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From Despotism to Democracy: Reporting Iraq's January 2005 election in the Australian and Middle Eastern print media

Mr Ben Isakhan
School of Arts
Griffith University

Abstract

It is only in recent times that the magnitude of Ancient Mesopotamia's contribution to language, agriculture, modern thought and urbane society has begun to be understood. Most relevant to this study is the governance of Mesopotamia's early city-states by a political system that Jacobsen has termed 'Primitive Democracy' where "…ultimate political power rested with a general assembly of all adult freemen" (Jacobsen, 1977; 128). Yet, despite this, the coverage of Iraq in the Western media since its creation at the end of the First World War and particularly since the first Gulf War, has tended towards Orientalism (Said, 1978) by trivialising this nation and thereby reinforcing the hegemony of the West over the 'backward, barbaric' East.

This paper examines this issue further by comparing and contrasting the representations of the Iraqi election of January 30, 2005 in four of Australia's leading daily newspapers (*The Australian, The Courier-Mail, The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*) with four Middle Eastern English language papers (*The Daily Star* from Lebanon, *Andolu Agency* and *Dunya* both based in Turkey, and the eponymous *Kuwait Times*). In essence, it finds that while the Australian media posits democracy as a Western concept and asserts a discourse of US hegemony, the Middle Eastern papers are more contemplative, focusing on the impact that this election could have throughout the region.

Introduction

> *In comparison with Greek and Hellenistic cultures, Mesopotamian culture at first sight, undeniably, seems alien and strange. The better one has learned to understand it, however, the more it has come to resemble our own culture. Its strange and exotic features conceal within themselves an invisible world of ideas more familiar to us, which resurfaces in new garments but largely identical in content in classical antiquity.*
> (Parpola, 2000: 30)

It is only in relatively recent times that we have come to understand the historical importance and influence of the region known as Mesopotamia in the Ancient World and currently known as Iraq. In fact, it was the early city-states that developed across this 'cradle of civilization' around 2700 B.C., which fostered the development of early farming practices and animal domestication, a sophisticated written language and a complex, urbane and cosmopolitan society (Seymour, 2004: 351). Overwhelmingly, history tells us of the megalomaniacal kings and their grand, menacing empires that rose out of these early developments to conquer and rule the region by fear, bloodshed and domination (Manglapus, 1987: 19). However, there is also a growing understanding that the history of modern thought – usually understood to have begun around 400 B.C., in Greece – can be traced further back to early Mesopotamia (Frankfort, Frankfort, Wilson, Jacobsen, & Irwin, 1977; Kramer, 1959; Manglapus, 1987; Oppenheim, 1964).

Of foremost relevance here are Thorkild Jacobsen's readings of the early Mesopotamian myths and epics such as *Enuma Elish* and *Gilgamesh* (for full versions of these, see: Storm, 2003). It is in these texts that Jacobsen discovered allusions to the political machinations employed by the Ancient Mesopotamians, which he has termed 'Primitive Democracy' (Jacobsen, 1970a, 1970b, 1977a, 1977b). This functioned more like a classical than a modern, representative form of democracy in the sense that it was a counsel or open forum. While it seems that the "elders" (mostly, if not exclusively, men) held most of the power (Kramer, 1963: 74), some research suggests that, "women as well as men took part in decision-making – sometimes with a dominating role" (Saggs, 2004: 30).

During an assembly, each of the citizens had the right to express their opinion and discussion would continue until a virtual unanimity was reached, with the final decisions being announced by the elders. Although this forum was usually called together to make decisions regarding matters as diverse as irrigation projects, trade missions, land surveying (Saggs, 2004: 131), administrative issues and to judge the serious offences of citizens (Jacobsen, 1970a: 138), it was primarily assembled when the security of the city-state was under threat (Adams, 1994: 16) in order to elect a temporary "king," or "big man" as it was called in Ancient Mesopotamia (Kramer, 1963: 74). This formed the nucleus of the city-states administration and allowed the collective resources of the community to be pooled in order to reach consensus for concerted action (Oppenheim, 1964: 21).

The notion that 'Primitive Democracy' existed in Ancient Mesopotamia is not only useful in terms of understanding the era's contribution to modern thought and as a

precursor to the development of the Greek *polis* more than 2000 years later, it is also particularly poignant when viewed in relation to the current situation in Iraq and its construction in the media.

