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The Iraq War began in March 2003 when American troops took hold of Baghdad, overthrowing President Saddam Hussein's dictatorial regime. Preceding this event was the decision - on the recommendation of, and in collaboration with the United States Super Secret International Security Government Agency[1] - to associate the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 with Saddam Hussein[2]. It was also decided between this agency and the administration to disseminate reports on the suspected development of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq[3]. These tactics were necessary in order to justify the military offensive in the region. As you know, America's success in Iraq is crucial to national interests[4].

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[1] The United States Super Secret International Security Government Agency is modeled on a combination of the CIA, and ministerial and government documents obtained from the White House website and other government sources.

[2] In 2001 both US Secretary of State Colin Powell & President Adviser Condoleezza Rice declared Saddam Hussein was not a threat. In fact, Powell boasted at the time that America had succeeded in "keeping [Saddam] in a box". However, just six days after the September 11 attacks, Bush signed 'a top-secretive directive' which put plans to invade Iraq in motion. Ray McGovern, a former senior CIA analyst claims the 9/11 attacks were simply used to accelerate the invasion into Iraq (Pilger, 2003). By associating the 9/11 attacks with Saddam the US Government was, in effect, devaluing the target.

[3] In response to the failure in finding the alleged 'weapons of mass destruction', President George W. Bush cast the blame on the CIA, claiming he had received false intelligence. This claim has been fervently disputed by former CIA operatives, such as Ray McGovern, who notes plans were made to go into Iraq soon after the 9/11 attacks (see above). McGovern's claims are supported by top-secret documents that were leaked from Britain's CIA equivalent, MI-6, in which Richard Dearlove, the head of MI-6 at the time, advised 'intelligence and facts [on weapons of mass destruction] are being fixed around the policy' (McGovern, 2005). Gregory Thielmann, former director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence (who emerged as a key whistle blower), concurs, arguing the White House 'cherry picked intelligence' to suit their policy in Iraq (as cited by Scheer, Scheer & Chaudhry: 18)

[4] The 'national interests' of course being America's quest to secure a notable presence in the oil-rich Gulf area. Noam Chomsky surmised 'if Iraq produced pickles and lettuce, do you think they would have been invaded? (as cited by Green, 2002). US Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, was even straighter to the point. When asked why North Korea and Iraq had been treated differently in terms of their containment of WMDs, he said 'the most important difference… is that [Iraq] swims in a sea of oil' (as cited by Wilkie, 2004:63)

The media, as expected, were instrumental in promoting the idea of President Hussein and Bin Laden as allies[5]. They were also invaluable in depicting Saddam Hussein as an imminent threat to the people of the United States. This helped in facilitating our advancement in the Iraq region.[6] Jim Walton, president of CNN Worldwide, Robert C. Wright from NBC and Rupert Murdoch from News Corp. have all recently reconfirmed their commitment in supporting the Administration during the war effort[7].

Recently, reports have been circulating in dissident media on the number of civilian casualties in Iraq[8]. Using independent studies, these reports allege the number of Iraqi is exceedingly higher then what has been alluded to by the government. The loss of any life is of course a huge tragedy, but it is also an unavoidable consequence of war. However, we can assume any report concerning a high number of civilian casualties will be perceived by American citizens as unjust and unwarranted[9].

As you are aware the American public are already disillusioned by the increasing financial costs of this war, and are sceptical over our progress in the Iraq area[10]. These reports may therefore also be seen as a reflection on America's inaptitude in the conflict. As we learnt in Vietnam, the American public are unlikely to support a drawn out war if there is no discernible progress[11]. It is vital these reports are contained as much as possible, and prevented from reaching mainstream America. If

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[5] Roedy Green claims Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden are in fact mortal enemies; Hussein is secular, while Bin Laden is a fundamentalist (Green, 2002)

[6] There is no dispute that President Hussein was a corrupt and immoral dictator. However as well as lacking any nuclear capability, he also had an outdated and dispirited army, with enemies in both the Northern and Southern sections of Iraq. He was not a direct threat to the United States (Green, 2002)

[7] This is an exaggeration of course, and no document has been found to confirm whether agreements like this were actually made. I wanted to include it here, however, to highlight the way in which powerful media outlets tend to support the government in times of war and conflict. An article in *The Age* for example, noted that 'despite the long-standing collapse in public support for [the war], America's mainstream media has been slow to embrace the idea of a withdrawal' (Carney, 2007:9).

