

Leadership and Abuse: News framing of the Iraqi War and Terrorism during the 2004 Federal Election.

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Abstract

This paper reports on research that investigated the reporting and portrayal of the Iraq War and related international events during the 2004 Australian federal election. We used the *Factiva* database to retrieve newspaper items from the Australian metropolitan press on the Iraq war and related issues between 16 August and 13 October 2004. Data, including actual newspaper items, was gathered and analyzed using grounded theory techniques. Analyses were aimed at determining the discourses in Australian journalists' framing of war and terrorism and identifying the significant images used to signify these discourses to the public. This paper focuses on the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta during the election campaign, concluding that by explicitly associating the terrorist attack with Australia's involvement in the Iraq war, journalists and editors localized, politicized and gave prominence to this issue in their election coverage.

Introduction

On 19 March 2003, the United States and coalition forces commenced military invasion of Iraq. Contrary to early predictions the conflict was not short-lived and intense fighting continued through 2004 and into 2005 when the US, British and Australian governments faced national elections. While a great deal has been written about the media strategy used by the US and UK governments in managing the reporting of the Iraq war (eg: Tumber & Palmer, 2004; Kuypers & Cooper, 2005) and on the reporting of war more generally (Knightly, 1975; Berenger, 2004), there has been limited critical analysis of the media's role in framing the Iraqi conflict and related terrorism during these elections.

This paper reports on a larger project examining the 2004 elections in Australia, Great Britain and the USA – countries described by then US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, as the 'coalition of the willing' (Source Watch, 2003). The project is examining the characteristic and dominant discourses used by newspapers in each country to report on the so-called 'new wars' including conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and the Balkans, and international terrorism. The project draws on the theoretical perspectives of the international warfare theorist, Professor Mary Kaldor (1999; 2000), who argues against the assumption that current wars (1990s and beyond) are intrinsically 'civil' in nature, representing a simple privatization of violence (Kaldor & Vashee, 1997). 'New wars' are defined against the background of ever-changing and contested discourses of global terrorism, the 'war on terror', human rights, freedom and democracy, regime-change and genocide. Analysing the second Iraq war through the framework of 'new war' discourses, Tulloch (2005, p. 7; see also Shaw, 2000) argues that these 'new wars' are '...distinct in not being inter-state wars ... new wars function as cultural imaginaries rather than solely as geo-strategic'.

This paper uses quantitative content analysis to examine the extent and nature of Australian reporting of the Iraq war and terrorism in the metropolitan press during the 2004 Australian federal election, before elaborating on a single news frame identified in the news coverage – the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta. The attack, which occurred midway through the campaign, was portrayed in the Australian media as bringing international terrorism to Australia's door. This critical event of the 2004 Australian election campaign provides a useful exemplar of the way that international crises are mediated to local audiences in the domestic political context through 'new war' discourses.

The 2004 Australian Election

Australia was the second nation state of the 'coalition of the willing' to face the electorate after the current Iraq war began. The conservative government of Spain, another coalition member led by Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, had been defeated in the aftermath of the Madrid bombings in March 2004. The Howard Liberal-National Government, elected for the first time in 1996, was seeking a fourth term in government. The Iraq war was seen as achieving far less media prominence or political controversy in Australia than in either the United States or United Kingdom (Mann, 2005, p. 97). By contrast, British Prime Minister Tony Blair had faced considerable internal political resistance to his strong support for the stance taken by the Bush administration, and the election primaries in the US and the general election were dominated by debates about national security, the 'war on terror' and US involvement in Iraq.

In Australia, the continuing Iraq war and related conflicts, and international terrorism, provide an important site for the study of discourse during the election period. The conflict and its links to global terrorism, especially the Bali bombings and the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York City, had been more than a major international news story. These events and their news coverage intimately connected each of the three political leaders – Prime Minister, John Howard, and the Labor opposition's two successive leaders, Simon Crean and Mark Latham – to staking out and personally defining their electoral credibility on issues of security. From the outset, the decision by the US to go to war without the sanction of the UN and against the wishes of major European powers had mobilized public opinion in Australia, resulting in mass demonstrations and published opinion polls showing that a majority opposed an Australian engagement (Goot, 2003, p. 2). Australia's Prime Minister Howard had been consistent in his support for the American alliance and strongly supportive of the American decision to invade Iraq in May 2003 without a mandate from the United Nations. Early in his leadership, Mark Latham had re-aligned his party's position with the policy directive that an elected Labor government would withdraw Australian troops from Iraq by the Christmas of 2004.