Iraq – the nation that we know today – resulted from the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War (Braude, 2003: 3). During this time, much of the Middle East plummeted into an unparalleled level of disorder. A territorial crisis ensued and the fighting between a myriad of ethnic and religious groups went unchecked. Britain and France moved into much of what are now Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Israel with an emphasis on curtailing chaos by imposing order. Nation-states were hastily designed (Jordan was famously drawn by Winston Churchill in the back of a taxi), ancient peoples were divided and new identities were born. In 1921, the many different peoples of the three previously autonomous regions, or vilayets, of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul became Iraqis (Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 60, 71).

Politically, Iraq has undergone a number of violent struggles throughout its short history. Not least of these was the military coup in which the Ba'ath Party came to power in 1968 and, just over a decade later, Saddam Hussein "elected" himself to the presidency in 1979 (Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 61). It was not long after this that Iraq first came to the attention of the Western media as an ally of the US during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1990. Here, Iraq was portrayed as a nation struggling towards nationhood and secularisation with its leader, Saddam Hussein, a symbol of "our" resistance to the spread of fundamentalist Islam and the dogma of that quintessential Eastern despot, Ayatollah Khomeini (for a scholarly investigation into Iraq's representation in the British Press from 1980-2003, see: Seymour, 2004).

However, it wasn't until Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2 1990 that the Gulf War began and Iraq shifted from US ally to enemy number one. Iraq was now the new threat to international stability, while Saddam Hussein himself was compared to the megalomaniacal and bloodthirsty kings of the Ancient Near East (which was further compounded by his own tendency to employ ancient Mesopotamian history and symbology in both his political rhetoric and the many grandiose portraits that scattered the country). Many have since been critical of the media's role in reporting this "clean" war (Kenney, 1994; P. M. Smith, 1991), with Keeble asserting that "Media manipulation…[had become]…a central military strategy" (1997: 8). This prompted further critique, such as Virillo's belief that the mass media had allowed the realities of war to be substituted by an information market of propaganda and illusion (2002) and – most provocatively of all – Baudrillard's essay, "The Gulf War did not take place" (1991).

The cataclysmic events of September 11 2001 and their coverage by the media has attracted similar criticism to that of the Gulf War (Dixon, 2004; Green, 2002; Green & Maras, 2002; Greenberg, 2002; Venkatraman, 2004) and ultimately led to the invasion of Iraq by the "Coalition of the Willing" in 2003. This too became a media spectacle, with 24-hour live updates and daily reports from the front line. Once again, the world's attention was focused on Iraq. However, unlike the critics of the Gulf War, the research and criticism of this war has primarily focused on the control that the US has exerted over the world's media. The Pentagon made two key strategic media

control decisions in the early days of the war. They limited journalistic exposure to the war by reporting the "facts" to the world's media at "Central Command", or CentCom, in Doha, Qatar (some 700 miles from Baghdad), and they devised the notion of "embedding" journalists with military platoons (for more information on these and other issues, see: Artz & Kamalipour, 2005; Miller, 2004; Rampton, 2003; Schechter, 2003).

What is common throughout the coverage of Iraq since the Iran-Iraq War and especially in the world since September 11, is that the Western mainstream Media have eschewed key historical and contextual data about Iraq, thereby serving to reduce and homogenize the complexity of the issues surrounding the region and the conflicts therein. In so doing, the media has played a central role in constructing the all-encompassing Middle Eastern / Muslim / Arab 'other'. The rich histories of the region and its wealth of religions, cultures and languages etc. become one. We know them only through disorder and opposition: non-white, non-western, non-Christian, non-civilized.

It is important to note here that the events of September 11 and the current situation in Iraq have occurred concurrently with a series of events in Australia. Since 2001, Australia has seen the 'Ethnic Gang Rapes' in the suburbs of south-Sydney, the 'Tampa' crisis, the 'Children Overboard Affair', repeated raids by the Australian Federal Police and ASIO of the homes of suspected terrorist cells across Australia, the Bali bombings, the return of Mamdouh Habib and direct threats against Australian cities by Al Qaeda. While some scholars have focused on these Australian events and the role that the Australian media has played in demonising Middle Eastern – Australians (Manning, 2004; Poynting, Noble, Tabar, & Collins, 2004), little analysis has been conducted on issues surrounding the Australian media's representation of the war in Iraq.

