U.S., Iraqi Forces Target Small Pockets of Insurgents; Commanders', *Washington Post*, 15 November 2014.

sesses their people to do that'.[295] These descriptive words are very detailed; they vividly portrayed a bleeding crushed body. These words are powerful depictions of the realities of any battlefield but importantly they were used specifically in association with western and local victims; only used to reveal the brutality and extremism of enemies and not to describe what happened to or was inflicted by soldiers. The effect was to strengthen the antipathy of readers towards 'enemies' and generate a supportive stance towards the invaders.

The word 'control' (see Table 1) was frequently used in the media discourse of these six battles but without descriptive words attached. The context and high frequency indicates that the military and the media were concerned with the battle process and the victory of the invading military. The ending of the battle was rarely mentioned but ceasefire was mentioned frequently in the two Gaza wars, usually described as 'humanitarian' and referencing international concern. The destruction of buildings and infrastructure did not gain much attention from media. The second Fallujah war gave some description of streets with descriptive words such as 'empty', 'deserted' and 'deadly' used to paint a 'ghost street' image.

Conclusions from Analyses

From a theoretical and methodological perspective, this study is reassuring. As expected, there is correlation between the (pro or anti) perspective suggested by the patterns of the dominant themes of a set of articles in any publication and the general tone within articles of that set. For example, when a higher proportion of frames that emphasised insurgent actions or diagnosis was seen, this was generally associated with a critical

[295] Shadid, Anthony. 'Baghdad suffers a day of attacks, assassinations; residents fear an insurgent offensive; bodies of 9 Iraqi troops found in Mosul', *The Washington Post*, 21 November 2004.

stance. Further research is required but this finding is supportive of the tabular analysis approach.

More generally and more definitely, this study adds to the body of work that suggests that the media are, in actual effect, biased towards and relatively uncritical of military organisations that they have an 'identifying' relationship with, whether that relationship is shared national identity or from the socialising effect of embedding. The evidence lies in the pattern of negative stories published (or not). For example, the relative lack of reporting on civilian casualties in First Fallujah, or a tendency for there to be fewer stories written from an insurgent perspective, or reporting less insurgent success than the situation on the ground warrants. On checking this further, by looking at the actual content of articles, it did seem likely that a linked process of self-censorship might be operating. In the articles examined further, it appeared that journalists choose unemotive frames to minimise or blur reporting on enemy, civilian and own casualties and avoid critique of (invader) military action. Reporting did mention the events that were causing civilian casualties but rarely details of those consequences despite the fact that these were being revealed in independent journalists' reports of the same battles – often on *Al Jazeera*. The processes and drivers of such self-censorship remain opaque. It is unclear if it is mainly a reporter or mainly a newsroom effect. Since newsrooms chose not to use negative reports when they were available from alternative sources (such as *Al Jazeera* during the Fallujah battles) and sometimes even chose to discredit those other perspectives, journalists may simply be responding to the demands of editors. Some editorial decisions were found to be puzzling. The UK's *The Guardian* has a clear liberal stance and generally took a line that was critical of the invasion of Iraq, yet it chose to be relatively restrained in that critique at the time of First Fallujah, which seems to support the indexing thesis (critique only occurs within the range of elite debate). It does seem theoretically useful to distinguish between

the concept of 'indexing' as being more of a 'newsroom' effect with reporting being bounded by elite debate. In contrast, 'self-censorship' may be understood as operating in war reporting at the 'coalface' and being bounded by the norms of journalistic practice in that theatre of operations, which includes the pressure not to criticise the 'hosts'.

The pro-status quo, pro-government and pro-military biases may superficially appear to be helpful to the military. This is probably untrue, since the effect is actually a sanitised representation of battle that allows false impressions to develop. This benign narrative allows political decision-makers to form unrealistic expectations and may be an increasingly attractive target to other journalists or activists who are able to offer correction with the 'true story', discrediting the military in the process. On a more optimistic note there is a clear opportunity for militaries to fill some of the information gaps we observed while still remaining within the bounds of operational security. This includes much richer pictures of enemy or insurgent activity, the military (rather than political) operational approaches to urban battle, the rationale for fighting and an historical context within which the toll of death and injury and destruction can be set.

The patterns of frames in reporting, for example the 'victory claim phenomenon' – a repeated official announcement of victory or progress when neither are in fact justified- is clear evidence of the enormous pressure that contemporary military leaders are placed under by politicians and media. Meeting the immediate demand by providing optimistic statements provides short-term relief but is likely to damage credibility in the longer term. The surprising frequency and importance of truces is closely related to this pressure. Contemporary truces seem to depart from the traditional model of a pause in hostility for the mutual humanitarian benefit of the combatants and are more about responses to external pressures. It is here that the media appear to have the greatest direct impact on urban operations. Critical local media reports, or more accurately their effect on

the Iraqi population, were what forced the US military to cease their offensive during First Fallujah. Conversely, critical international media coverage constrained and ultimately stopped Israeli operations in both Gaza battles; the relationship between critical reporting and operational pauses is quite clear in the patterns of frames. This demands different approaches; militaries need to manage political expectations better.

Beyond the general exploration of the framing of battles, four additional questions were asked:

1. DOES FRAMING IN URBAN OPERATIONS REFLECT TYPICAL PATTERNS IN OTHER WARS?

This has been conclusively shown to be true- reporting strongly favours own troops and is biased towards allies (local reporting was anti-invader, though that was not analysed). It is equally clear that this bias means that domestic audiences are not receiving a balanced picture of events – indeed the stories they read are highly sanitised. There would appear to be latent political risk. Should a more accurate version be provided later this could be interpreted by the population as deception by government. Such behaviour is known to be one of the factors that can activate popular interest, starting a shift of opinion against war. For instance, while it is clear that the American media were uninterested in revealing the level of civilian casualties during First Fallujah, if a particularly ugly incident had somehow drawn public attention, the other extensive footage then available from *Al Jazeera* would probably have been aired with significant impact.

2. IS EVENT-DRIVEN NEWS AN ACUTE ISSUE IN THE ANALYSED URBAN OPERATIONS?

Event-driven news was in fact a key issue in First Fallujah, although it was actually out of the scope of this analysis; the atrocity preceded this data and the critical reporting was in the Arab press. The events of the initial American offensive that

were reported in the local media were what galvanised Iraqi popular support for the insurgents. Within the cases and sources studied, event-driven news was prominent in both Israeli campaigns, each of which was punctuated by a series of incidents that created political level pressure for military policy change – in most cases manifest in a truce. This is important for the purposes of this research, because in terms of reticence, the Israeli military are probably the closest of the three studied armies to the Australian Defence Force. The two battles provide a clear example of media coverage of events rapidly translating to policy action.

3. IS TACTICAL CRITIQUE PROMINENT?

The point of this query is to investigate the indexing thesis and especially whether the press would question the conduct of the war before asking if it should be happening. In coding stories, 'diagnostic' might be treated as a proxy for tactical critique, while anti-war is coded in its own right. The patterns of stories were examined in the analysis tables but the numbers of both kinds are insufficient to draw conclusions. Nevertheless, it can be seen that diagnostic frames preceded anti-war ones, so this may be a fruitful area for further investigation.

4. WHEN DO MILITARY POLICY CHANGES OCCUR?

Significant policy changes during battle occurred in First Fallujah, where the US offensive was stopped because of its impact on the Iraqi political process. However, this did not involve the Western media. What was revealing were the policy changes that occurred during both Gaza battles, because these do correspond to critical reporting and do appear to have driven political input.

Interestingly, being prepared to robustly disregard the role of the media, with the blessing of politicians, is no great advantage. In the Chechen wars, the insurgents directly engaged the Russian

public via the media and this established a very damaging alternative narrative and communications channel through which Russian mothers even privately negotiated their sons' release from captivity. Chechnya also demonstrates that if the military do not invest effort in managing their relationship with the media they will be the scapegoats for politicians' decisions. First Grozny is remembered as a Russian military disaster – the impossible position that military leaders were put in is overlooked.

Chapter 4: Delphi Forum Feedback and Morphological Analysis – Identifying what the Military can Influence

This chapter describes both the process of 'Delphi' engagement with expert practitioners and the use of a morphological analysis to operationalise their insights. After a brief introduction of both methods, an indicative selection of feedback comments is presented followed by a step-by-step description of how the morphological analysis identifies 'capacities' to manage adverse media impact during urban war.

At this point in the study, there was evidence of event-driven news distorting urban operations consistent with the theoretical explanation outlined in earlier chapters. How might this risk be best understood, and responses explored?

This research used a variation on the Delphi method, developed in the 1950s by RAND Corporation, which involves iterative rounds of questionnaires to arrive at group consensus. The original research plan was to conduct a centralised one day seminar activity involving a panel of media, media students and military personnel, recruited through personal contacts and snowball methods. As arrangements were made it became evident that there was not only a reluctance to attend because of time pressures, but a more ideological hesitation from journalists. This seemed to relate to an explicit media distrust of the ADF, which was already a recurrent theme in the study. The approach was changed and a progressive 'Delphi conversation' was conducted with a series of individuals and small groups. The journalists, several of whom were also academics, had a minimum of a decade of experience and the army officers were at least at the rank of Major and all had operational experience. Respondents were provided the research findings, and under

conditions of anonymity, had a structured discussion with the researchers seeking:

- Feedback on the urban battle framing analysis findings;
- Perceptions of media-military relations generally;
- Factors that shape media influence in the urban warfare context.

The feedback on the framing analysis broadly endorsed the findings, however the responses to questions about media-military relations from journalists were consistently critical of the ADF, and in some cases hostile. The thrust of this critique is described below and well captured by Hugh Riminton's detailed written response to our questions in the next chapter. The focus of the Delphi process was on the last item, identifying the factors that shape media capacity to influence urban war policy. This used a reductionist process of first brainstorming a list of all factors that might be relevant to the problem, then selecting those that are things that can be changed or influenced by the military and finally synthesising the surviving similar constructs into a set of six 'driving factors', for example 'audience understanding of urban conflict' (the process is further described below).

The six synthesised 'driving factors' were analysed morphologically. On a table they were assigned vertical columns and five different conditions of the factor from 'good' to 'bad' were described in boxes at different row heights. This tabular presentation offers a simple way to describe present, more desirable and less desirable 'worlds' and explore the conditions under which media reporting might variously be a serious risk to operations, an asset to the military or something in between.

The Delphi Process

The key question asked of respondents was: what are the factors that shape the character and policy impact of media reporting in urban war? Before letting them answer this they were asked

several sub-questions to identify related issues and 'set the scene'. These were:

- What are the proper roles of media in (urban) conflict?
- What is the likely extent of media influence?
- What sort of narrative is likely to lead to policy change?

The discussions were often intense, and highlighted issues raised in the literature and discussed earlier. After the interview, Hugh Riminton also provided a detailed written response to these questions. It eloquently addresses many of the key issues and it is included in full as a separate chapter below.

Indicative Responses to Questions

The response to the above three questions posed at the beginning of each Delphi session revealed several new insights but generally amplified issues about media and military relationships already identified in the literature. A small selection of the comments is included below as they give a sense of the tensions exposed. All were provided on the basis that they were un-attributable. Importantly, these comments are representative of what was said by the respondents however the sample consulted may not be representative of a larger group of army officers or journalists. The groups were small and participants were responding to research that highlighted challenges, and such framing will likely have shaped the often negative tone of ensuing discussion. Nevertheless, the critique and especially the consistency of journalists' description of a poor ADF- media relationship deserve further investigation.

What are the proper roles of media in (urban) conflict?