News Framing Analyses

The first part of our analysis mapped the extent of the war coverage during the 2004 Australian election using traditional content analytic methods, but we extended this limited approach by identifying the characteristic news frames in this coverage. News framing analyses attempt to identify the dominant ways in which news discourse is presented and made understandable to audiences (Reese, Gandy and Grant, 2001; Pan and Kosicki, 2001; Entman, 1993).

News, as a cultural product, reflects what is deemed significant or newsworthy by editors and journalists, the social organization of journalistic work and assumptions made about audiences (Tuchman, 1978, p. 46; Schudson, 1995). The story's frame, often signaled in the headline, directs the reader to what is in the frame and not to attend to what is excluded.

Reese's (2001, p. 11) 'working definition' of news frames proposes that they are 'organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world'. Some news frames persist in our consciousness more than others. Explicit in Reese's (2001, p. 14) discussion is the central roles played by culture and power:

... frames are principles of organizing information, clues to which may be found in the media discourse, within individuals, and within social and cultural practices. ... To ignore the principles that give rise to the frame is to take media texts at face value and to be misled by manifest content.

Identifying news frames involves analysis of news texts but also an understanding of the social and cultural environment in which news is planned, gathered, selected and presented (Golding, 1981). As Gamson (1992, p. 26) argues, journalists' sense of news and socio-cultural values leads them to present issues within certain frames, often reflecting broader cultural themes and narratives that help define ideas available to audiences as they talk about and think about the issue. Following Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 2), we examine news discourse and public opinion as parallel sites of meaning and avoid making causal assumptions. Framing is 'dependent on a series of media decisions about what constitutes news, news space and reader interests' (Terkildsen, Schnell and Ling 1998, p. 46). In addition, contemporary journalism's desire to seek balance or impartiality normally means that the news story is structured to include opposing or counter-views. The imposition of dualism may also serve to structure a complex event with many competing viewpoints in terms of what is seen by the editor and journalist as the dominant view and the dominant counter-view (Terkildsen, Schnell and Ling 1998, p. 47; 59).

Demonstrating that editors and journalists routinely rely upon news frames to organize and structure discourse inevitably leads to questions of the consequences of framing decisions.

Method

We analyzed all news items in seven metropolitan newspapers during the election from 16 August to 13 October 2004. The newspapers were: *The Australian*, Melbourne's *Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the Adelaide *Advertiser*, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, Melbourne's *Herald Sun* and Brisbane's *Courier Mail*. Using the Factiva database and copies of the newspapers, we retrieved all news items mentioning 'Iraq war or conflict', 'terrorism', 'Abu Ghraib', 'prisoner abuse', 'Guantanamo Bay' and 'Kosovo or Balkans' – identified in the analyses that follow as Iraq war and terrorism.

Each item was analyzed by three trained coders, supervised by the authors, who recorded date of publication, page number, length in paragraphs, and genre (news or feature or editorial or regular by-lined column or irregular or invited opinion piece, or letter to the editor). News sources were also coded – own reporter by-line or column or editorial or news agency,

international news agency, letter to the editor and combinations. Trial coding sessions were completed with the three coders and inter-coder reliability checks were frequently made. For the final coding, inter-coder reliability for all items was greater than 90%. For each item the headline and main topic was recorded. During this process, items were identified as potential exemplars for qualitative textual analyses.

Extent of Coverage

Overall, we retrieved for analysis 1695 items from the seven newspapers over eight weeks around the campaign period. Most items were published in week five – about 27.5% of all items. In the first week less than one per cent of all items were published, and in the last week about five per cent of all items were published. The *Australian*, *Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* contained the most items on the Iraq war and terrorism, and the *Courier Mail* and *Herald Sun* the least items.