[8] These reports include a UK based agency, Opinion Based Research report (OBR) presented in March 2007, which estimates the true number of Iraqi casualties alone is closer to one million, which is an increase on a previous report published by the *Lancet* journal which cites 655,000 Iraq casualties. This is nowhere near the 71,000 reported by the Iraq Body Count (IRC) website – a source often used by the media when reporting casualty figures - and is much greater then the 37,000 as reported by the government (BBC website, 2007)

[9] Backfire occurs when there is a perceived injustice which is communicated to relevant audiences. (Martin, 2004)

[10] In a recent poll, 42% of respondents said they believed US troops should withdraw from Iraq within the year (Press TV website, 2007)

[11] As described by H.D.S Greenway (2007)

this information is circulated to a wider public there is a potential for mass anti-war movements to erupt on both national and global scales. We cannot let another Vietnam happen[12].

I am here today at the request of the Administration to advise on the best way possible to manage this situation. History has taught us of the kind of repercussions we may face if information concerning civilian tragedy becomes common public knowledge. Fortunately, the unyielding support and cooperation of the corporate media in the war effort should allow for the containment of these reports to be largely unproblematic[13].

It has also been a long-standing policy for the Government to abstain from tracking civilian casualties during war[14]. As such, we are not in a position to confirm or deny reports distributed by independent organisations and agencies[15]. Any data on civilian casualties from April 2004 onwards has been the responsibility of the Iraqi Interim Government. It is vital this information is communicated and made knowledgeable to the public.

Civilian casualties incurred since Operation Iraqi Freedom began are also largely a result of terrorist groups intent on undermining the political process[16]. Coalition troops face violent insurgency attacks and sectarian violence on a daily basis, and regrettably, civilians are often caught in the crossfire. There is no doubt casualty

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[12] America pulled out of Vietnam following enormous protest from the American public after the true extent of what was happening in Vietnam was revealed (Hall, 2004)

[13] Media lens claims that 'numerous studies… have shown, it is quite simply the structural role of the corporate media to defend established power by minimizing, as far as possible, public perception of the costs to civilians of US-UK state violence' (Media Lens, 2007). Likewise John Pilger discovered that at least 80% of journalists followed the government line when reporting on the war in Iraq (Pilger, 2007)

[14] The Pentagon stopped tallying the number of people killed by the American military in conflict after the Vietnam War. These numbers were exaggerated by government officials and field officers 'in attempts to show the war was going better than it was [which] ultimately backfired when the body counts provided fuel for the anti-war movement' (CBC News website, 2007)

[15] This concurs with the first method of preventing outrage as outlined by Martin (2005). Refusing to confirm or deny reports, for example, and refusing to keep track of civilian causalities, is akin to covering up an unjust action

[16] The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in the United Kingdom outlined this as one of the reasons for civilian casualties in a written statement responding to a study conducted by *Lancet* in 2004. In transferring the blame, the minister (Jack Straw at the time) is in effect, reinterpreting the events. This is another method used to inhibit outrage according to Martin.

figures in Iraq would be significantly lower without these insurgency attacks[17].   We also have intelligence, for instance, which suggests Iraqi children were deliberately targeted when co-ordinated bombs were detonated in Baghdad[18].   Again, we must ensure this information is communicated to the public to counter reports that may begin to circulate in the mainstream.

We also find the methods used to obtain data on casualties as both questionable and unreliable.   We strongly doubt the accuracy of the *Opinion Research Business* report for instance, which extrapolated on figures taken from a relatively small survey of Iraqi's to ascertain casualty statistics.   The *Lancet* report in 2006 was similarly flawed.   Further, discrepancies between and amongst agencies tallying civilian casualties in Iraq only serves to highlight the impracticality of body count surveillance[19].

The USSSISGA believes it is imperative the above information is disseminated to the wider public, using (in addition to the corporate media) official government channels. These channels will include – but are not limited to - press conferences, the distribution of government press releases to media, and government websites[20].   The President should denounce any report as *inaccurate* and *exaggerated*.   The President may also want to stress that it is virtually impossible to estimate the loss of civilian life in conflict – particularly in Iraq.

We also recommend the President uses the media and official government channels to reiterate the success of the troop surge[21].   All improvements made in the Iraqi region due to the presence of Coalition troops should also be highlighted[22].   An emphasis on

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[17] Since Bush declared an end to major combat operations in May 2004, Iraq has descended into an anarchistic civil war. Jihadist intifada sprung up in both Shiite and Sunni heartlands, uniting in their shared hatred of the United States' occupation (Bodansky, 2004: 517).

[18] Described in the ministerial statement addressing civilian causalities as referred to above (2004)

[19] An effective way of inhibiting outrage is by devaluing the target (Martin, 2005). Denouncing the reports as inaccurate and exaggerated - as done in this instance - is an example of devaluing the target.

[20] Powerful groups have a better chance at inhibiting outrage and thus preventing backfire (Gray & Martin, 2006). This is particularly true in this instance due to the large influence the government has on the mainstream American media.