Every journalist asked about the role of the media responded with a version of 'to tell the truth', though they then acknowledged the ambiguity of what that means. One said "truth is tricky – accuracy is a more useful idea – and in war if you cannot tell all the truth you should at least be accurate with what you do say". The inference was that in war there were

things that should be exposed. They went on to highlight a dilemma: "what do you think a journalist should be anyway? Do you go with 'Greenwald' (openly activist) or 'Keller' (impartial and conformist)? We need Greenwalds to stop toxic things like Abu Ghraib or rendition, but the military won't let them come anywhere near, so either journos masquerade as Kellers or they go over to Al Jazeera – and either way they (journalists) become hated (by the military)." The broad sense of the journalists' comments was that war is awful and needs to be revealed but soldiers do not seem to want to acknowledge its nature. One pondered: "I wonder why the modern military reject the press when ancient warriors took scribes and bards along to record their exploits? – there's a psych PhD in it."

Military personnel asked about the proper role of the media were cynical, dismissing possible opportunities to shape agendas and emphasising risk to security and reputations. They echoed the perspective summarised by General Leahy earlier: the media are after a story, any story, and scandal sells. An officer pointed out that the press have an incentive to create stories and recalled how in his earlier Northern Ireland service reporters would encourage youths to throw rocks at soldiers to stir things up, dryly commenting: "I don't give a stuff about journos' intentions, the fact is, from Belfast to Jenin to Dili, when the cameras turn up the bottles fly and bad stuff happens." Among the small set of officers asked, their robust responses suggested a visceral perception of the press as a potential threat, which they then justified with specific experiences and translated to wider distrust – but an ex-soldier was much more pragmatic; "it's not rocket science, if your mug gets on TV you have to buy every one of your mates beers so we keep out of their way". The sense

remained that the media are considered a nuisance on the battlefield.

What is the likely extent of media influence?

Academics and officers all agreed with a journalist's view that media reporting can ultimately erode the will to fight and that 'Military and political elites try to shape the debate'. A fundamental difference was revealed when respondents were asked: 'what is your role in that debate?' This conversation exposed a crucial schism in media-military relations. Journalists argued for maximum exposure expressing ideas such as: "If the fight is truly necessary, it will survive democratic daylight".

In contrast military officers construed shifts in public opinion against war as a 'military' threat and one that it is their duty to address: "It's our job to win and we have to win the information war". Some saw this as legitimising attacks on "*Al Qaeda's propaganda arm*" (*Al Jazeera*) or intimidating (embedded) journalists who 'might poke their noses where they are not wanted…nothing like a couple of 81mm mortar bombs lobbed near the press tents to keep them out the way". An alternative suggestion was "If they tell the wrong story you put them on a chopper out" or "Get the old boy network to have a quiet word with the publication's proprietor suggesting that the journo is suffering PTSD and needs to come home." Although these comments had a robust humour to them and perhaps should not be taken too literally, they do both confirm press perceptions of being distrusted by the military and inadvertently reveal an underlying belief that the press do indeed have influence. Interestingly, for other officers, despite having just discussed evidence that domestic media is biased in favour of 'own troops' (and so not a danger) the reflexive focus was not on the independent and foreign media who present a greater security risk, rather the 'home threat' by domestic media to the prosecution of the war. One said (referring to national political will): "If you

start it you must see it through, the lives lost must not be wasted." When it was pointed out this was both a focus on sunk rather than future costs and that any serving member seeking to influence domestic debate was not being apolitical, the response was angrily defensive: "*Whose side are you on*?" Implicit in all of this discussion was a tension between an instinctive idea that it is any military leader's responsibility to show and seek support for the war being fought – for the sake of subordinates' morale at the very least – whereas most, if not all, journalists probably want to see any war constantly questioned.

What sort of narrative is likely to lead to policy change?

Soldiers' initial responses to the question concerned how negative portrayal of casualties leads to defeat, making comments such as: "*Look at Blackhawk down*" or "*What about Vietnam?"*. When asked for more recent or different instances they offered that the media could have positive policy influence, but used overseas examples; "it was the press stories about rifles jamming in the desert (in 1991) that finally got the British Army to fix their crap weapon" or "The Poms only replaced Landrovers with AFV after the Daily Mail campaign". The only similar Australian example was that one officer referred to Afghanistan, acknowledging, "The Minister fixed the Multicam trousers once the story hit the papers". When pressed further about media influencing the strategic debate, one commented "The press have been saying that the Emperor is naked for years, but the public don't give a stuff and continue to elect governments who don't have a strategic clue, so frankly the media are irrelevant." A journalist disagreed, citing a 1999 inadvertent cross border firefight between the Australian Army and the Indonesian Police during the Timor Leste crisis, which was televised. This action very clearly demonstrated Australian Army reticence to the world and had a positive strategic effect in Indonesia. They also said that the sort of reporting that

delivered these important stories was getting less and less frequent as media organisations cut down on staff and reporters are forced to become generalists. An officer wondered if that would only leave the independent reporters who were "out of control and after a scoop". Finally, it seemed that participants wryly agreed that the level of information '*shut-down'* exerted right across Canberra is such that for any reporting to lead to policy change it would have to be done by someone outside the ADF media process.

The comments above are representative of the replies by journalists and military respondents to the three preliminary questions. These were used to set the 'set the scene' and collect perceptions of media-military relations. The issues that arose are further discussed in a later chapter. The main research query was focussed on identifying the factors that shape the impact of media reporting, and which of these can be influenced.

Brainstorming a List of Relevant Factors

Respondents were then asked the question: *'what are the factors that shape the character and policy impact of media reporting in urban war?'* Brainstorming rules applied, so all answers were recorded and (apart from eliminating identical responses), the full list was provided to the next group or individual. At the end of this process the final group were used to rationalise the 'brainstormed' list in two stages. The first stage was to merge very similar items and makes sure they were clearly phrased and the second was to identify which might be susceptible to action by Army. The result of synthesis was the list below, with the items in bold being those considered possible 'action-item' factors:

- Elites' opinions of a conflict
- Public and media organisations' level of interest in a conflict
- Public and media organisations opinion on a conflict

- Public understanding of war generally and urban war issues in particular
- Biases of audiences
- **Military passive survivability capability**
- **Level of commitment to a sound doctrine**
- **The presence or absence of reporters**
- **Capacity to control access to an area**
- Capacity to control collection in an area
- **The quality of reporters and reporting teams**
- **The level of access for reporters**
- **Military capability for generating own stories**
- **Level of army-media mutual trust**
- **Maturity of army-media relationship**
- **Military freedom to comment**
- Political levels of control
- **Risk tolerance of the military**
- The social media presence
- Degree of independence of reporters
- Journalists' biases
- Proprietor direction
- Editorial direction and bias
- The degree of misinformation

The 'action item' factors (in bold) were then the 'raw material' for morphological analysis.

Influencing Media Influence: the Driving Factors

As explained earlier, morphological analysis provides: a way of describing the conditions under which media reporting might present serious risk and those conditions under which it is an asset to the military, the possibilities in between and, most important, it indicates things that can be changed to improve mat-

ters. It is a tabular approach in which five to seven key variables or 'driving factors' are identified and plotted, each with its own column. The cells arranged vertically describe the condition of that variable from 'good' to 'bad'. By selecting the relevant cell for each variable, the current, or any future, desirable or undesirable situation is readily described in terms of things that might be changed. This easily allows the 'problem space' and the options for change to be visualised. More advanced application of the table such as 'Field Anomaly Relaxation' (so called because it removes all illogical future combinations) can allow 'Futures Study' – comparative mapping of different future pathways. In this case we want to identify 5-7 things that will determine whether negative media reporting will have a very negative policy impact.

The first step in the analysis was to reduce the large list of factors into the following manageable set of 5-7 key variables – a construct that is a determining factor for media impact on policy. After synthesis, the six driving factors were:

- Denial of target acquisition & media collection
- Audience understanding of urban conflict
- Narrative generation
- Doctrine validity and policy resilience
- Military passive survivability
- Military media relations

These factors are by definition 'something that can be influenced' by Army. The following paragraphs describe how the effects envisaged might be achieved.

DENIAL OF TARGET ACQUISITION & MEDIA COLLECTION – This factor describes the degree to which there is a capacity to prevent Australian troops from being 'seen', both visually and electronically. While the capacity is first needed to reduce soldier's extreme exposure and consequent vulnerability on the urban streetscape, it includes preventing cameras from capturing images. This effect can be achieved with smoke and other

particulate obscurants as well as physical screens but these may be supplemented by other systems that dazzle or disrupt sensors that 'scan'. The variety of jamming systems that primarily prevent adversaries from communicating may also disrupt press and 'new media' transmission. Ideally obscuration and screening should be delivered by ground or air platforms directly. Where kinetic munitions are used they should have limited destructive ballistic effects and screening materials should present low hazard to humans.

AUDIENCE UNDERSTANDING OF URBAN CONFLICT – This factor identifies the (extent of the) audiences which have a historically realistic understanding of the nature of urban war. That is to say they recognise that high levels of casualties, particularly among civilians, have almost never been avoided and that urban war's conduct is technically difficult and psychologically problematic. An audience with 'urban operations literacy' is not expected to be any more tolerant of civilian casualties or battlefield misjudgements but is expected to attribute responsibility for these to those making the political decision about whether any particular battle or war should be fought.

NARRATIVE GENERATION – This factor describes the degree to which the army has the in-house capacity to generate its own media stream in real or near real-time that is able to compete with the most sophisticated adversary propaganda material (such as ISIL/Da'esh products). Rather than seek to capture imagery purely for media purposes, it would seem logical to integrate with the ISTAR (information, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance) systems. Some current concepts for networked tactical combat already envisage extensive sharing of imagery across platforms in order to provide unprecedented tactical situational awareness (in contrast to traditional urban 'blindness and disorientation'). Integration might require modification of the technical specifications for the cameras

carried by individuals or mounted on systems, and their communication links. However, the kind of imagery required for this particular media purpose and that required to improve the tactical picture are very similar. The significant new element of this capacity would be a forward deployable media element that could receive and process diverse visual feeds and then select streams to be made available to the media in near real-time and with suitable commentary – yet without compromising operational security. Special consideration needs to be given to the question of handling imagery that suggests or reveals own casualties. The current practice of media 'shut-down' when casualties occur is an exploitable vulnerability and probably not sustainable. This in-house narrative capacity is unashamedly an Information Warfare effect and therefore the exclusive preserve of military personnel.

DOCTRINE VALIDITY AND POLICY RESILIENCE – This factor describes the resilience of Army's doctrine for urban warfare, which is the degree to which military commanders are able to conduct operations in a militarily optimal way. A crucial issue is the 'balance of destruction', referring to the inverse relationship between the number of casualties and civilian casualties. As discussed, this is a political decision that requires the military to be able to give advice with great confidence. Therefore, the requirement is for doctrine that has been thoroughly validated through trials, experimentation, rigorous analysis (including extensive simulation) and then been repeatedly exercised with troops across actual or representative urban terrain. It is particularly important that all component effects are practiced live. For example, if the operational screening system is artillery smoke, then artillery smoke must be used on exercise. It is equally important that this doctrine is exercised publicly with candid media coverage of the moral controversies involved – indeed public debate should be welcomed but, most important of all, federal politicians should be engaged. Nothing less than

this approach is likely to allow military leaders to consistently resist political pressures for either more aggressive or less aggressive tactical approaches than the situation warrants.

MILITARY PASSIVE SURVIVABILITY – This factor describes the ability of the force to protect its troops operating within the urban environment, and therefore avoid the use of firepower. It is a primary design consideration for the IDF, reflected in their development of the Namer AFV for urban operations. The more that tactical tasks can be executed without troops, the more that engineering 'reach' capability is available to clear and open safe routes, the more that troops are able to manoeuvre inside well protected platforms and the more that troops have advanced body armour and tactical shielding available, the fewer casualties will be suffered for any task. The greater the passive survivability, the less the imperative to use direct and indirect fire support to suppress likely or suspected enemy positions with all the attendant risks of collateral damage and civilian casualties.