Much commentary on the Iraq war has focused on the role of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation in supporting the Iraq war and President George Bush (Mann, 2005; Hirst & Schutze, 2004). For this reason, newspapers were grouped by ownership: Murdoch owned newspapers included the *Australian*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Advertiser*; Fairfax newspapers included *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

We created a prominence scale (1 to 12) by combining the position of the item in the newspaper and its paragraph length. Thus, longer items on the front page or in the front news pages of the newspaper were classified as high prominence, and shorter items reported in later pages in the newspaper were classified as low prominence. Across all metropolitan newspapers, the mean prominence was 5.2. The Fairfax press reported more prominently (position in the newspaper and length) on the Iraq war and terrorism during the election than did the Murdoch press (mean prominence of 6.3 compared to 4.8). The *Age*, *The Australian* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* coverage ranked most prominently compared to the other newspapers – mean prominence of 7.0, 5.9 and 5.7 respectively. As would be predicted, the 'quality' broadsheets (*Australian*, *SMH* and *Age*) covered the war more prominently than the 'tabloids', regardless of ownership. Significantly, opinion columns (that is, invited columns or irregular opinion columns) scored high on the prominence scale, primarily because of their length and position in the front news pages. Table 1 shows mean prominence for the newspaper groups by genre.

As an indicator that the coverage of the Iraq war and terrorism was certainly prevalent but not dominant, only about 5% of all retrieved items were on the front page with about 28% between pages two and 10, and about 36% in later news pages.

Table 1
Mean prominence rating of Iraq war and related conflict items in Australian metropolitan press during the 2004 federal election by genre and newspaper group.

Genre	All Items	News	Feature	Regular Column	Opinion Piece
Group:					
Murdoch	4.8	5.1	4.3	4.4	4.9
Fairfax	6.3	6.9	6.7	3.9	6.7
	(1663)	(1038)	(176)	(58)	(128)

Mean prominence rating is a simple combination score, ranging from 1 (low) to 12 (high) of position of the item in the newspaper (front page, news pages, later in newspaper) and length in paragraphs (1 to 10; 11 to 16; more than 16). A 3 x 3 matrix was used to create the index. Thus, front page + more than 16 paragraphs was scored 12; later in the newspaper and 1 to 10 paragraphs was scored 1, etc. Genre was recorded as news, news feature, editorial; regular column, opinion piece; or letter to the editor. News group is Murdoch owned newspapers the *Australian*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Advertiser*, and Fairfax newspapers the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*

Most newspaper coverage (about 33%) focused on the on-going violence in Iraq. About 15% of all items concerned global terrorism in general. The detention of Australians David Hicks and Mamdouh Habib at Guantanamo Bay accounted for about 10% of all items retrieved. The Abu Ghraib scandal and trials of US soldiers, and other stories of prisoner abuse, accounted for 5.5% of newspaper items retrieved. The most prominent substantive topics covered were items about security and intelligence issues, including political party policy statements (mean prominence 7.6) the bombing of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta (mean prominence 6.1), the on-going Iraqi conflict (mean prominence 5.3) and international ramifications of the Australian election (mean prominence 5.5). This latter category included reports on the US alliance and American newspaper comment on the Australian election.

There were few differences in substantive topic covered between newspaper groups but about 35% of all items analysed in the Murdoch press were about Iraq compared to about 29% for the Fairfax press. News items about the Iraq war and terrorism in the Fairfax press were, however, more prominent than the Murdoch press, as were news features and opinion pieces. Table 2 shows mean prominence of retrieved items by substantive topic and newspaper group.

Table 2
Mean prominence rating of Iraq war and related conflict items in Australian metropolitan press during the 2004 federal election by substantive topic and newspaper group.
Substantive Topic

Group:	All Items	Hicks	Prisoner Abuse	Jakarta Bombing	Iraq News	Global Terrorism
Murdoch	4.8	5.3	3.3	5.6	4.8	5.1
Fairfax	6.3	7.2	7.3	6.9	6.5	5.9
	(1663)	(168)	(94)	(63)	(554)	(255)

Mean prominence rating is a simple combination score, ranging from 1 (low) to 12 (high) of position of the item in the newspaper (front page, news pages, later in newspaper) and length in paragraphs (1 to 10; 11 to 16; more than 16). A 3 x 3 matrix was used to create the index. Thus, front page + more than 16 paragraphs was scored 12; later in the newspaper and 1 to 10 paragraphs was scored 1, etc. Genre was recorded as news, news feature, editorial; regular column, opinion piece; or letter to the editor. News group is Murdoch owned newspapers the *Australian*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Advertiser*; and Fairfax newspapers the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*

In summary, items about the Iraq war and terrorism were extensively covered during the election although front-page items comprised only five per cent of all items. Coverage was uneven across the eight weeks of the campaign with least coverage in the first and last weeks. The Fairfax press was far more likely to give prominence (position in the newspaper and length) to the Iraq war and terrorism during the election, reporting more news, news features and opinion pieces. Slightly more prominence was given to regular columns in the Murdoch press compared to the Fairfax press. Thus, coverage was extensive if not prominent. While this mapping of the coverage is vital, this quantitative statement tells us little about the *nature* of the coverage.