Earlier work by the author (Isakhan, 2005a, 2005b) has attempted to address this by focusing on the fact that the Western media has neglected to adequately report on the complexities of Iraq's cosmopolitan society. Specifically, Iraqi society is considered "the most spiritually diverse in the Middle East" (Braude, 2003: 65) and is home to "numerous racial and religious minorities…(including) Turkomans, Persians, Assyrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Jews, Yazidihs, Sabeans, and others" (Batatu, as cited in: Cordesman & Hashim, 1997: 71). To put things in perspective, 40 distinct minority groups have been identified across the Arab World (Hourani, 1947: 1-2), many of these having their own language, culture, religion, food, history, dress and customs. Yet, despite this heterogeneity, the Western media has failed to report on the complexity of Iraqi society. While much Western scholarly and media attention has been given to the plight of the Kurds (Robinson, 2002: 20) and the split between the Sunni's (who make up about 20% of Iraq's population but held the majority of power under Hussein) and the Shi'ites (who form the majority within Iraq) (Keeble, 1997: 12), little attention has been paid to the views of the many other Iraqis.

This research paper extends this examination into the reductive and homogenising way that the Western media covers Iraq by focusing on the reporting of Iraq's January 2005 elections. Firstly, it is important to note that this has occurred within

the larger framework of what appears to be something of a 'shift' towards democracy across the Muslim world. This has included Algeria's first elections in 1999 and, in the same year, Indonesia's first free parliamentary elections since 1955. Following this, 2005 has been an extraordinary year in terms of democracy in the Middle East. Specifically, this has included democratic developments in Palestine (first election), Egypt (first multi-candidate popular vote), Saudi Arabia (first municipal elections), Pakistan (local body elections), Lebanon's first free election in many years (post-Syrian withdrawal) and Afghanistan's first parliamentary elections in four decades.

Although each of these elections has attracted both the attention and criticism of the Western media, it is arguably Iraq's first free election as a nation that has been the focus. Specifically, on January 30 2005, some 8.5 million Iraqi's took to the polls. While scholars from a myriad of fields have addressed many of the issues surrounding Iraq's 'shift' to democracy (Benomar, 2004; Darwisha, 2004; Diamond, 2005; Nader, 2003; Tripp, 2004), little attention has been paid to the construction of these events in either the Western media, or that of the Middle East.

This study therefore attempts to address this lack of scholarship on Iraq by investigating the representation of the Iraqi election in both the Western (Australian) print media and that of the Middle East (Lebanon, Turkey and Kuwait). It is expected that the Australian print media will follow the Orientalist (Said, 1978) tradition of media coverage of the East in general and, more specifically, of Iraq since the Gulf War. Furthermore, it is also expected that Australia's print media will frame democracy as a Western concept, therefore viewing the elections in Iraq as a triumph of Western (US) ideology. On the other hand, it is expected that the Middle Eastern media will view Iraq's elections as less of a US led ideological victory and more of a crucial step in establishing a more egalitarian and stable Middle East and an independent Iraq.

Methodology

Four Australian and four Middle Eastern newspapers were analysed for the period of one month (January 22 – February 22, 2005). The decision for the one-month time span of the study was based around the date of the election in Iraq – January 30, 2005 and allowed for the study to cover news reports from the lead up to the election (January 22 – January 29), the election itself up to the announcement of the results (January 30 - February 13) and for a short period following the announcement (February 14 – February 22).

The Australian newspapers consisted of: *The Australian*, a News Limited broadsheet that is circulated nation-wide; *The Courier-Mail*, which is also a News Limited broadsheet and is the only Metropolitan newspaper of Queensland, based in the state capital of Brisbane; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, a broadsheet published out of Sydney – Australia's largest and most iconic city – by Fairfax and; *The Age,* another Fairfax broadsheet which is published in the Victorian capital of Melbourne.

Between them, these four daily newspapers have some of the largest circulations in the country (Report, 2002) and serve not only the three largest metropolitan areas in Australia (Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne), but also the entire country (*The Australian*). They are also representative of the two largest newspaper conglomerates in the country, News Limited, owned by Rupert Murdoch, and John Fairfax Holdings which is owned by the triumvirate of the Commonwealth bank of Australia, Colonial and the Permanent Trustee Company (Report, 2002). It is therefore fair to say that these newspapers do much to inform the Australian populace about the events in Iraq and, in this context, the Iraqi election in particular.