MILITARY MEDIA RELATIONS – This factor describes the degree to which the media represents an operational security hazard or an asset to the force. In the first instance this depends upon the press having a very good understanding of operational security as well as a commitment to preserving it. This should not be confused with hostility or suspicion which can be tolerated provided security needs are observed. However, in an ideal world, selected media would not just be embedded, rather they would be integrated into the force as part of a governance function. This would allow positive narratives to have credibility while allowing journalists to retain their personal integrity as objective observers.

MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS – The morphological analysis is essentially a matrix on which the different possible states (from good to bad) for the various driving factors are plotted as at

Table 11 (page 190). The process involves considering each factor in turn, articulating it as clearly and concisely as possible (cells in italics) and then considering its ideal condition. A short description of the 'good' condition is then entered in the appropriate (green) cell, then the worst likely condition for the same factor is envisaged and entered into the bottom (red) cell. After this, conditions for the states in between are entered in the three relevant cells. The exercise is repeated for all factors. The result is a visualisation tool that can be used to consider different possible future states as defined by the conditions of the different factors, especially to distinguish between desirable and essential targets and different pathways for change. For example, this table can be used to consider what the targets might be for the Army to appropriately manage the risk of media reporting having a negative impact on operations – those targets would only be one part of a wider urban operations capability discussion.

The orange-coloured boxes represent the researcher's view of a plausible set of capacities with levels of each for a force that is being developed to have significant urban operations capability (which is not currently the case).

Table 11 - Morphological analysis of driving factors for 'Media Impact' (next page)

Factors	Denial of target acquisition & media collection	Audience understanding of urban conflict	Military in-house narrative generation	Doctrine validity and policy resilience	Military passive survivability	Media security comprehension & relationship with military
	The Capacity to screen, jam & defeat sensors & data transmission	*The Audiences which have a historically realistic understanding of Urban War*	*The Capacity to Generate Compelling Combat Narratives that Compete*	*Political commitment to a Validated & Established Doctrinal Approach*	*Military Capacity to operate in a hostile urban environment with few casualties*	*Disposition of the Media towards the military and their capacity to report freely without security breaches*
Condition A	Visual and electronic isolation of urban objective and route minimal delivery hazard	Broad International and all domestic audiences	Fully integrated IO/ ISTAR system delivering compelling near real-time feeds from a forward facility	Bipartisan endorsement of a robust, validated & demonstrated doctrine	Stand-off capability for many tasks. Highly protected platforms. Engineer screen & reach capability	Embedded Media are qualified, trusted & a governance tool. Independent media respect security
Condition B	Visual isolation of an urban objective and route, Local electronic denial – minimal delivery hazard	Key International and Most Domestic Audiences	Some ISTAR feeds plus specialised combat camera crews with UGV and forward facility	Some political awareness of a robust, validated & demonstrated doctrine	Highly protected platforms. Engineer screen & reach capability. Advanced body armour	Embedded media are qualified & trusted. Independent media respect security
Condition C	Local Visual isolation of an urban objective and/or some jamming plus screen by fire	Media Elites and Key Domestic Audiences	Dedicated combat camera crews and in-country facility	Robust, validated doctrine	Well-protected platforms. Engineers reach capability. Advanced body armour	Embedded media respect security. Independent media reckless with security
Condition D	Extensive screening by fire not WP dependent	Some Media Elites and Most Military	Camera crews and media liaison team	Well-established doctrine	Well-protected platforms	Quasi-embedding, with benign relationship, occasional recklessness with security
Condition E	Limited screening by fire – WP	A few Military Personnel	Limited text and photo releases	Tactics, Techniques and Procedures only	SAA/Splinter protecting platforms. Soft body armour for dismounted operations	Quasi-embedding, with frequent mutual suspicion or hostility, regular recklessness with security

Chapter 5: A Journalists' Understanding of the Issues

by: Hugh Riminton

Acknowledgement: Hugh Riminton
One of the journalists who agreed to participate in the Delphi discussions was Hugh Riminton, who presents TEN Eyewitness news in Sydney. Hugh has reported from many war and conflict zones, from Afghanistan and Iraq to Somalia, Rwanda, South Sudan, East Timor, the Balkans and Israel's wars with its neighbours, among others. After our face-to-face discussions he offered the following written responses to our questions, which he gave the researchers permission to publish in full.

What are the proper roles of media in (urban) conflict?

The proper role for the media in any conflict is to report the best available version of the truth of that conflict. In an ideal world, this is a dispassionate process, free from distorting influences. In reality, it is an utterly flawed idea – although still better than any known alternative. Limitations on the media delivering a faithful and true account of include, but are not limited to:

- The degree to which media organisations (and their public) care about the conflict.
- The level of access to the conflict for reporting teams on the ground.
- The quality of those reporting teams.
- The degree to which they are subject to wishful thinking, obfuscation or deliberate misinformation by important information sources (*e.g.* the military).
- The editorial biases of their employers.

- The inbuilt biases of their core audience (excesses of patriotism and the need to reflect it can be a significant distorting influence, as can - often later in a protracted conflict – a deep cynicism about the project and its prospects for success).
- The inbuilt biases, distorting desire for self-aggrandisement and other weaknesses in the journalists themselves.

In a wider sense, allowing for non-traditional media like Twitter, Facebook, private websites and blogs etc, there is more capacity for the media to bring insight to an urban conflict than ever before. These outlets also allow unparalleled access to a global audience for insurgent groups, civilians, NGOs etc. They will also shape the narrative and have influence on tactical, strategic and policy processes.

Because all conflict is fundamentally hideous, and protracted urban conflict especially so, there are military thinkers who argue for as absolute a control on reporting as possible. Images of civilian atrocities, especially where there might be culpability attached to the "friendly" force, has a capacity to drain public and political support for the mission. This is equally possible where images emerge of "friendly" force casualties where the conflict at home is not perceived to be a "necessary" war.

Examples include the US decision to withdraw from Somalia after the bodies of Americans were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. It also explains the extraordinary efforts the US made under President GW Bush to discourage images of military coffins returning from Iraq. This was apparently an attempt to forestall the "body bags" language from the Vietnam era.

What is the likely extent of media influence?

Taken broadly, the media influence on how a conflict is perceived is immeasurably large. The only influence more potent is whether the invasion or military activity has bipartisan support at home. Where the political parties are divided, the split tends to be emotionally charged. It both reflects and feeds divisions within the wider society. The media in this environment will also inevitably be split into warring camps.

Because media reporting can influence the domestic audience to the point where bipartisanship is lost, and ultimately the will to fight, the activity and work of the media is subject to inevitable attention and "shaping" by military and political elites.

The larger the conflict, the more ambiguous the war aims, the higher the "friendly" casualty rate, the greater the number of civilian casualties that can be reasonably blamed on "friendly" forces, the more febrile the media and political environment.

The temptation to control the media narrative can become overwhelming. It is to the credit of the United States political and military elites that during the broad Coalition activity in Iraq in 2003-2012, there was a reasonably free hand given to US and Coalition media to report the good and bad of the conflict as they saw fit. As a reporter who was in Baghdad in the lead-up to the 2003 invasion, I can attest, however, that there was a significant push to get western media out of there.

Australia was not helpful to its own media in Iraq from 2003. However, there was a degree more freedom in reporting Australian military and civilian activities in the Afghanistan conflict. Journalists who were embedded were,

however, hand selected by the Australian Defence Force and worked under conditions where they encountered threats to their accreditation, and therefore their capacity to work, if they strayed into unwelcome areas. I have direct experience of that. More positively, I experienced frank top-level briefings on the challenges of the mission and was free to travel and see what I felt I needed to see with the exception of special operations (SOTG) activities. This included engaging in foot and vehicle patrols in hostile areas where we were under fire or subject to ambush.

What sort of narrative is likely to lead to policy change?

All battle plans evaporate at the sound of the first shot, so the maxim goes. Every military adventure is subject to the perils of mission creep, as tactical and strategic realities shift. An alert media will be aware of these shifts through its contacts and observations on the ground. Sometimes the media's insights will be welcome by military chiefs – frequently they are planted by them – so that their own operational approaches can be adjusted to improve the likelihood of success. Frequently the media's observations are not welcome.

Media reporting from Iraq in 2004 made it clear that the US strategy of having no strategy beyond the invasion phase was a colossal failure. The US political and military elites were far too slow to react to this. There was a near criminal complacency, not helped by the sidelining of those individuals with a sophisticated sense of the social-political realities of Iraq itself. It was not until late 2006 that a coherent strategy, built around "the Surge", took shape.

The experimental counter-insurgency approach, first trialled on significant scale in Tal Afar in the north of Iraq,

gained currency when it began being reported from the ground, along with the insights of the warrior-anthropologists behind it. The media narrative that developed around these efforts, notably from *CNN*, the *New York Times*, and others, began to reshape Iraq policy at a fundamental level.

Single, shocking events have the power to shift realities on the ground, particularly when coalescing around potent visual images. The Blackwater bridge atrocity is one example. The Somalia body-dragging incident was another. In each case, the shocking vision crystallised an idea that was already out there. In Somalia it was, why are these people killing us when we only went there to help them? Something similar was there in Fallujah, although it was probably more a visceral realisation of the potential for awfulness in Iraq. In both cases it ignored the violence already done – the Black Hawk Down slaughter in which probably thousands of Somalis were killed, and the Fallujah incident in which unarmed demonstrators were mown down by American troops. Violence always has a reaction. Sometimes all that gets reported is the reaction.

Images alone rarely move mountains. They have to be the right images at the very moment that a collective view is forming about an event. Think of the famous napalm girl from Vietnam. More recently, the image of the drowned boy, Aylan Kurdi, galvanised sympathy for the plight of Syrian refugees. It prompted unstoppable momentum for European governments to act. That quickly went into reverse when the counter-image emerged of an unceasing line of refugees, coupled to widespread reports of sexualised violence.

There can be no question, though: an image that suddenly reflects a changed perception has the power to move armies.

What factors shape media capacity to influence?

Media images and reportage can undoubtedly shape a conflict. That is to be expected. But the effects, like war itself, can be asymmetric. The picture of the hooded prisoner of Abu Ghraib with the concurrent images of naked and chained men menaced by American guard dogs, arguably did little to alter American attitudes to the war in Iraq. Supporters of the war saw it as an unfortunate incident that was being dealt with through appropriate legalistic response. US opponents of the war saw their concerns confirmed. In the Iraqi world, however, the images were much more potent, serving as a recruiting tool for the gathering insurgency. The sexual humiliation of Arabic men by American women was a source of shame and burning resentment. More than any other thing those images appeared to disturb the Iraqi men working with the CNN team in Baghdad.

In the most recent Israel/Gaza conflagration, the fatal shelling of Palestinian boys playing football on the beach on a sunny afternoon resonated long after the conflict ended. It appeared to confirm callousness by Israel towards Palestinian civilians, especially children. While Hamas militants breached international law with tunnels and bunkers beneath protected buildings like hospitals and schools, the single telling image counted against Israel internationally. It did not appear to disturb domestic Israeli opinion which remained strongly supportive of the military action.