News discourses

The Iraqi war and terrorism played a secondary role to domestic issues in the Australian election campaign. Nonetheless, stories of the 'new wars' including the 'war on terror' were reported and, at times, dominated newspaper discourse. At the outset of the 2004 election campaign – launched by Prime Minister John Howard on the theme of trust – *The Australian's* foreign editor, Greg Sheridan, in an opinion column headlined predicted 'Coalition owns the US alliance' (*The Australian* 2004, 30 August, p. 5) that:

This election will be dominated by national security and the alliance with the US to a greater extent than any national poll since the era of the Vietnam war.

This opinion piece was supported by a separate seven column wide, prominently displayed, news story headlined:

PM ignores the fallen reign in Spain
(*The Australian* 2004, 30 August, p. 5).

The leading paragraph set the dominant frame – Howard’s Iraq war test: John Howard is the second coalition of the willing to go to the polls in an election dominated by national security, the Iraq war and the US alliance.

The story also included a separate box detailing Prime Minister Howard’s and Opposition Leader Mark Latham’s stance on the US alliance, the Iraq war and security in Australia’s region.

While the continuing conflict in Iraq, suicide bombings, kidnappings and executions of westerners were primarily reported in the international news pages, a few key events – including the trial of alleged Australia terrorist David Hicks by the US at Guantanamo Bay, the Beslan School massacre in Russia and the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta - became prominent during the campaign. In the first week of September – the end of the third week of the campaign – the news from Russia of the attack by Chechen rebels on a school in Beslan, North Ossetia, dominated news coverage. Labor’s plan for tax cuts, and overhauls of the tax system and family benefit schemes, took second place on the news pages of metropolitan newspapers to this discourse of terror. In addition, national security was an important issue discussed in the nationally televised Howard-Latham debate, and global terrorism and the Iraq war again emerged in the post-election analysis.

This paper does not trace the media’s framing of each of these issues during the election, but focuses on the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta as an exemplar of the portrayal of international terror in the domestic election context. We used news framing analysis to examine the range of meanings available to Australian newspaper readers about the Jakarta Bombing - a key event during the 2004 Australian election that was framed in the Australian news as bringing international terrorism to Australia.

The Jakarta bombing

Half way through the Australian election campaign (Thursday, 9 September 2004) – terrorism emerged as a front-page news story with intense local resonance. A car bomb was detonated outside the entrance to the Australian embassy in Jakarta in an act of terrorism carried out by the group Jemaah Islamiyah. The bombing killed nine and injured 199. *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2004, 10 September, p. 1) set the dominant frame – a terrorist attack on *us* – that was echoed by most of the metropolitan press. The headline read: Evil at our gate: Australian embassy attack. *The Australian* on the same day (2004, 10 September, p. 1) reported: Terror at our door: 11 Indonesians die in embassy bomb attack *The Age* (10 September, p. 1) departed from the ‘terrorist attack on *us*’ frame to explicitly link the bombing in the headline to the on-going election campaign: 11 killed in Jakarta blast. Suicide bomber hits Australian embassy. Attack stops federal election campaigning.

All news stories were accompanied by graphic photographs of the devastated embassy with the Murdoch press using an aerial photograph of the scene depicting a high, dense plume of smoke rising from the bomb site. This photograph was used repeatedly in later news stories by the Murdoch press as an icon of this terrorist attack.

The Sydney Morning Herald's coverage continued on page four with one headline reporting: Targeted as US ally in deeply despised war. The article claimed that the Jakarta bombing signaled that Australia was no longer a minor player in world affairs, and that whereas previous attacks in Indonesia had targeted 'Westerners', Australia was now the prime target. The lead paragraph read:

This time there is no doubt – Australia was the target of whoever carried out yesterday's bombings. It is the first time it has been so singled out in Indonesia.

The story speculated on the impact of the bombing on the election and suggested that: Some will believe Australia's role in the Iraq war and its support for the US are the reasons for the embassy being targeted.