The Middle Eastern papers were chosen for different reasons altogether. Essentially, they were selected according to three main criteria: firstly, due to the researchers lack of language skills, they had to be in English; they had to be based within the Middle East and produced by and for the (English reading) people of the region; and finally the newspapers needed to be readily available. According to these criteria then, the Middle Eastern papers analysed in this study include: *The Daily Star*, a Lebanese daily; both the *Andolu Agency* and *Dunya*, daily newspapers based in Turkey; and the *Kuwait Times*, a daily newspaper published out of Safat, Kuwait.

Unlike the Australian newspapers, these Middle Eastern sources are not written in the majority / native tongue of the country to which they belong. The use of the English language does suggest that these papers are aimed at the expatriate community as well as the upper (English reading) classes of the country rather than the bulk of Arabic or Turkish reading people within their respective countries of origin. However, despite this, the papers have been selected because they are all produced within the Middle East, by and for the people living and working in this region. This aids the assumption that they would reveal more about the interests, opinions and beliefs of these people in a general sense than any Western based / produced media.

The news reports for the newspapers were obtained by using the 'Search' function of Factiva (www.factiva.com), which contains more than 9, 000 sources form 152 countries (Factiva, 2005). To search for the relevant articles, the search terms "Iraq and democracy" were entered, the time frame was limited to the 1-month period mentioned above, each respective newspaper was specifically selected (i.e. one at a time) and the search was set to examine the 'Full Article.'

This search yielded a total initial return of 240 articles across the four Australian newspapers and 98 from the four Middle Eastern papers. However, a number of the articles counted in this initial result from Factiva were deemed irrelevant. To refine the data to more manageable numbers and salient articles, the following types of articles were deleted: Letters, Book Reviews, brief Editorial Comments, World Watch (or any news in brief). As well as this, only the first edition of each paper was included in the data set to prevent the data being skewed by the repetition found in second or later editions. This process of refinement left 162 Australian news articles and 89 from the Middle East (for a further breakdown see Table 1). Each of the separate articles were then grouped first by their respective newspaper, then by country (in the case of the Middle East papers) and finally divided into the two geographical regions: Australia and the Middle East.

Table 1: The number and percentage of articles from each of the newspapers

Region	Country	Newspaper	Initial Result	Final Result
Australia	**Australia**	The Australian	114 (47%)	74 (46%)
		The Courier-Mail	18 (7%)	10 (6%)
		The Syd. Morning Herald	55 (23%)	37 (23%)
		The Age	53 (22%)	41 (25%)
TOTAL			240 (100%)	162 (100%)
Mid. East	**Lebanon**	Daily Star	69 (70%)	63 (71%)
	Kuwait	Kuwait Times	5 (5%)	5 (6%)
	Turkey	Anadolu Agency	21 (21%)	18 (20%)
		Dunya	3 (3%)	3 (3%)
TOTAL			98 (100%)	89 (100%)

Note: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

To perform the content analysis component of this study, a program named Leximancer (www.leximancer.com) was used. This software was developed at the University of Queensland by the Key Centre for Human Factors and Applied Cognitive Psychology and is capable of analysing large collections of text by either an automatic or a manual (user defined) process whereby the program tags, maps and mines the data set. It then produces a series of concept clusters that are represented a number or ways: graphically, in word lists that constitute each concept, in a table showing rank, percentage and frequency and in their relationship to other concepts within the text (for more information of the many uses of Leximancer, see: A. E. Smith, Grech, & Horberry, 2002).

For each concept that Leximancer extracts from the articles, it also produces a full reference library, where the actual instances in which the particular words relating to the concept are found. As well as this, each of the words is weighted in their relationship to each concept so that the data is not skewed by the frequency of irrelevant words or concepts. As is explained in the User's Manual (Leximancer, 2005), this means that a word, sentence or paragraph is only tagged as being related to a set concept if the sum of the weight of each particular keyword is higher than a set threshold.

Most importantly, though, Leximancer tracks the co-occurrences of the concepts that it extracts. This means that Leximancer is not only capable of providing a basic content analysis with descriptive statistics, but that it is able to discover the key discourses or concepts within a text, what they are made up of and how those discourses stand in relation to others within the text. There are, therefore, several advantages to using Leximancer in such a study. Firstly, it is time efficient, allowing a large quantity of data to be analysed at the click of a button. Additionally, by setting Leximancer to automatically mine the data, any researcher bias is removed from the process, thereby removing issues such as coder reliability and subjectivity. This has quickly made Leximancer a sought after tool which has now been applied to a variety of media studies, the most relevant of which would be Liu's (2004) investigation into the representation of Chinese ethnic groups in Australian newspapers.