The media can of course be shut down. It has become understood that Australian journalists cannot go into the field with Special Forces soldiers. Even if a camera crew was to stumble across SF troops in action, Australian law requires the disguising of their individual identities. To

my understanding, there were no reporters embedded with Australian troops in the Iraq conflict although unofficial relationships did occasionally occur. When an Australian military fatality occurs in-theatre, embedded troops are the LAST to be able to report it; they are immediately put into transmission lockdown. On one trip I made to East Timor in early 2001, I was so smothered by military minders, including for two days by two officers, including a wing commander, that reporting was almost meaningless. Only when I insisted on being left on a roadside in the middle of the night just east of Batugade was I able to avoid being effectively kidnapped by them. It was a farce. I was once unlawfully detained by SAS soldiers on a road in Australia and only released after calling the state AFP commander, whom I knew, so that he could order my release. In Afghanistan, I was improperly threatened with the revocation of my credentials by a one-star Australian officer for doing my job. Others are far more enlightened, but military tolerance – even understanding – of journalism seems at times to be tissue thin. On heading to Afghanistan one time, the brigadier in charge of the Defence media unit told me they were glad that my being there would allow "positive" stories to be told. I am not there, I said archly, to report positive stories. I was there to report a war. The officer appeared to see the embedded process entirely as a military PR exercise in which I was complicit.

Wars are awful things. Media examination can sap the public will but a positive consequence of that is that in democracies there is a reduced insouciance towards mass casualty rates. The lack of front-line imagery doubtless extended the horrors and waste of the WW1 trenches. As one US officer said to me in Baghdad, when the subject of how many US troop casualties the American public could

endure, "hell, we lost more men in one day on Omaha Beach than we have in this whole thing."

But times have changed. If we find ourselves in another truly existential war, the acceptance of high casualties might well return. But in the seemingly endless chain of conflicts of choice, where alliance management seems more pressing than any immediate strategic need, media coverage keeps the pressure on the politicians to keep the death toll down. It also keeps the pressure on us to minimise civilian casualties as far as we can.

Those, broadly, are good things.

Recommendations for Army-Media Interaction during Urban Operations?

Hellish as urban war is, I am duty bound to make the case for maximum transparency. It is commonplace to mock the media with the phrase 'if it bleeds, it leads." If it bleeds as much as urban warfare does, it bloody well should lead. My concern is the opposite: that we have become inured to war and its realities, turning away from it to focus on lighter entertainments elsewhere.

Chapter 6: Review, Discussion and Conclusions

The working question for this study was '*How does media framing of urban combat influence elite, public and political opinion, what are the likely impacts on military policy and how should the military respond?'* This final part of the report draws together the elements of the research to offer a response. It first provides a review of the chapters, then discusses the key issues that arise and concludes that there is good reason to address some of the issues identified, making several recommendations.

Review of Chapters

This document began with a chapter arguing that the media is increasingly important in urban war. To set the scene, it explained the underlying reasons for mutual distrust between the military and the media, sketched their consequent troubled relationship and pointed out both the decreasing possibility of control and the value of media oversight. The asymmetric effects of the media in war generally (potentially far more harmful to the military than the adversary) were outlined as background to why the media will have greater influence in urban war, noting that some stories are likely very negative. The consequences are uncertain. While the domestic press, tend to be biased in favour of the military, there remains potential for unanticipated and emotive events to drive unpredictable policy shifts. A measure to reduce this volatility is to educate key audiences about the military in urban war. Failure to establish both such understanding and

appropriate media processes may place the army's reputation at risk in future conflict.

The second chapter of this report examined the media research literature. The first important message is that the media is generally biased in favour of their own military during war and that the effect is accentuated by embedding. This behaviour reflects how media generally support the status quo and 'manufacture consent' for governments. Critical reporting is indexed, meaning it operates within the range of discussion established by norms and defined by societal elites. There are important implications: the first is understanding that journalistic objectivity is real (most journalists are genuinely committed to the notion of truth) but contextual. For a range of social and practical reasons, criticism generally only occurs within an established 'legitimate' range, although it may be highly aggressive within that range. Secondly, the boundaries of this index for criticism may be narrow early in a war. It may not be acceptable to question the war itself – often for patriotic 'pro-troops' reasons. Therefore any existing motivation to criticise the war may be diverted to focus on what can be legitimately attacked. This includes the way the military execute operations. The notions of media, public and political agenda-setting that define debate are important. They involve a complex interplay between media, elites and the public that may prove difficult to influence in a crisis. It is, however, certainly possible to set background conditions so that when foreseeable events occur in urban warfare a latent agenda will be taken up. An understanding of how framing operates to change audience perspectives is also central. Crucially, it needs to be understood that framing is a social process; therefore influencing it will fundamentally depend upon good relationships between military and elites,

including the media. As with agenda-setting, preparation is all-important. By establishing suitable 'culturally congruent' frames in peacetime, delivered during public engagements, announcements, training events, public displays and so on, these will automatically be reached for by elites when war occurs.

It is questionable whether shaping public opinion about government policy is a task for the ADF, even in war. It's clear duty is to effectively execute, and be seen to effectively, execute government policy. This nevertheless requires military leaders to understand opinion-forming processes, especially the phenomenon of 'activation'; they need to recognise the kinds of events and interactions that draw public attention and set the conditions for shifts in political opinion. Most particularly, the fact that casualties have this effect should be recognised. The effect might be mitigated by preparing the public for losses and justifying them before the event. When they occur, casualties should not simply be 'announced' but should be communicated within a narrative that explains the military context in which they occurred. In similar vein, military leaders also need to be alert to the event-driven news phenomenon and thus the likelihood of associated impulsive political decision-making in response to any outrage. This risk might be minimised by developing and firmly establishing in peace doctrinal norms of 'how we will fight' in war. This and similar forms of 'pre-framing' will help resist policy volatility during early parts of a campaign.

The third chapter of the report describes the empirical research that tested the understanding of framing in prior media research applied to urban combat. Analysis of print media reporting of urban war produced two classes of findings: methodological aspects that are of interest for

future research and some observations that have direct military relevance. From a research perspective the examination of distributions and patterns within the data conforms to the predictions of previous studies. Most notably, it is clear that 'reporting bias' is pro-establishment and favours national allegiance- reporters and editors favour 'their own'. Where foreign media are unconstrained by this they tell a very different 'truth'- usually a more complete and thus uglier one. An important finding from a methodological perspective was that where the patterns of the main frames of the reporting in a set of articles suggest bias, this bias is actually evident in the tone of a typical article. This is self-evident but could not be assumed.

From a military perspective it was very clear that there are significant gaps in the reporting of urban warfare, in particular there were almost no instances of articles providing; the military rationale for the conduct of a fight, an adequate picture of the adversary or a historical context generally for casualty levels in particular. This is in effect an information vacuum into which relevant material may be injected and therefore represents an opportunity for shaping the media narrative without the risk of being seen to manipulate the 'news'. It was also very clear that the notion of indexing does indeed operate and impose a limit on critique. Vitally, from a military point of view, this index of legitimate critique appears to sit more easily astride the military conduct of war than across the political reasons for war. This means that criticising tactical conduct of operations is likely to be perceived by journalists as legitimate well before criticising politicians for conducting the war. An incidental observation from this part of the study was that, as the Russians showed in Chechnya, if you fail to effectively engage the media, you first risk the possibility your enemies may do so rather better

that you do. Secondly if you are unsuccessful, it will be easy for politicians to place the blame on the military regardless of where it properly lies.

The final analytic chapter overviews the Delphi discussion process used to identify factors that shape media influence. This included a selection of comments from practitioner participants which provided personal perspectives that amplify other findings, especially media-military distrust. The factors are then applied in a morphological analysis to determine those conditions that might be addressed to better manage the media-related risks in urban war.

Discussion of Key Issues

The research highlights several key issues: the flawed media–military relationship, political dilemmas, the opportunity and need to prepare to shape the urban battle narrative, and information and media operations.

Flawed Relationship with Media

A crucial message from this report is that amongst a subset of the small cohort of reporters with relevant experience, the media-military relationship appears to be broken. The researchers identified that a significant number of journalists have learned to be hostile to the ADF. Beyond noting that political leaders have played a role in this, there is little purpose in attributing blame. This poses a reputational risk for the ADF and a vulnerability when waging Information Operations. The problem has to be fixed and it is very much in the interests of the military to do the fixing. This issue is increasingly difficult to address as media organisations get leaner, journalists become generalists and there are fewer and

fewer reporters with an understanding of the military. Radical changes are necessary, although much of what may be needed is beyond the scope of this paper and in any event demands extensive prior debate. The start point might be philosophical, seeking a common ground between journalists and soldiers. This might engage an 'idealised' notion such as (shared) advocacy against war through honest portrayal of its nature, and for swift victory when war cannot be avoided. This notion reflects the views of experienced journalists we spoke to and is a recurring theme among veteran senior officers. It is feasible that embedded journalists might be re-envisaged as a governance mechanism or even akin to a contemporary 'unit diary' – given absolute licence to record the complete story and expose wrongdoing, in exchange for accepting mechanisms to properly protect operational security. There is common ground in that most, if not all, reporters are attached to the principle that their reporting cause no physical harm – this is a sound basis for determining security information boundaries. Ideally, we envisage a situation where embedded journalists are truly free to report as they wish, constrained by a moral understanding. This approach needs to be backed by a thorough education in the need for operational security, which to avoid perceptions of co-option, should probably not be delivered by the military. Difficult though it may be for some military leaders, the ADF requires a culture where critical professional journalism is understood as an ally in a new-media 'wild west'.

Political Dilemmas

The cases in this study indicate that when urban warfare goes wrong, there is typically a disconnect between the military method and political policy. Most obviously, this involves political direction to conduct offensive operations hastily

without appropriate capability. Less obviously, this can involve directing the military towards over-aggressive operations without a commitment to stay the course or, alternatively, directing very reticent methods only to become more robust after own casualties. Politics cannot be ignored but developing, establishing and exercising appropriate rules of engagement for war during peacetime protects against such policy volatility.

As the military-media relationship was studied, the distortions resulting from excessive government secrecy and political spin were obvious. This is hardly a novel insight and well beyond the scope of this paper to address, beyond noting the risk that this culture poses to effective response in an urban war. War is politics and the military must conform, but there seems little prospect of achieving proper trust between media and military without efforts to better distinguish between 'secrets' of political expediency and real operational security. While the two are conflated, the journalistic default is to take all 'security' claims with a pinch of salt. More uncomfortably, the historical reality of urban warfare suggests that the military should seriously review the implications of portraying itself as a high-tech and surgically discriminant force. War is difficult, things go wrong, soldiers die and children get killed – to pretend otherwise is simply 'setting up' for perceived failure. A philosophical basis for change exists within the Army's existing commitment to becoming a Learning Organisation – this notion might be extended to explicitly include the idea of learning from error.

The underlying challenge is 'political': the reflexive desire by politicians to control the military narrative in response to a combination of unremitting media demand and shifting technologies. The critics encountered earlier suggest that successive Australian Governments since 9/11

(like many other across history) may have politicised the military by requiring the ADF to 'sell' the mission as well as execute it. Indeed, this has become so ingrained as to be unremarkable. There is an important underlying philosophical question at stake here, but that is for others to address. The issue exposed in this study is practical. Because they are perceived as having been co-opted into political strategic messaging, some senior military officers are considered compromised by some journalists. This might lead to reporting that proves damaging for the ADF's reputation but ironically such perceptions might ultimately be a greater problem at the political level because in a crisis governments may depend on public perceptions of military leaders' integrity. If comments by journalists during this research are representative, there is the prospect of military leaders being directly and personally challenged and their word doubted, setting a negative media agenda for government and military alike.