[21] Using official channels is an effective way to give the appearance of legitimacy and justice (Martin, 2005). It is one of the more difficult obstacles for opponents of the unjust act to overcome.

[22] The Bush Administration – as noted on the White House website - maintains the troop Surge as a success. This is in sharp contrast to various reports which suggest more people have died since the surge began in February 2007 (see for instance, Jamail & al-Fadhily, 2007; Howard, n/d)

positive progress will help to further validate our efforts in the country, and diffuse outrage over civilian casualties[23].

The press conference and presidential statements will of course be broadcast to large national and global audiences with the help of our media allies at NBC, News Corp. and CNN. This will help to keep the general public satisfied with our efforts in Iraq.

Finally, we will continue to treat any criticism or opposition to the war - from media outlets, journalists or public figures - as unpatriotic; they will be blacklisted and dealt with accordingly.[24] [25]

The acquisition and control of Iraq is crucial to United States policy in the Gulf area. Incursions into Iran to secure a greater presence in the Middle East will be more easily facilitated if we can ensure there is as little resistance as possible.

We have invested too much in this war to pull out now.[26]

USSSISGA

This document must be destroyed immediately

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[23] Putting a positive spin on it, as show in this case, is another example of reinterpreting the events

[24] This is another example in which the target is devalued, yet it can also be seen as a form intimidation - the fifth method in inhibiting outrage (Martin, 2004). Methods used to inhibit backfire can often overlap in this way (Herd, 2006: 121)

[25] The Dixie Chicks were among several high profile celebrities who were labeled unpatriotic following criticism aimed at the George W. Bush during a concert in London. The band was sent death threats, country music radio stations refused to play their songs, and fans publicly threw out their albums. Their ordeal was captured in the 2007 documentary *Shut Up & Sing* (Byrnes, 2007: 15). Actor George Clooney was likewise branded a 'traitor' and attacked by the establishment when he chose to question America's Iraq policy (Chenery, 2007: 27)

[26] The war has cost an estimated $400-500 billion dollars to date, and rising. Sources expect the war to surpass $1 trillion by 2009

STS390 – Project Report

Dialogue between
Analytical Annie & Lucy Left Wing

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE
Starting Out

Analytical Annie: Have you started thinking about what you want to do for the STS Project Report?

Lucy Left Wing: Well I want it to be something I actually enjoy doing. I guess the one thing that gets me the most riled up – and I'm not sure if it's because it's so fresh in my mind because of all the Iran stuff lately – but definitely all that George 'Wanker' Bush stuff. Like, you know they want to go to war with Iran, and now all of a sudden Iran has weapons of mass destruction and is supposedly supplying the anti-American insurgents in Iraq with arms. It's such total and utter bullshit.

AA: I know - it's just more lies and excuses to control the oil. It pisses me off a bit too. I don't know too much about the president of Iran to be honest, but it's funny the way America chooses one evil villain after the other, and then starts a massive campaign to discredit them.

LLW: Alright well lets work together on this together and see what we come up with. I was talking to our teacher Serenity Simon today and he gave me the idea to write a brief from the American Defence Department's point of view. That'd be pretty interesting, don't you think?

AA: Yeah - sounds like a challenge. Especially when we're both a bit like 'fuck you America'.

LLW: Ha ha – yeah, it will be a challenge. And then terms of theories I think either lying or backfire would work well if we're discussing the Iraq War.

AA: I like the backfire theory. It's kind of interesting to see what happens when you apply it to different things.

LLW: Great, well let's get started and see what we can come up with.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO
Getting it Together

LLW: I've looked at some stuff on the Iraq War, and you know what I think would be really interesting? If we looked at some of those reports that say there are many, many more dead civilians then what they've been reporting in the mainstream media.

AA: What kind of figures are we talking here?

LLW: Well apparently over a million Iraqi's have died since the conflict started – it's completely nuts. I think Bush sort of claims 30,000 – I read that on the White House website – and then there's this website called the Iraq Body Count, which claims about 70'000 Iraqis have been killed. A lot of media tend to cite the website in their news reports, but apparently even that's a pretty modest estimate.

AA: So who says a million?

LLW: There's two reports – ones a medical journal, the *Lancet* – and the other is an independent British organisation called Opinion Based Research. But you look on the White House website and their all "we're going so well in Iraq", "all the Iraqis love us", blah blah blah. It's absolute bullshit of course because I was talking to a friend's dad the other day, who is from Iraq, and he said 90% of Iraqi's were happier under Saddam then they are since the invasion.

AA: Holy crap, are you serious? Actually, that would work well in our brief. Instead of the Defence Department we could write it from the perspective of the Bush Administration or CIA, as if we're trying to prevent people from finding out about how many Iraqis have really been killed.