As the focus of this study was to discover the ways in which the Iraqi election was represented in the Australian and Middle Eastern print media, the analysis was conducted on two levels. Firstly, the data was analysed by Leximancer to identify the top 10 concepts within the Australian and Middle Eastern coverage in order to gain an initial insight into the data. These top 10 concepts were further divided into the same four broad Themes in order to compare and contrast the ways in which the election was represented in each data set (see Table 2). Following this, the 5 highest ranked co-occurrences for each of the top 10 concepts were examined, with the co-occurrence of concepts from within the same Theme being excluded from further analysis (see Appendix A for the Australian data and Appendix B for the Middle Eastern data). Although this data would enable further quantitative assessment, this paper is primarily concerned with extracting more qualitative results which are explored further in the discussion.

Table 2: The Four Themes and the Top 10 Concepts per Region

Theme	Aus. Top 10 Concepts	Rank	Mid. East Top 10 Concepts	Rank
Iraq	Iraq	1	Iraq	1
	Iraqi	7	Iraqi	7
US	US	2	US	3
	Bush	6	-	-
Democracy	Democracy	3	Democracy	2
	Election	4	Elections	5
	Vote	9	-	-
Politics and People	People	5	People	9
	World	8	-	-
	Political	10	Political	4
	-		Government	6
	-		Arab	8
	-		Country	10

Results

The Australian Print Media:

Not surprisingly, the leading way in which the Iraq election was portrayed in the Australian newspaper was via the theme 'Iraq' (made up of the concepts Iraq (ranked 1) and Iraqi (7)). Overall, this theme co-occurred most prominently with the concept of 'US', followed by 'Election' / 'Elections,' 'Democracy', as well as some co-occurrence with 'People'. Following this, was the theme of 'United States' (US (2) and Bush(6)) which co-occurred strongly with the concepts 'Iraq', 'Iraqi' and 'Democracy', 'Election' as well as including two unclassified concepts 'World' and 'Freedom' which interestingly appear in co-occurrence with the concept 'Bush'. The theme of 'Democracy' (Democracy (3), Election (4), Vote (9)) was found to co-occur most strongly with the concepts 'Iraq,' 'Iraqi' followed by the 'US,' 'Bush' as well as some co-occurrence with 'People'. Finally, the theme 'Politics and People' (People (5), World (8) and Political (10)) co-occurs with the concepts 'Iraq,' 'Iraqi' and 'Election,' 'Democracy,' 'Vote' as well as the 'US,' 'Bush', with a reference to the unclassified concept of 'Freedom.'

The Middle Eastern Print Media:

Once again, the foremost way that the election in Iraq was portrayed was via the theme 'Iraq' (Iraq (1), Iraqi (7)). Co-occurring most significantly with this, were the concepts 'Democracy,' 'Elections,' followed by 'Country,' 'People,' the unclassified concept of 'Security' and finally the concept 'US.' 'Democracy' (Democracy (2) and Election (5)) was the second theme that emerged from the Middle Eastern papers, and co-occurred with 'Iraq,' 'Iraqi,' followed by 'People,' 'Country,' 'Government.' Interestingly, the theme of 'Democracy' also co-occurred with two unclassified concepts: 'Middle East' and 'Region.' Following this, was the theme 'United States' (US (3)) which co-occurred highly with 'Iraq,' while 'Government' and 'Democracy' co-occurred equally. As with the theme 'Democracy', the 'United States' theme also produced two unclassified concepts: 'American' and 'Bush' (this is the only reference to Bush in the data for the Middle Eastern papers). The final theme, 'Politics and People' (Political (4), Government (6), Arab (8), People (9), Country (10)) is the largest of the themes and co-occurs most strongly with 'Iraq,' 'Iraqi' followed by 'Democracy,' 'Election,' then the 'US.' The theme of 'Politics and People' also includes the unclassified concepts: 'Region' (which appears twice), 'World,' 'American' (which also appeared in the theme of 'Democracy') and 'Middle East.'