Shaping Messages and Influencing Frames

This study demonstrates the complexity in the interaction of elites, media and the public in processes that influence what happens between events in battle and the consequent political policy change. While this has highlighted great unpredictability, particularly in response to events driven news it has also identified significant opportunities to improve matters. The role of elite commentators to set agendas and the range of public debate is likely crucial, yet there are no recognised urban operations commentators with both authoritative status and expert knowledge. While senior current or retired military officers might step into this breach, all the evidence suggests that reputation can only be established over time. Furthermore, while such 'last minute' expert commentators

may be able to contribute to public debate about imminent or ongoing urban combat, they are unlikely to be influential enough to change the press agenda or determine the range or 'index' of discussion for urban operations. They certainly cannot establish latent frames to shape emerging media narratives; that requires a long time. The best way of establishing a group of elite commentators' expertise in urban warfare is unclear but there are obvious perception disadvantages if it is an in-house military organisation.

During operations military outlets could however 'fill the gaps' by providing material explaining the nature and problems of urban warfare and providing the historical context for contemporary operations and outlining. Similarly, they might provide information about enemies. During peace there appears to be a wide range of public discourse 'preparing and shaping' activities for Army. More conventional options include conducting public specialist conferences, tailoring the narrative used in recruitment videos and the creation of recruitment wargames rather like the US Army did (these are ostensibly there to support recruiting but present perception shaping opportunities too). Conducting military exercises within Australian urban areas would be a very good way of placing urban warfare and its media aspects on the public agenda – quite apart from its obvious value in training soldiers in a real environment. This is an unfamiliar approach in this country but was quite normal during the Cold War across most of Europe.

Information and Media operations

The issues that arise out of the relationship between media and the military suggest a new approach is required. It may be helpful to conceptualise the difference between

Information Operations (IO) and media operations in a new way that conceives 'embedded media operations' as involving close and trusted relationships with domestic media and information operations as an integral part of urban combat survivability (screening) and ISTAR (information, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance) capability.

Defensive Information Operations

The concept of (media) defensive information operations (IO) for urban combat builds on the capability needed for military tasks. To manoeuvre over the exposed urban streetscape without being engaged, soldiers need to not be seen. Historically they used darkness and smokescreens to achieve this. Future screening capabilities will deny other forms of sensing as well as vision and instead of effects coming from indirect fire projectiles, autonomous platforms may deliver obscurants, apply dazzle and disabling effects, 'jam' parts of the electromagnetic spectrum and deploy physical screens that block viewing across key points on the battlefield. These methods to deny the enemy 'situational awareness and target acquisition' will also limit information collection by media. There are associated political and perception management problems associated with acknowledging this capacity to 'hide the story' which need to be mitigated by some of the other media initiatives mentioned. Defensive IO also needs to consider adversary Offensive IO initiatives. Trends such the established capacity of many insurgent groups to record and transmit engagements, the technical sophistication of Da'esh propaganda videos or Hezbollah use of UAV all point to future real-time high-resolution visual capture of engagements. This and the current practice of

shutting down all communications with 'home' when a casualty occurs, represent vulnerabilities that need to be addressed; possibly systems for next of kin notification need to be modernised.

Offensive Information Operations

Notwithstanding the defensive measure described, it is unlikely to be possible to prevent adversaries from presenting their version of current urban operations. Urban offensive IO should seek to deliver a technically superior and compelling 'news' feed to the media. There is already considerable investment in improving situational awareness on the urban battlefield, which includes integrating camera feeds from helmets and vehicles. These streams are already being used by tactical commanders, but it would be relatively straightforward to exploit them to produce a (sanitised) 'battle channel', perhaps augmented by the return of the military combat cameraman.

Enabling Media Operations

Military-media relationships require a drastic revamp as discussed above. Beyond the philosophical issues described, there are practical measures that could and should be taken under the guise of media operations. A central issue is the question of educating journalists to prepare them for reporting war generally and urban operations in particular. In the past, the larger media organisations provided 'hostile environment training' but this is now less common. The problem is compounded by the reduction in the number of journalists and an ever-increasing generalisation, which

means there are fewer and fewer journalists with the relevant war experience. There are likely to be many reporters who have little idea of operational security or how to handle themselves on a battlefield. They represent a risk to both security and media-military relations. While this is not an army problem, it is an opportunity to start army media discourse. Whether educating journalists should be tackled by the military itself is questionable – clearly any such exercise will appear tainted- but there certainly appears to be a workable solution in supporting a third-party institution in delivering training that provides a good understanding of operational security as well as possibly things like military terminology, weapons systems and historical cases.

Conclusion

The research question for this study is: '*How does media framing of urban combat influence elite, public and political opinion, what are the likely impacts on military policy and how should the military respond?* An answer can now be offered.

The evidence is superficially reassuring. Domestic media reporting is weighted in favour of the status quo and the establishment generally. In war the bias favours 'own' and 'allied' troops. Furthermore, the domestic press typically refrain from reporting war using frames that might generate negative emotive responses; this self-censorship is usually still observed in the uglier circumstance of urban conflict. The acceptable limits of realism in war reporting are 'indexed' or bounded by public norms and elite discourse, which only shifts slowly. At the beginning of any war a public 'rally-round-the-troops' effect tends to inhibit mainstream press criticism of the political decisions involved. Popular opposition will only have political effect as part of a slow,

complicated process of interactions between elites, the media and the public. Such a shift is properly a longer-term political rather than a military concern.

Unfortunately, there is no room for complacency. Criticism of operational conduct is likely to lie within the bounds of acceptable and objective reporting by domestic media. Worse, the phenomenon of 'event-driven news' allows shocking and unexpected events to overcome press-room restraint and be reported descriptively, with the likelihood of public distress and political response. Such events are most likely to occur in urban areas because of the presence of civilians. Incidents of large numbers of civilian or multiple military deaths frequently trigger policy shifts.

The greater challenges and risks arise, however, from the uninhibited reporting of citizen users of social media, as well as independent and foreign journalists who can be expected to provide much more descriptive coverage. The inherent nature of urban war, and civilian casualties in particular, dictate that anger or outrage is a common response to incidents. Local effects in the countries where the battles occur can include dramatic increases in popular support for insurgents with strategic consequences. Internationally, the result can be severe damage to a military's reputation. Importantly, actual culpability is less important than perception from initial reporting. It appears that the media can indeed have a 'decisive effect' on the urban battlefield. Fortunately, there appear to be measures that can be taken to limit the volatility of domestic public and political response to incidents as well as shaping the media narrative for 'offshore' audiences.

Media Engagement Recommendations

It is recommended that the militaries should:

- Independently assess media perceptions of the military-media relationship – in order to determine possible risks and responses.
- Generate a public conversation about urban operations challenges, capability choices and doctrinal options – in order to shape political choices in peace and the media narrative in war.
- Investigate philosophical, procedural, technological and training options that might ensure journalists can maintain operational security without otherwise limiting their reporting – in order to be able to create the functional foundations for an effective military-media relationship.
- Examine the possibility of engaging suitably qualified, domestic journalists to provide an explicit oversight mechanism for operations – in order to change the media-military paradigm.
- Promote an independent and credible urban operations community of practice in and beyond the armed forces – in order to establish a pool of trusted commentators to anchor public debate in war.

Capability Recommendations

Armies should consider the following approaches to both reduce operational and casualty risks that drive negative coverage in urban operations and take control of the narrative.

- Emphasise passive survivability in capability procurement – in order to reduce the requirement for suppressive fires during urban operations.

- Develop an integrated system of image capture systems, observers and platforms that first serves ISTAR yet also provides redacted, but compelling imagery and commentary to media outlets in near real-time – in order to internationally 'win the narrative war'.
- Develop systems for screening, obscuring, and dazzling with minimum hazard to civilians, which own vision systems can see through, thus making troops 'one eyed in the kingdom of the blind' and including denying adversary 'video narratives'.

Future Research

Feedback from reviewers of this study identified several promising new research areas, which we share here for the benefit of academic colleagues.

- The relationship between the 'necessity of secrecy and the necessity of lying' and how this relates to evolving military concepts of information operations.
- Further empirical study of journalists uncritical use of official sources and failing to cite.
- Extending the framing analysis of urban battle accounts to Russian newspapers.

Postscript: Assessing the Realities of War Project findings against the case of Marawi

Introduction

Islamic State (IS) inspired militants seized the Southern Philippines city of Marawi in May 2017 – well after this 'Realities of War' report was completed. One of the authors of the 'Realities' report, accompanied by another colleague,[296] conducted a research visit to the Philippines in October 2018. This provided a valuable opportunity to reassess the study and its conclusions in the light of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) response to the Marawi crisis.

> *Caveat: This assessment is focussed on AFP Media engagement capability, so necessarily draws heavily on information provided by the AFP and their official account.*[297] *Unless otherwise cited, where comments and observations are attributed to AFP officers, they are from interviews conducted in Manila*[298] *and Marawi*[299] *during this visit.*

[296] Dr Charles Knight (CSU) and Ms Katja Theodorakis (ANU).
[297] Philippine Army Operations Research Center, *Marawi and Beyond: The Joint Task Force Marawi Story* (Quezon City: Teramag Publishing, 2018).
[298] In Manila: Briefing by LTCOL Jo-ar Herrera to the MMC Foundation and IDEASPACE at Makati city, 10 Oct 18. Briefings at the Operational Research Centre (ORC), Philippines Army (PA) Headquarters, 10 Oct 18. Interview with Commanding General PA, Lieutenant General Bautista, 12 Oct 18. Briefing at ORC, 12 Oct 18.
[299] In Marawi: Briefing and Q&A session by Deputy Commander 103 Infantry Brigade and Staff, 11 Oct 18. Tour of Main Battle Area guided by veterans, followed by meeting with Maranao Political leadership and visit to Bahay Pag-Asa displaced persons camp. 11 Oct 18.

The AFP struggle to eliminate the militants highlights a repeatedly forgotten lesson discussed earlier in this document. Armies pay in blood, time and often reputation for not being ready and equipped for urban war. To progress against determined defenders, they typically default to firepower, often causing massive collateral damage. In Marawi, fortuitously most of the population fled, limiting civilian deaths. Nevertheless, the AFP took a much criticised five months to recover the city, 168 servicemen were killed,[300] over 1400 wounded and the city was left in ruins.

The destruction, setbacks and difficulties of the kinetic struggle dominated international reporting and analysis. That focus has obscured a two-pronged AFP strategy that proclaimed equal military effort for 'hard' and 'soft' power. Detailed analysis of the 'hard power' kinetic fight must await the public release of combat data. Similarly, it is too soon to assess the long-term political and strategic results from the 'soft power' efforts. However, AFP messaging efforts and activities in the Information, Social Media and Civil Military domains were immediately observable in print and television media. Furthermore, after the crisis ended the AFP produced a book[301] and a set of six 'lessons learned' publications for public consumption that give more details of how these media effects were delivered. While the data to assess the effectiveness of soft power effects is elusive, useful observations can be made about the fielding of the military organisations that delivered them.

The Marawi crisis began in confusion with an arrest operation that left security forces dead and trapped. The political and military challenge posed to the Manila

[300] Fonbuena, Carmela, 'Gov't Death Toll in Marawi Siege Rises to 168', *Rappler,* 10 January, 2018.
[301] Philippine Army Operations Research Center, *supra,* footnote 297.

government became evident only as the militants seized the city around the responding police and military. The AFP acknowledge[302] that their difficulties arose because they were unprepared for a 'hard power' fight in a city. In contrast, AFP staff officers assert that they somewhat prepared to exert 'soft power' and their commander foresaw a pressing requirement before the crisis. They report that they had been discussing contesting militant narratives since 2009 when the National strategic approach changed. This aligns with US analysis[303] and US Special Operations Forces (SOF) in the Philippines reporting [304] that they had been supporting influence initiatives against IS since at least 2014. Moreover, the initiation before the crisis of committees to engage local community leaders and a program for training social media operators is evidence of preparation to engage in a 'war of narratives'.