But the headline – setting the dominant frame – explicitly linked the Iraq conflict to the bombing – when it stated that Australia was 'Targeted as US ally' in this 'deeply despised war'. By explicitly associating the Iraq war with the terrorist attack, journalists and editors localized, politicized and gave prominence to what was otherwise an overseas news story that had played a background role in the coverage of the election.

In Melbourne, *The Age's* (2004, 10 September, p. 1, 5) chief political correspondent, Michelle Grattan, was quick to label the Jakarta bombing as the 'nightmare scenario for the election campaign'. Under the headline, 'Security back to centre stage in election campaign', the dominant frame was clear-cut; terrorism uncertainty was on the election agenda under the frame of Australia as target: 'terrorist attack on us'. Grattan linked the 'dangers' for both Howard and Latham to the bomb attack earlier in the year in Madrid and added: ... any country with a high profile in the war on terrorism and troops in Iraq has to be nervous. To support the dominant news frame, Grattan noted (page 5) that:

The bombing injects a new and unpredictable element into a campaign that has so far concentrated almost exclusively on domestic issues.

But she predicted that the political climate seemed likely to move in Howard's favour given his experience on the world stage, voters' reluctance to change in times of uncertainty, and that Latham's recently released tax package had been overshadowed by the bombings.

Under the banner 'The reasons why', *The Age* (2004, 10 September, p. 4) also reported the headline: Iraq war increased the risk, say the experts.

The Sydney Morning Herald's editorial (2004, 10 September, p. 16) was more direct. While supporting the 'terrorist attack on us' frame with the headline, 'Now that we are the target', the editorial noted the recent history of bombings in Indonesia, and Australia's new relationship with the country, and argued that the Jakarta bombing would bring a focus in the election away from 'bread and butter' issues back to security issues:

The Prime Minister, John Howard is consistently seen as a strong leader on security issues. His swift response to the explosion, his appropriate sympathy for the families of those Indonesians killed, and his Government's record of effective co-operation with the Indonesian authorities after the Bali attacks are all likely to enhance this advantage.

The *Herald Sun's* editorial ('Terror and the election', 2004, 11 September, p. 26) called on both political leaders 'not to use the politics of fear in an election only four weeks away' (as the newspaper had done on the previous day). But the editorial did ask two questions. Did the Howard government's support for war in Iraq make Australia a terrorist target? And, did Mark Latham open the possibility of an attack similar to Madrid when he said Australian troops would be withdrawn from Iraq by Christmas? Malcolm Farr, the *Daily Telegraph's* chief political correspondent reported (2004, 11 September, p. 19) that: On the hustings it's a military campaign.

Farr noted that the televised debate scheduled for that night would see Howard and Latham 'break their moratorium not just on campaigning but on the political issue of national security'. But he chastised Labor leader Latham for saying that the Jakarta bombing was beyond politics. Latham was quoted: 'There are matters that go beyond an election campaign, that go beyond party politics. This is one of them'. Farr wrote. 'It most certainly is not. Death and apprehension of violence demand responses'. At this stage of the campaign, Australian journalists were urging politicians to debate the issues of national security even if political leaders were reluctant to respond. *The Age* (2004, 11 September, p. 15) followed its coverage of the bombing with an opinion piece headlined: Before the bombing, US and Australia were polls apart.

Supporting the 'terrorist attack on us' frame, the writer, Tony Parkinson, stated that 'it is clear that Australia has become a direct target for radical Islam' and noted that the Coalition and Opposition parties had until the bombing 'seemed content to confine the battle to bread-and-butter issues of jobs, interest rates, taxes, family payments, health and education'. Prompting the leaders to debate the security issue, Parkinson asked: 'How do they expect Australia as a society to respond to the dangers – regional and global?' The next day, the News Corporation owned *Herald Sun's* controversial columnist, Andrew Bolt (2004, 12 September, p. 23), was characteristically forthright: Let's debate Jakarta.

In this reference to forthcoming nationally televised debate between Howard and Latham, Bolt argued that 'there had been no real debate about the security of this country and which political party will protect us best.' Readers, however, had a clear idea where Bolt stood. Speaking through the 'test of leadership frame', he challenged Latham to reverse his decision to withdraw Australian troops from Iraq:

I, for one, particularly need to know from Mark Latham whether he is going to give in to terrorists or stand up to them.