Discussion

These crude quantitative results enable a more thorough interpretation through the use of the qualitative approach called discourse analysis. This approach has a long-standing tradition in Cultural Studies, and has been applied to the study of newspapers by many media theorists (such as: Fairclough, 1995; Tolson, 1996; Van Dijk, 1991). In this context, media discourses can be seen to be made up of socially constitutive language which journalists use to "…reflect the norms and values of the cultural context in which they work and, thus, draw on the tools provided by the hegemonic ideology when constructing news frames" (Noakes & Wilkins, 2002: 651). This type of media analysis therefore reveals both the pervading ideology of the context in which it is revealed, the types of discourses that the media draws upon and is conscious of the media's role in constructing the representations of certain events or people (Pietikainen & Hujanen, 2003: 256-257). Specifically, by closely examining the ways in which the Iraqi election has been constructed and represented in both the Australian and Middle Eastern print media, we can begin to understand the discourses that underpin these texts, the ideological environ in which they are produced and the ways in which these are disseminated to the respective readership.

The Australian Print Media:

During the first State of the Union address of his second term, the American President, George W. Bush, shifted the United States' self-imposed mission to espouse the virtues of democracy and freedom to new heights of grandeur and idealism by committing America to the twin goals of proliferating democracy around the globe and ending tyranny across it (for a full transcript, see: Bush, 2005). Arguably, these missions have governed much of the Bush administration's foreign policy in recent times and have done much to shape the world in which we live.

It is therefore of little wonder that further analysis of the Iraq election in the Australian print media reveals a discourse of the Hegemony of the United States. This can be seen via the overwhelming references to the 'United States' and its President, George W. 'Bush.' Not only do they form highly ranked concepts of their own, they also have strong co-occurrence with 'Iraq' and 'Iraqi's', suggesting that the US holds a position of power over this nation and its people. Additionally, the 'US' and 'Bush' can be seen as co-occurrences within a number of other concepts, including both 'World' and 'Political' which assert the notion that the US is the dominant world superpower and supports the claim of US hegemony. As well as this, 'Bush' does not appear to be criticised in any quantifiable way for his decision to go to war nor his management of the war thus far. Instead he is constructed in ways analogous to his State of the Union Address: a powerful 'World' player on a mission to bring 'Freedom' and spread 'Democracy.'

This alludes to a second discourse, which sees Democracy as a Western (US) Concept. The most telling evidence of this is the strong relationship between the concepts of the 'United States' and 'Bush' with 'Democracy' and 'Election'. In this way, Iraq's election is constructed as more of a triumph of Western (US) political

ideology than a positive step for – and by – the 'Iraqi' 'People'. In part, this could be attributed to the need to re-establish popular support for a much criticised war. However, this discourse seems to run deeper than this, reflecting not only the historically inaccurate belief that democracy is a Western concept, but also the more Orientalist (Said, 1978) view that the backward and barbaric savages of the East are incapable of democracy and unable to understand such advanced Western concepts.

Overall, the Australian print coverage presents a relatively insular picture of the Iraqi election. Although the 'World' and 'Politics' do appear as concepts, they are virtually at the bottom of the ranking: eighth and tenth out of ten respectively. Similarly the Australian media has eschewed Mesopotamia's ancient history of 'Primitive Democracy' in favour of discourses that reflect US Hegemony and Democracy as a Western Concept. This serves to frame the election less in terms of its significance for the people of Iraq and the rest of the Middle East and reflects the West's pervading ideology of superiority over the East.

The Middle Eastern Print Media:

The Middle Eastern newspapers tell a very different story altogether. Overall, the US and Bush are certainly far less salient and appear only as one concept (US, which is ranked third compared to second position in the Australian newspapers). It is understandable that the US does appear as a concept given that country's involvement in leading the War in Iraq as well as its position as the global superpower. However, it is interesting to note that the 'US' is not accompanied by the concept of 'Bush' (who only gets one mention as a co-occurrence as opposed to being a separate concept, ranked sixth, in the Australian media) and is only supported by two scattered uses of the term 'American.'

In this way, the Middle Eastern papers seem to avoid the discourse of US Hegemony, instead adopting a discourse of Regional Concern. This is reinforced not only by the prominence of the concepts of 'Iraq' and 'Iraqi' (which also appear prominently in the Australian media), but also in the emphasis that has been directed towards the 'Arab' 'People' as a whole and the 'Country' of 'Iraq' (interestingly, neither 'Arab' nor 'Country' were top 10 concepts in the Australian papers). These concepts are reinforced by the appearance of 'Middle East' which appears twice and 'Region' which appears three times. This seems to suggest that the Middle Eastern papers not only represent the interests of the Middle Eastern region as a whole, but approach the issue of Iraq's shift to democracy as an interesting and thought provoking event, whose implications for the rest of the East needs to be considered.