The militants in Marawi did achieve their military intent of forcing the AFP to destroy the city to eliminate them, but failed to create a 'Fallujah 2004' situation where widespread outrage at civilian casualties and destruction ignited popular resistance against the Coalition invaders of Iraq. Crucially, the militants failed to persuade or prevent most of the city's population of over 200,000 Maranaos fleeing, with over 360,000 ultimately displaced from the

[302] Harvey, Adam. 'Escape from Marawi,' *ABC Foreign Correspondent*, 1 August, 2017.

[303] Beaudette, Fran. 'Philippine Counterinsurgency Success: Implications for the Human Domain of Warfare,' (Army War College, Carlisle Barracks PA, 2013).

[304] Livieratos, Cole. 'A Cultural Failure: U.S. Special Operations in the Philippines and the Rise of the Islamic State,' *War on the Rocks*, 3 July, 2017.

area.[305] This limited civilian casualties – an important factor which means that their decision to leave deserves further research. The devastation caused by the AFP was widely criticised both internationally and domestically, with concern for the ultimate political consequences increasing as delay in rebuilding compounds frustration amongst the city's displaced inhabitants. Despite the destruction, militant propaganda and continuing hardship amongst the displaced, their suffering did not translate to significant wider violent anti-Government action during the crisis, a crucial quiescence.

The AFP states that its soft power initiatives by, with and through media rehabilitated its reputation amongst the locals, a claim anecdotally supported by comments from local Muslim community and political leaders to the researchers. They describe a shift from a longstanding and widespread Maranao distrust or even hatred of the Army dating from repression under Martial Law in the 1970's. While empirical evidence is limited, the suggestion of improved confidence is consistent with the findings of an independent survey[306] amongst displaced Maranaos in April 2018 that Rood[307] indicates shows high trust ratings for the military. Less equivocally, the AFP information effort also harnessed extensive public support across the rest of the

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[305] Bermudez, Reinna. Temprosa, Francis Tom. Benson, Odessa Gonzalez. 'A Disaster Approach to Displacement: IDP's in the Philippines,' *Forced Migration Review*, no. 59 (2018): 44-46.

[306] SWS. 'April 2018 Survey on Post Conflict Expectations in Marawi City,' Lanao Del Sur, and Maguindanao,' Quezon City, Philippines, (*Social Weather Stations*, 2018).

[307] Rood, Steven. 'Presentation: Struggle for Marawi - SWS Presents the April 2018 Survey on Post Conflict Expectations in Marawi City, Lanao Del Sur, and Maguindanao,' (Quezon City, Philippines: *Social Weather Stations*, 2018).

Philippines. This was visible on social media messaging, letters and packages sent to the troops, opinion surveys and retrospective media critique.[308] Such support for the troops and continued operations was not a given since there were many dissenting voices calling for negotiations at the beginning of the crisis, particularly on the left of Philippines politics. AFP influence operations seem likely to have helped counter the militants' intent to provoke Christian backlash and fracture political will to resist along political lines. This effort highlights an important debate. Where a violent enemy seeks to influence policy for military operations, what should be the constraints on militaries seeking to influence the public to shape the political process?

Background

The 'Moro' majority Sunni Muslim population of the island province of Mindanao in the Southern Philippines has a long tradition of fierce resistance to outsiders. Dense jungle and mountain terrain enabled prolonged insurgencies against the Spanish, the Americans and the Japanese. Heydarian describes how '*systematic discrimination, large-scale land dispossession and maltreatment under largely Christian military and security forces'* also fuelled separatist rebellion against Manila.[309] For two decades the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) was dominant amongst several separatist organisations, gaining a series of political concessions including the creation of an autonomous region in 1990, until it signed a peace deal

[308] Custodio, Jose Antonio. 'Loose Lips Sink Ships,' *Rappler*, 3 August, 2018.

[309] Heydarian, Richard Javad. 'Marawi and Duterte's Battle against the Islamic State,' in: *Countering Insurgencies and Violent Extremism in South and South East Asia*, DeSouza, Shanthie Mariet. (ed), (Routledge, 2019).

with the government in 1996. This saw MNLF members integrated into the military and police, with expanded autonomy on Mindanao. Discontent with this deal and its implementation led to the formation of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and continued violence by them, other groups and eventually even renewed actions by factions of the MNLF.[310.] In 2014 the MILF signed the Bangsamoro accord and agreed to follow the earlier example of the MNLF and deactivate in return for a greater degree of Muslim self-rule in parts of the Southern Philippines. This agreement aligned the interests of the MILF and MNLF against those groups who wished to continue the armed struggle. These opponents included the leftist New People's Army (NPA) as well as various IS-aligned Salafist-orientated militant groups who reject any compromise with Manila, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), the lesser known Ansar Khalifa Philippines (AKP), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and the Maute group – named after their family clan.

The Bangsamoro agreement coincided with the 2014 offensive of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which rapidly pushed aside the Iraqi army and declared a caliphate in June 2014. The leader of ASG, Isnilon Hapilon then swore allegiance to the self-declared ISIL caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, with other groups including AKP and

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[310] Mapping Militant Organizations. 'Moro National Liberation Front,' Stanford University. Last modified May 1019, <mappingmilitants.cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/profiles/moro-national-liberation-front>; *also* Mapping Militant Organizations. 'Moro Islamic Liberation Front,' Stanford University. Last modified January 2019. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/moro-islamic-liberation-front>

Maute doing so the following year. In 2016 these newly allied groups cooperated in several operations on Mindanao including a bombing in Davao city in September, while they were joined by other foreign Islamists aligned with ISIL who infiltrated into Mindanao, bringing funds and weapons. The Philippines Defence Secretary acknowledged these growing links to ISIL in January 2017.[311] It appears that the local militant leaders were eager to establish their credentials with the central ISIL leadership at a time when the latter were under pressure in the Middle East and looking to 'franchise' their operation.

The Islamic city of Marawi offered the militants special opportunities – politically and physically. Overlaying broad Moro hostility to Manila, the Maranaos have their own language and an independent warrior tradition that reinforces a 'Rido' clan culture.[312] Localised violence was sufficiently extreme and prevalent that many families constructed reinforced concrete 'Buhos'[313] bunkers stocked with illegal weapons, water and food.[314] Effectively, Marawi was already prepared for a fight. AFP officers retrospectively observed that widespread concrete construction gave fighters an unanticipated advantage. Insurgents had previously conducted short lived urban seizures and hostage taking before being driven out by the AFP. For example, in

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311 Fonbuena, Carmela, 'How a military raid triggered Marawi attacks – Rappler sits down with Major General Rolando Bautista, the commander who ordered the ilitary to raid a village in Marawi City last Tuesday, May 23', *Rappler,* 29 May, 2017.

312 Saber, Mamitua. 'Maranao Resistance to Foreign Invasions,' *Philippine Sociological Review* 27, no. 4 (1979).

313 Tagalog for poured concrete – distinct from weaker concrete block construction.

314 Franco, Joseph. 'Preventing Other 'Marawis' in the Southern Philippines,' *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* (2018) 5, no. 2: 362-69.

2013 several hundred renegade insurgents took control of Zamboanga city for 19 days and a similar event took place in Butig in 2016 – but in both cases the buildings were far lighter and gave little protection from AFP firepower.[315] Furthermore, Marawi's broader geography suits military defence. To the east and south it is bordered by a lake and to the west by a river crossed by only three bridges. There are only three roads into the city and all have narrow choke points that suit ambushing. Not only are there the many 'Buhos', sometimes confusingly called tunnels, to shelter defenders, there is a network of actual underground tunnels, constructed during an earlier period of martial law to allow Islamic clerics to escape arrest by the government.

An ISL Plan for Seizure

The leader of ASG, Isnilon Hapilon and two brothers of the Maute clan crafted a plan to seize control of Marawi on the first day of Ramadan 2017 with the intention of establishing a 'Wilayah' or province of ISIL's self-proclaimed caliphate. The Maute clan fighting under the label Islamic State Lanao (ISL), ASG fighters and allies from the BIFF and AKP were joined by at least 40 foreign fighters. Initial numbers are contested, with independent estimates at the time being around 300,[316] with AFP initial statements suggesting around 100, which were later revised upwards dramatically. It is clear that before the crisis the militants infiltrated hundreds of fighters undetected and that this continued for months. They amassed both weapons and explosives for the kinetic fight

[315] J. Franco, "The Battle for Marawi: Urban Warfare Lessons for the Afp," *Security Reform Initiative*, (2017).
[316] Gunaratna, Rohan. 'The Siege of Marawi: A Game Changer in Terrorism in Asia,' *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 7 (2017).

as well as the tools for waging a propaganda war, including camera drones and sophisticated video equipment. [317] Regional terrorism expert Sidney Jones assessed that the planning must have started almost a year in advance.[318] With this force and the reinforcement that 'Rido' culture would bring to the Maute clan, the militants planned to cut off the access points to the city, attack government institutions, assault the nearby army base and then ambush responding forces. Their preparation included close reconnaissance of the army camp and the 'safe houses' that were being used by intelligence units.[319]

The AFP knew little of this. The overall commander, of the subsequent operation (later Chief of Army) Lieutenant-General Bautista, described receiving information about a plan to seize Marawi two or three weeks before the event and attempting to validate this. Suspicious individuals were observed, but police zoning checks to see if locals were carrying firearms did not detect that "critical signature".[320] It is suggestive of Maranao distrust[321] of the security forces that for a long period the latter did not receive actionable intelligence about the arrival in the city of large numbers of well-armed outsiders: after the battle the AFP identified that there had been fighters from Saudi Arabia, India, Yemen, Morocco, Indonesia, Singapore and Chechnya. When eventually information was received that suggested that the Maute brothers would be meeting at a safe house in Western Marawi, surveillance then unexpectedly indicated that Isni-

[317] Franco, (2017), s*upra*, footnote 315.
[318] Harvey, Adam. 'Escape from Marawi,' *ABC Foreign Correspondent*, 1 August 2017.
[319] Franco, (2018), *supra,* footnote 314.
[320] Fonbuela, (2017), *supra,* footnote 311.
[321] Franco, (2018), *supra,* footnote 314.

lon Hapilon was also present. The AFP immediately mounted an arrest operation.

A fortuitous raid

The substantial arrest force comprised police, elite troops, an infantry company plus four Simba armoured personnel carriers (APC) to provide security. The force moved to the area, dismantling a militant roadblock *en-route* and began to deploy security elements into position. As the unmarked vehicles carrying the arrest team approached the target house, a firefight erupted. Within a short space of time a force of up to a hundred fighters had emerged from houses nearby, the suspects had escaped through a hole knocked in a wall and the arrest teams were pinned in a firefight which lasted several days. Although this operation has been characterised as tactically 'botched',[322] it can also be understood as decisive action in response to limited information, and the deployment of combined arms support probably ensured that the arrest team was not wiped out. While the AFP was surprised by a large and well-armed force, the event was strategically fortuitous, because it caused ISL to launch their attack prematurely.