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LLW: Yeah because otherwise it would backfire against them! If everyone knew how many innocent people were dying - for oil no less – there'd be *massive* outrage. There's already a lot of opposition to the war now. I read an article in the Sydney Morning Herald the other day about 100,000 people protesting near the White House in Washington. People really don't want this war, and I think if these reports on Iraqi casualties surfaced in the mainstream media it would add even more fuel to the fire, so to speak.

AA: It's a bit like Vietnam in a way, isn't it? People started to kinda go "oh hang on a minute. Why are all these people dying in this war, when we shouldn't really be there anyway?"

LLW: Yeah – okay so we're advising on how to prevent backfire… and we can apply the five methods we went over in class, such as covering things up, devaluing the target and that sort of thing. Let's start writing our reports and see how we go

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE
The Organisation

LLW: There's so much interesting stuff on the Iraq War when you delve into it. I read a bunch of articles about intelligence documents that were leaked. You don't ever read about that kind of stuff in the newspapers though, do you?

AA: I know, I've also found there's quite a few intelligence agents that have jumped shipped or become whistle blowers – they were just so appalled at the lack of integrity shown in going into this war.

LLW: So if we're writing it from a pro-war perspective, we could model it on the CIA or the Bush Administration and the documents we've found from their websites. I found they sort if just kid themselves that what they're doing is okay, you know what I mean? The language that they use is so… not self-righteous, but more… oh bugger I can't think of the word.

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AA: Like a bit arrogant or something?

LLW: Well yeah – arrogant I guess. I think just because you read so much stuff or you hear so much stuff on how fucked up the whole thing is, but again, you go to the White House website and they just have this sense that what they're doing is okay and justified. Like "we'll continue to fight for America's freedom!" – I mean, are you frigging kidding me?

AA: I know exactly what you mean. There's an interesting section of the White House website actually where the attempt to dispel any – what they call – 'myths' from Iraq.

LLW: I read that too. I also found a really cool document that addresses the casualties specifically. It was written by the Foreign Minister in the UK after the first *Lancet* study came out – we should definitely use that in our brief.

AA: Great, well now that we have that angle sort of covered lets try and see how we can apply it with backfire.

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ACT TWO, SCENE TWO
Backfire

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LLW: God, this is pretty hard. The more I read the more I think "maybe we could do this, or maybe we could look at it from this angle". I've read this great article from John Pilger for instance, which goes on about how America knew Saddam was no threat to their security, they just tried to capitalise on the 9/11 attacks. It's total bullshit! I guess I'm more surprised that this stuff didn't make headline news at the time. Why am I only finding out about it now that I'm researching it? It's not widely circulated information, is it?

AA: Well that works great with our brief, because the media are going to help us keep these reports on casualties contained and out of the mainstream public

LLW: Yeah it fits in with backfire. Especially if we're working as a government body because we have power over official channels. We have a certain influence over the media for instance, so we can use that to our advantage. I read an article from Serenity Simon actually, where he's applied backfire to the Iraq War, and he says that the role of the official channels is one of the trickiest things to get around if you were trying to expose injustice.

AA: I read that article too. He's actually gone though it step by step to show how America tried to inhibit backfire, and then he's shown how it backfired anyway.

LLW: Ours is a bit different because we're tackling one very specific aspect of the war rather then the entire thing.

AA: I guess what we're doing – you know, sort of preventing the public from finding out about the real number of casualties - would constitute a 'cover up' in the grander scheme of things. But on its own, we can still apply it to the backfire model using the five methods.

LLW: Yeah, well, I know we're supposed to be critical of the backfire model, but I find it's pretty easy to apply most things to it. Remember when Eager Emma applied the backfire model to the Diane Brimble case in class?

AA: Yeah – and you can apply it to things like defamation as well. I think as long as there is an injustice by a powerful group it works well.

LLW: Like you said, I think the hardest part of backfire would be if you were on the less powerful side trying to expose the injustice. Imagine what you'd be up against.

AA: Exactly… But when it works, it's brilliant. Look at the McLibel case for instance – total David and Goliath.

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE
And we're done!

AA: Phew we're finished… finally.

LLW: How hard was it to cram everything into 1000 words?! And trying to write it as though I was in support of the war was kind of tough. I have so many footnotes! How did you find it?

AA: Well yeah I think just trying to think like a government agency was tough. Especially when you so completely disagree with what they're doing.

LLW: That's what I found as well. But just researching the Iraq war was like, wow – this whole thing is just too crazy. It's so wrong. I definitely wish more people knew what was going on.

AA: Well unfortunately, if the mainstream media don't give it any attention…

LLW: I know! Crazy world we live in.

AA: Yup, crazy world.

THE END