Following on, it is also of interest that the concepts 'Democracy' and 'Elections' make no mention of the United States at all. Instead, the co-occurrences listed here refer to the 'Country' of 'Iraq,' its 'Government,' the 'Iraqi' 'People,' and the 'Middle East' as a 'Region'. This seems to construct democracy neither as a foreign or Western concept, but intertwines with Regional Concern to establish a discourse that is Familiar with Democracy. It is important to note here that this does not suggest that democracy was necessarily viewed as an Eastern concept (note that no direct

references to 'Primitive Democracy' in Ancient Mesopotamia were found in either the Australian or Middle Eastern sources analysed), but that it was not constructed as unattainable, unintelligible or foreign. Furthermore, this concern and familiarity regarding democracy was supported by the high ranking of the 'Political' concept (fourth in the Middle Eastern papers, tenth in the Australian ones) as well as the appearance of both 'Government' and 'Country' (which do not appear in the Australian data at all). These additional concepts as well as the unclassified concept of 'Security' seem to once again reflect a Middle East that is interested in the political machinations of Iraq and their consequences for the region as a whole. Additionally, it could also be argued that these papers show a greater concern for the people of Iraq, seeing them as less of a distant, barbaric enemy and more of a trouble-stricken neighbour.

Overall, the Middle Eastern print media posits a better-rounded representation of the election in Iraq. The discourses of Regional Concern and Familiarity with Democracy contradict US Hegemony and the view of Democracy as a Western Concept that run through the Australian coverage. Instead, the Middle Eastern media avoids this homogenising and essentialist Orientalism, favouring concern for the situation in Iraq and the impact that its shift to democracy will have on the region.

Conclusion:

While neither the Australian nor the Middle Eastern print media mentioned Mesopotamia's ancient culture of 'Primitive Democracy', it is clear that these two groups of newspapers see Iraq's shift from despotism to democracy very differently. The quantitative results of ranked concepts and their co-occurrences as well as the qualitative discourse analysis reveal that these two sets of media assert very different discourses and opposing ideological positions.

Firstly, the Middle Eastern coverage of the Iraq election can be seen to forego the Hegemony of the US, and focus instead on the questions and issues facing the Middle East as a region. Specifically, Iraq's elections raise questions regarding its political process and the broader implications it may have across the Middle East. The coverage of these issues in the media construct the Middle East as a heterogenous region made up of not only a number of nation-states, but also a number of ethnic, religious and cultural groups. Furthermore, this Middle Eastern coverage does not reveal a backward, barbaric Orient that is simply incapable of adopting or understanding the sophisticated Western concept of democracy. Instead, it reveals a gradual and contemplative yet well informed move towards democracy; perhaps most revealing in juxtaposition to the West's haste rather than as a sign of the East's backwardness.

The analysis of the Australian print media, on the other hand, reveals the presence of two key discourses: US Hegemony and Democracy as a Western concept. Neither of these is particularly surprising given both Australia's close relationship with the United States and its involvement in the 'Coalition of the Willing' as well as the common assumption that democracy began with the Greek polis. Collectively however, these discourses reiterate the pervading Western ideology of the West's superiority over the East.

As stated earlier, this ideological position is analogous to Said's work on Orientalism (1978). In order to complete this seminal work, Said conducted a discourse analysis of an astounding number of academic, bureaucratic and literary texts from the early modern period, when the colonisation and construction of the East seems to have been at its peak. What is of particular relevance here is Said's assertion that the hegemonic group or coloniser (in this instance, the US) generate certain forms of knowledge about those that are subordinated or colonised (the Iraqi's), and that this knowledge is disseminated to the general public (via the Australian media). In this way, the people of the Orient are constructed as "degenerate, primitive or backward, uncivilized, (and) unreliable" (Poynting, Noble, Tabar & Collins, 2004; 35). This representation leads to the assumption that Middle Easterners - even when offered democracy and freedom – either cannot rise above their cruel, brutal 'nature' or that they are simply unable to grasp the complexities of this Western concept. Essentially, this reflects the colonialist adage that lies at the heart of Orientalism – "that it may be impossible to 'reform the savages'" (Seymour, 2004: 356).

This is particularly important given the central role that the print media, of both Australia and the Middle East, plays in reporting events such as Iraq's election to the

respective populace. However, as Noakes and Wilkins note in their analysis of the representation of the Palestinian struggle in US news, the "news media…are more than just a mere carrier of information from the source to the individual. Media frames interact with and influence the construction of identities, ideas, opinions etc" (2002: 650-651).