Rampage and Chaos

The unsuccessful raid was the trigger for hundreds of militants to mount attacks across Marawi. They killed personnel at the police station and jail, freed and armed prisoners and beheaded the police chief at a checkpoint. A Protestant college was burned and the Catholic Cathedral desecrated, while some whom the militants encountered

[322] Fonbuela, (2017), *supra* footnote 311.

who could not recite the Muslim article of faith were executed. The AFP describe how 500 militants attacked their base, Camp Ranao, while a mechanised infantry platoon that responded into the city was ambushed, two armoured personnel carriers destroyed with soldiers killed and the remainder were trapped for days.[323] Similarly, Philippines police responding in armoured vehicles were also ambushed and officers killed. As the scale of the crisis became apparent, President Duterte declared Martial Law and forces throughout the Philippines prepared to respond. As regional terrorism expert Sidney Jones observed:

> *"I don't think anybody expected that they had the skills or the intention of taking over a city. The aim of this is to inspire young men across South East Asia to come and join forces. There have been calls saying if you can't get to Syria, go to the Philippines and if you can't go to the Philippines, wage war at home".* [324]

Within hours, smartphone footage of black flags flying from public buildings, and militants smashing statues in the cathedral was on the internet and being retransmitted by media outlets. ISL had established a media centre equipped to share worldwide their confronting message of brutally taking control. Soon more sophisticated footage of hostages pleading for a negotiated settlement and choreographed executions of men dressed in orange jumpsuits with IS branding appeared - having been transmitted by satellite for editing and reprocessing overseas. AFP accounts describe an upload rate of up to 30 recordings a day. This followed the technique refined by ISIL in the Middle East of pitiless

[323] Franco, (2017), *supra,* footnote 315.
[324] Harvey, (2017), *supra,* footnote 318.

messaging to both convey indomitability to supporters and potential recruits while exploiting '*vexatious violence*' to fracture political will in target societies. This logic of violence was promoted by Al Qaeda theorist Abu-Bakr-Naji,[325] and such messaging by ISIL is implicated in the collapse of the Iraqi army in 2014. High impact material was increasingly backed by narratives framing the seizure as a fight to purify Marawi from sinful influence and as an Islamic fight against the oppressive Christian crusaders.[326] Messages of ruthless success from Marawi probably helped inspire some of the other Jihadists who then travelled to join the fight, but do not appear to have provoked attacks against Muslims elsewhere in the country nor have engendered support amongst the Maranaos. Judging by the puzzled and distressed comments [327] of locals who knew the Maute brothers personally, the violence appears to have been locally counter-productive for the militants. [328] This is significant given the potential appeal of the ISL seizure as an act of defiance against a central government often seen as exploitative and oppressive and an enduring community desire[329] for independent Islamic government under Sharia law. Much of the population initially bunkered down, some heroically hiding their neighbours, including Muslim

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[325] Naji, Abu-Bakr. *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through Which the Umma Will Pass,* (translated by William McCants; Harvard University: John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006).
[326] Franco, (2018), *supra,* footnote 314.
[327] Panzo, Maria TB. 'Framing the War: The Marawi Siege as Seen through Television Documentaries,' *Asian Politics & Policy* (2018) 10, no. 1: 149-54.
[328] Santos, Ana P. 'How Two Brothers Took over a Filipino City for ISIS,' *The Atlantic*, 12 August 2017.
[329] SWS (2018), s*upra,* footnote 306.

policemen who sheltered Christian building workers.[330] Is appears that only a few hundred more locals, albeit including children as young as 10, joined the rebellion.

The situation in Marawi was chaotic. The AFP spokesman Brigadier General Padilla described their surprise and initially thinking that they were facing about 100 fighters.[331] Experienced ASG and foreign fighters were to the fore of the initial fighting with Hapilon and the Maute brothers seen coordinating from the front until the AFP began to target leaders. They then withdrew to command positions in mosques or other strong points.[332] Whether as part of a tactic to avoid being located, or because of conflicting orders and intentions, the militants moved frequently within the city, before within two days gradually consolidating at pre-planned locations astride and to the east of the river. Militant snipers demonstrated the skill to shift after firing between carefully selected hidden firing positions that dominated main roads.[333] As the AFP probed to try to locate their opponents they began to notice the hobby drones that the militants were using to observe and avoid military raids.[334] Soldiers explained how for the first two days two days the rules of engagement were uncertain and they only used small-arms, before starting to use mortars, heavier firepower and airstrikes. Across the city many groups of civilians hid in fear of the militants and to shelter the crossfire, using mobile phones and two-way radios to frantically call for help. Militant behaviour varied. The most brutal actions seem to have been carried out by foreign

330 Harvey,(2017), *supra,* footnote 318.
331 *Ibid.*
332 Franco, (2018), *supra,* footnote 314.
333 Harvey,(2017), *supra,* footnote 318.
334 Franco, (2018), s*upra,* footnote 314.

fighters, while it appears those locals fighting alongside the Maute clan – whether from conviction or because of Rido obligations, did not attempt to prevent their neighbours fleeing.

Evacuation

During several days of confusion, Marawi's population began to evacuate. Various explanations were mooted during discussions with AFP officers and community leaders including; the proclamation of martial law by President Duterte, fear of the army informed by memory of its behaviour in the 1970s, a departure from the past crisis pattern of ceasefire and negotiation after several days of fighting and, probably most significantly, the directions of religious leaders. Tens of thousands of people began to move out of the city at the same time as police and military reinforcements arrived from across the country. The immediate challenge for the security forces was to control and aid the fleeing population, whilst both preventing militants from concealing themselves amongst the displaced and intercepting recruits from across the region travelling by sea and land to join the battle or supply weapons. This flow of recruits would not be stemmed for many weeks,[335] [336] with Gunaratna suggesting it continued till August.[337]

As the plight of the 2000 or so people who were hiding, trapped in the crossfire or held hostage became clear, their rescue became a political priority. Many would be extracted before the isolated AFP elements were relieved.

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[335] *Ibid.*

[336] Gunaratna, (2017), s*upra,* footnote 316.

[337] Gunaratna, Rohan. 'Ending the Fight in Marawi,' *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 9, no. 10 (2017): 1-5.

Teams of police and soldiers crept deep into the occupied city to locate civilians or colleagues, avoiding yet sometimes clashing with militants along the way. The latter transmitted pleas from their hostages via the media as well as through social networks. Concurrently, humanitarian organisations and religious and civil community leaders negotiated with militants and organised convoys of trucks to extract those still caught up. Maranao members of a civil emergency organisation for natural disasters formed what they called a 'suicide squad' to save the lives of the trapped.[338] Key figures associated with the two mainstream Moro insurgent groups assisted in establishing and supervising a 'peace corridor' for the onward movement of the displaced, although it was a month into the crisis before the president began to play closer attention to negotiations with the MILF.[339] This period of evacuation and rescues was probably crucial in shaping Maranao perceptions of the situation. The contrast between the wanton destruction and murder by militants and the risks taken by community and security forces to rescue the trapped, as well as the admittedly tenuous alignment[340] between government and the mainstream insurgents, especially the unprecedented cooperation[341] between the MILF and the AFP, seems to have undermined the credibility of the militants' narrative.

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[338] Harvey,(2017)*, supra,* footnote 318.

[339] Heydarian, Richard Javad. 'Marawi and Duterte's Battle against the Islamic State,' in: *Countering Insurgencies and Violent Extremism in South and South East Asia*, DeSouza, Shanthie Mariet. (ed), (Routledge, 2019).

[340] Singh, Jasminder. 'Insights for Practitioners and Policymakers from the Marawi Siege, May-October,' in: *Learning from Violent Extremist Attacks: Behavioural Sciences Insights for Practitioners and Policymakers*, Ed. Khader Majeed *et al,* (World Scientific 2018).

[341] Cook, Malcolm, 'Unexpected Benefits from a Battle against ISIS,' The New York Times, 5 November 2017.

The press and overseas observers have criticised[342] the AFP for the time taken to clear Marawi, although few accounts recognise the significance of militant use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and hostages to impose delay and casualties.[343] There is still insufficient information available to dissect the battle, but AFP leaders at all levels from the Commander, General Bautista down have acknowledged that they were simply not prepared for the switch from jungle to urban fighting. Troops attempted to advance on the streets, took casualties and were repulsed – a pattern that has been repeated again and again throughout history by troops untrained for fighting in urban areas.[344] Press reports from June of ill-equipped and under-armed soldiers and police lying low well back from the front line reflect this.[345] The AFP had been focused on light infantry counterinsurgency operations and did not have a substantial force trained and equipped to conduct a coordinated all arms operation.[346] Looking to the future, there is value in critically analysing what kind of early response might have prevailed. Given their actual capability, had the AFP launched a larger offensive early on it might have succumbed to a militant plan to isolate and then swarm the attackers – (a tactic devastatingly applied by Chechen militants against the Russians in 1995). Regardless of whether there was a missed kinetic opportunity, the AFP decision to consolidate undoubtedly allowed the evacuation

342 Harvey,(2017), *supra,* footnote 318.
343 Singh, Jasminder, and Muhammad Haziq Jani, 'The siege of Marawi city: Some lessons,' *RSIS Commentaries* 153 (2017).
344 Evans, Michael, 'City without Joy: Urban Military Operations into the 21st Century,' (Canberra: Australian Defence College, 2007).
345 Harvey,(2017)*, supra,* footnote 318.
346 Franco, (2018), s*upra,* footnote 314.

to occur uninterrupted. This both reduced the potential for civilian casualties and allowed the AFP to engage in the battle of the narratives – an offensive it was apparently better prepared to conduct.

Hard Power

Behind a slowly solidifying land and sea perimeter a Joint Task Force (JTF) was assembled to and prepared to end the crisis, a process that took at least a month.[347] The 'hard power', military component of this force was conventional. The city was divided into three clearance sectors; one allocated to a Philippine Marines Joint Task Group (JTG), two allocated to Army JTG, while the lake approaches were secured by a maritime JTG – and a police JTG provided all-round backup. At both citywide and sector level, the AFP characterise their approach as 'SLICE'ing. They first would *Strategise* (plan), then *Locate* the militants, next *Isolate* them, having done so they would *Constrict* them and then finally *Eliminate* them. The JTG's fought their sectors differently, reflecting different organisational cultures, experience and equipment. For example, one of the formations had night vision equipment and used this to advantage.

Detailed analysis of the tactical conduct of the battle is not yet possible, though a broad picture emerges from overlaying the accounts of veterans of the battle, media reporting and the actual maps used to plan the operation which are on display in the Philippines Army Museum in Manila – on which every building in the city is numbered. The vital lesson is the cost in time and blood of being unprepared. Prior to the crisis, only a couple of AFP elite units had training or experience in urban warfare. The

347 *Ibid.*

unfamiliar environment presented an acute challenge for junior leaders and led to painful mistakes, most notably several incidents of airstrikes killing groups of soldiers. AFP counter sniper teams gradually eroded the militant's capacity to dominate streets and open spaces. As allies provided niche capabilities, including drone surveillance from the US Special Forces and Australian electronic surveillance aircraft, domination gradually extended into three dimensions. With improved air-ground procedures and new strike aircraft capability it was now possible to destroy located militant positions – unless they were in a mosque or there were hostages present. Yet, in every case eventually men on foot had to enter and clear each building.

All three JTG's appear to have conducted a slow advance using mortar, rifle grenade and extensive small-arms fire to try to 'sweep' militants from buildings ahead, using air strikes or direct-fire artillery against buildings where militants were located. Progress was severely hampered by extensive and sophisticated militant use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) which were not just hidden in walls, but also concealed in ceiling spaces. Troops report learning to never enter hallways as these were particularly likely to be booby-trapped. In response to the IED threat and in an effort to reduce own casualties and the risk to hostages, the advance seems to have become a series of individual deliberate attacks on each building in turn, planned in detail and after capture thoroughly prepared for defence before progressing. This approach did not completely avoid civilian casualties and left the centre of the city a ruin comparable to Mosul or Idlib. The slow progress was criticised internationally, but it aligned with the JTF messaging of the intention to minimise loss of life amongst hostages.