The Sunday Telegraph (2004, 12 September, pp. 89-91 in its lift-out *News in Review* section headline the front page:

Political Dynamite. The bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta is seen as terrorism's attempt to influence voters in the federal election. The headline was printed over the iconic photograph of the bombing used in the initial coverage – an aerial photograph depicting the plume of dense smoke rising over the embassy. The message was that all Australians were now directly involved in global war and terrorism. The accompanying editorial ('A triumph of good over evil') intoned:

Their [the terrorists] target was not just innocent civilians – it was the democratic process itself, the beating heart of our free society.

Terrorists resort to bombs rather than the ballot box because they

know that few would willingly choose to live in the Islamic dictatorships they want to impose throughout the Muslim world.

The second and third pages of the lift-out were headlined 'Vicious Cycle' and included a photograph of what appears to represent a hooded Islamic terrorist, and pictures of Howard and Latham. Below, in a separate box, with a photograph of the former Spanish prime minister, the caption read:

Targets: the destruction of John Howard's leadership is firmly on the terrorist agenda, given Mark Latham's softer approach.

But, in a competing frame, the *Daily Telegraph's* Glen Milne wrote (2004, 12 September, p. 91) of the forthcoming Howard-Latham debate ('Sensitive topics make debate a tough challenge') that:

Both sides of politics agree that if either candidate in tonight's leadership debate makes the mistake of trying to take political advantage of the Jakarta bombing they could well lose the election'.

In the weeks after the news prominence given to global terrorism and the threat to Australia of the Jakarta bombing, we identified only one news item that explicitly stated global terrorism and security was the top issue for voters. Nevertheless, Australian newspaper journalists had been quick to link this event with the fortunes of both political leaders. Their portrayal of the 'attack on us' told a story of Australia at risk from global terrorism through its involvement in Iraq. Our leaders' positions on Iraq, and their response to the Jakarta bombing were seen as a 'test of leadership'. Jakarta was also seen as a 'coming of age' event in Australia's involvement in the 'war on terror'. We were now a major player and our people had a vital choice to make in the forthcoming election. Overall, Australia's media came down in favour of the incumbent Prime Minister to best respond to the threat – despite some journalists making the connection between his decision to send troops to war and the increased risk of terrorism.

Conclusions

The 2004 Australian federal election was fought against the backdrop of global terrorism and the capacity of both major political parties and their leaders to deal with issues of national security. While the Iraq war and terrorism were extensively covered by the metropolitan press during the election these issues did not uniformly dominate coverage. Certainly, the conventional wisdom holds that domestic issues and leadership were the defining and deciding issues of the campaign. Front page items comprised only five per cent of all items retrieved on the Iraq war and terrorism.

Yet major events and comment on terrorism did receive prominence including the military trial of Australian David Hicks at Guantanamo Bay, the terrorist bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta, and the Beslan School massacre in Russia. Global terrorism issues and national security emerged significantly in the only nationally televised debate between Howard and Latham, and in international reaction to the Howard Government election victory. This extensive and prominent coverage did provide newspaper readers with differing ways in which to approach these events and issues during the campaign.

By far most prominent newspaper coverage was given to the bombing of the Australian embassy in Jakarta, which was predominately framed as a 'terrorist attack on us'. In this way, global crises were localized to Australian audiences (Nossek 2004; Putnis 2006). The event and the news coverage

became a significant discussion point by newspaper political correspondents examining leadership and national security. Latham's perceived win in the only nationally televised debate and his comments about the diversion of defence resources to the Iraq war and away from Australia's region became major news of the campaign.

In an important respect our analyses are constrained because of the limited time frame of the study. Many issues surrounding national security and global terrorism – and most likely audience knowledge of these issues – would have been partly determined by past news coverage, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the Bali bombings and the Madrid bombings, in addition to current election news. We studied news coverage of discrete events, discourses and frames. But diverse audiences are more likely to make connections between events and issues, especially when 'summing up' the leadership qualities of the party leaders. At the outset, Howard had cast the 2004 election as one of trust in his leadership. Past issues of the 'children overboard' affair, asylum seekers and the Tampa affair, the decision to commit Australian troops to Iraq, and the Australia-US alliance, are difficult to disentangle from wider issues of trust, security and leadership, and the on-going coverage of Iraq and terrorism.

While some prominent newspaper comment on the campaign lamented the fact that national security and terrorism were not major issues in the campaigning for both major parties, our news frame analyses demonstrate that these issues were an ever-present backdrop to the domestic campaign, and on occasion became major news stories which brought the 'new wars' into sharp focus for Australian newspaper audiences.

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