Soft Power

The most unusual aspect of the Marawi case is an explicit focus on both military soft and hard power, and the alignment of hard power in support of soft power objectives. From early in the crisis, Army messaging emphasised the importance of human rights and political legitimacy, which took many, including the population, by surprise. The Philippine military has spent most of its existence confronting insurgencies and was particularly severe in repressing uprisings on Mindanao in 1972. The JTF commander (at the time) Brigadier General Bautista, afterwards candidly acknowledged Muslim majority distrust, even hatred, of the military and spoke of avoiding what he called 'cultural friction'[348].

A commitment to soft power was also signalled in the level of the commanders responsible for delivering soft effects. A JTG commanded by a Brigadier General tasked with cordoning Marawi was also given responsibility for rehabilitation and stakeholder engagement while another JTG focused on Information Support was tasked to manage Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and Civil-Military Operations (CMO). During the evacuation of citizens, the AFP ordered the priority deployment of 'Hijab Troopers' female soldiers wearing modest Muslim garb to assist with the displaced population, reflecting cultural sensitivity — even while soldiers were still trapped in the city and there was a pressing need for combat-focused resources. Similarly, the military ensured it was visibly at the forefront of a whole-of-government effort to provide food, water and shelter, even as the hard power force assembled. An important

[348] Tomacruz, Sofia. 'Resolve "Cultural Friction" to Achieve Peace – Bautista,' *Rappler,* (22 May, 2018).

insight is the importance of symbolism. The actual level of relief provided from military resources was probably modest compared to whole of government efforts. Similarly, many Maranao's may have not have been persuaded by AFP of a commitment to the rule of law and pursuit of legitimacy, yet the messaging value of somewhat unexpectedly taking these initiatives seems to have been substantial.

To deliver these soft power effects the JTF's 'information operations' organisations deployed a range of new or expanded capabilities to shape local, national and international opinion on the one hand and on the other, demoralise militants and undermine their narratives. The ground work had begun two months before the crisis when the Marawi based commander both initiated a program to engage the community which included harnessing local chief executive support and developed a social media strategy. As is explained in AFP 'lessons learned' pamphlets, they took Neisser's cognitive psychology approach as a theoretical foundation for a concept to build an audience, improve the army's image and secure support and advocacy in the virtual environment.

As the crisis unfolded, the existence of a rudimentary engagement network, nascent social media capability and, above all, conceptual preparation provided the foundations to implement a new strategic communication plan. This aimed to harness community support, with an immediate focus on influencing via key local officials, religious leaders, and civil society organisation representatives. A crucial new message was that while the implementation of martial law gave the AFP sweeping authority, they would apply this in the security domain and use it to empower local leaders to make decisions concerning non-military issues, albeit with military support. This was in stark contrast with past practice.

After three days the AFP had established a provincial crisis management committee including traditional local leaders, which was given the authority to play a key role in enabling and negotiating rescue operations – with a direct line to the military for support and resources.

Fortuitously, the Philippine military's first ever social media operations training course started two weeks before the crisis, and as it happened, the final exercise included a scenario based in Marawi. On completion, the 70 students were immediately deployed to staff a 24/7 social media operations centre in Marawi. Here they monitored and analysed militant messaging to identify who was reposting militant messages, develop counter narratives and initiate actions to exclude militants from mainstream platforms. The team also posted online materials highlighting how the troops were fighting, with a focus on support to the evacuated population and the daring rescues being carried out. This set the conditions for 'hashtag support our troops' going viral. Most radically, members were authorised to join in online discussions to explain the AFP position. This is at odds with the practice of most militaries, or indeed even institutions, who generally seek to tightly control and oversee messaging in the virtual environment. The commander of the social media unit asserts that operators were told they had the freedom to engage as a right, qualified by a reminder of moral responsibility to tell the truth. On examination, extending the trust given to soldiers in a kinetic battle to soldiers in a virtual battle seems logical. There should be no fundamental difference in a commitment to obeying rules, indeed arguably kinetic battle probably presents more challenges. This initiative appears to merit examination by other militaries.

Soft power operations were directed from the Civil Military Operations Coordinating Centre (CMOCC). This was set up with a structure that reflected the strategic communication plan. The first element was a '*stakeholders desk'* to provide the community with a continuous point of contact into the military, while enabling the latter to engage with leaders and influencers. It provided links upwards to the Provincial level Council and politicians and provided the authority and resources to empower local government. The desk also organised outreach activities such as seminars and forums and was the gateway for reporting of grievances or abuse. The other CMOCC elements were '*relief operations'* which organised the delivery and distribution of relief goods, '*retrieval operations'* which collaborated with the police and fire service to recover, identify and bury the dead. The most significant element in terms of messaging, the battle of the narratives and building links into a once hostile community was '*rescue operations'*. This team received distress calls from across the city, coordinated information about trapped people and then organised the rescue efforts in conjunction with local government, humanitarian organisations and other volunteers. It appears that the imperative to try to rescue family friends and neighbours was what opened the communication channels between otherwise hostile Maranaos and the military.

To engage the domestic and international press, another team of soldiers, contractors and civilians established a 24-hour JTF media centre. This team were confronted with the perennial challenge of avoiding operationally sensitive material being reported, which in the Marawi case was not just about future intentions, but also current capability. Logically the AFP must have been confronted with a dilemma concerning their own initial lack

of capability. In order not to support the militant narrative it would have been vital that the setbacks caused by lack of AFP experience in urban operations did not initially become part of the 'public right to know'. Having made a very public commitment to only tell the truth, it is unsurprising that the media did not get all the answers they wanted from regular press briefings or public conferences – nor unfettered access to the troops, especially during the early chaotic phases or later when there were setbacks such as air strikes killing own troops. However, despite harsh critique of news blackouts by some sections of the Philippine press, especially independent minded entities such as 'Rappler', as well as more general international critique of the use of firepower, the media centre appear to have been successful in generating and sustaining an effective AFP narrative that focused on positive stories – the scope for which clearly expanded over time as urban capability grew.

Media team members report that an important factor was an early engagement with the mainstream media to build relationships with reporters, particularly to provide them with the opportunity to tell stories of and capture images of soldiers who were saving lives during the early stages of the operation. They also say that they understood and accepted that for journalists to establish credibility they would inevitably deliver some negative reporting. As the situation stabilised and trusted relationships with journalists began to develop, the team conducted 'media field immersion', which saw some journalists visit and report on troops actually engaged in combat. Echoing the success of embedded journalists with US forces, it is evident that much of the most positive reporting of AFP actions came from journalists who spent extended time with the troops. An important initiative that both served to fill the media demand for information

and allow the delivery of material that supported the AFP narrative was the JTF media teams production of videos and documentaries. In many cases these were recorded by combat cameramen following the lead troops or using footage taken from soldiers body-worn cameras. The result was that the AFP were able to provide media outlets with a steady flow of engaging material that presented the fight from a soldiers perspective, including emotive combat footage and human interest stories - all of which supported the broader AFP narrative.

Inside the urban battle area the key information operations task was to concurrently; deliver messages that would demoralise the militants and induce them to surrender, provide advice to trapped civilians; and offer uplifting messages for the troops in battle. Here more traditional methods such as loudspeaker operations and leaflets dropped in plastic bottles from helicopters were used in conjunction with idiosyncratic approaches. Many Maranaos use two-way radios for communication and hand-poster style tarpaulins are often used to announce significant social events. Consequently, teams were assigned to producing appropriate poster messaging as well as monitoring and transmitting on radio channels. The AFP readiness to improvise and adapt to deliver in a wide variety of media was crucial to expanding its capacity to engage the 'battle of narratives and perceptions'. It seems likely that empowering junior leaders and soldiers to use their initiative was an important enabler for media operations.

Analysis:

Analysis of the Marawi battle reinforces the importance of key issues identified earlier in the main research report.

These can be summarised as: the significance of (the) defence relationship with the media, military-political dissonance, recognition of the need to shape and influence public perceptions and creating the Information Operations capability to achieve that. It must be noted that marked differences in the political environment in the Philippines permit different approaches.

While sections of the Philippine press have always been fiercely antagonistic to Government and the AFP, the enthusiastic engagement with some sections of the media demonstrates the advantages of avoiding the earlier discussed anti-media sentiment and policies/norms of information control evident among elements of the defence bureaucracy in Australia. At the outset of the Marawi crisis the AFP leadership appear to have applied mission command principles to information operations. For example, notwithstanding that the AFP assigned relatively senior officers to command the 'soft power' organisations, they delegated significant autonomy and authority to a Lieutenant Colonel to implement many of the initiatives described above. Equally important, they delegated the authority to the lowest possible level to conduct both offensive and defensive messaging without instituting a system of hierarchical approval. This enabled the 'battle of the narratives' to occur in the virtual world in real time – accepting the risk that messages would not always align with political preferences.

The dissonance between military judgement and political policy that was often evident in the urban battle cases we identified in the main report was initially also present in Marawi. This was most obvious early in the Marawi battle with the President issuing ambitious directions and predictions of progress. However, the military

leadership seems to eventually have prevailed and persuaded him that they should prosecute the fight in a deliberate fashion that accommodated AFP limitations. The President also chose to ignore international criticism and gave full and very public backing to the continued and extensive use of firepower - with one exception. During his repeated visits to the battlefield he emphasised, albeit unsuccessfully, that explosive weapons were not to be used on mosques. While this restriction led to more AFP casualties, it was consistent with the overall messaging from AFP commanders.

A remarkable feature of the Marawi crisis is that the AFP immediately and explicitly recognised the normative and political nature of the struggle and devoted resources and command effort to shaping and influencing – to use their phrase – winning the battle of the narratives. While they did not use our analytic construct of 'defensive' and 'offensive' Information Operations, it suits analysis.

The AFP capacity for 'defensive Information Operations' was initially limited. The AFP was not able to extensively employ smoke screening which presented a vulnerability during hard power operations, but also meant it was not possible to hide the battlefield and deny militant image capture. It took some time to counter militant capability for UAV image capture and the satellite uploading of messages – ultimately achieved using airstrikes. This highlights the value of obscuration as a non-lethal defensive information operation tool. The AFP defensive soft power capability in the virtual environment developed rapidly and they demonstrated both the capability to directly engage in a contest of ideas on social media platforms and the capacity to work with new media companies and service providers to take down militant communications.

The AFP offensive Information Operation capability was also rapidly expanded. Instead of relying on a small security-cleared media entity within the defence organisation, they quickly reached out to the media, public relations organisations and civil society for assistance. This brought in specialists to engage with media and the public, as well as niche expertise such as psychological assessment of militant messages. Such outreach involved a calculated acceptance of reduced control, and recognised the importance of influencing a wavering public. It established links with opinion shapers in Manila to support a patriotic narrative. This offensive understanding and use of soft power was not delicate. A key message was intended to convince the Muslim population of Mindanao that the AFP were not the enemy. This required stories that showed AFP care, efforts and sacrifice on their behalf. However, this message was delivered in parallel with a more forceful one intended to demonstrate to IS sympathisers that the militants would not just be defeated in the abstract, but unequivocally killed.

AFP messaging met the brutal genre of IS propaganda head on, understanding that while killing the militants was a military necessity, publicising doing so was politically decisive.[349] The jihadi message that martyrdom shows greater commitment was directly contradicted by the AFP communicating their soldiers' declared willingness both die and kill for their country – notions that are uncomfortable in countries like Australia. The AFP did not shy away from showing their own casualties or the difficulties of the fight, and deliberately provided media of urban combat and the dead militants. This approach is very different from the practices of militaries like Australia's with

[349] *Supra,* footnote 340.

their concerns for delicacy and privacy, and reflects a very different political context and community norms about the portrayal of violence. However, if as seems likely, media technology increasingly allows real-time images of the battlefield to bypass any methods of control, then there is merit in considering new approaches, including those taken by the Philippine military.

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