This therefore raises a number of questions regarding the coverage of Iraq's election, particularly by the Australian print media. Specifically, the Australian media must be careful not to be reductive in its coverage of Iraq and avoid falling back on pervading ideologies. In this way, the Australian media can move beyond Orientalist discourses and report a more well-balanced story; one that frames Iraq less in terms of US hegemony and more in terms of the consequences that events such as the Iraqi election may have throughout the Middle East. Here, the Australian print media can not only play a role in disseminating a culture of empathy and support for the people of Iraq, but it may also play a larger role in helping Australians to re-think the binary opposition between East and West.

Finally, there is yet a larger significance to the research presented here. By looking back in time to the dawn of civilization, we are able to see that democracy has long played a central role in the governance of human affairs. Well before the classical Greeks, the Ancient Mesopotamians ruled the world's first city-states via a process Jacobsen has termed 'Primitive Democracy' (Jacobsen, 1970b). By mentioning this, both the Australian and Middle Eastern media can serve to educate many about the origins of this sophisticated political process. In turn, the media can help to shift the popular conception that democracy is a Western concept that is being imposed on the East. Potentially, with the stigma of being Western removed and the education of democracy's Eastern origins complete, the people of Iraq may feel a sense of 'ownership' over democracy and take pride in endorsing it. By telling a more well rounded and historically accurate story, both the Middle Eastern and the Australian print media can play a role in abating the conflict in Iraq and aiding the shift towards a free, egalitarian and democratic nation.

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Appendix A: Australian newspapers: Concepts and Co-Occurrences

Theme	Concept Top 10	Rank	Freq	%age	Co-Occurance Top 5	Freq	%age
Iraq	**Iraq**	1	838	100%	US	269	32%
					Election	212	25%
					Democracy	189	22%
					Iraqi	187	22%
					People	142	16%
	Iraqi	7	312	37%	Iraq	187	59%
					US	107	34%
					People	102	32%
					Election	100	32%
					Elections	74	23%
United States	**US**	2	506	60%	Iraq	269	53%
					Bush	143	28%
					Iraqi	107	21%
					Democracy	103	20%
					Election	101	19%
	Bush	6	315	37%	US	143	45%
					Iraq	140	44%
					Democracy	86	27%
					World	66	20%
					Freedom	61	19%
Democracy	**Democracy**	3	371	44%	Iraq	189	50%
					Election	112	30%
					US	103	27%
					Bush	86	23%
					People	86	23%
	Election	4	366	43%	Iraq	212	57%
					Democracy	112	30%
					US	101	27%
					Vote	100	27%
					Iraqi	100	27%
	Vote	9	241	28%	Iraq	128	53%
					Election	100	41%
					People	74	30%
					Elections	62	25%
					Iraqi	62	25%
Politics & People	**People**	5	330	39%	Iraq	142	43%
					Iraqi	102	30%
					Election	87	26%
					Democracy	86	26%
					Vote	74	22%
	World	8	252	30%	Iraq	112	44%
					US	87	34%
					Democracy	79	31%
					Bush	66	26%
					Freedom	52	20%
	Political	10	241	28%	Iraq	117	48%
					Election	58	24%
					US	57	23%
					Democracy	49	20%
					Iraqi	49	20%

Note: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Appendix B: Middle Eastern newspapers: Concepts and Co-Occurrences

Theme	Concept Top 10	Rank	Freq	%000age	Co-Occurance Top 5	Freq	%age
Iraq	**Iraq**	1	385	100%	Elections	90	23%
					Iraqi	88	23%
					Democracy	72	19%
					Country	71	18%
					US	69	18%
	Iraqi	7	148	38%	Iraq	88	59%
					Elections	50	34%
					People	36	24%
					Democracy	31	21%
					Security	30	20%
Democracy	**Democracy**	2	200	52%	Iraq	72	36%
					Elections	42	21%
					Middle East	38	19%
					People	38	19%
					Region	37	19%
	Election	5	155	40%	Iraq	90	58%
					Iraqi	50	32%
					Democracy	42	27%
					Country	26	17%
					Government	24	15%
United States	**US**	3	176	46%	Iraq	69	39%
					American	43	24%
					Government	34	19%
					Democracy	34	19%
					Bush	34	19%
Politics and People	**Political**	4	157	41%	Iraq	62	39%
					Democracy	29	18%
					Government	28	18%
					Arab	27	17%
					Region	25	16%
	Government	6	148	38%	Iraq	64	43%
					US	34	23%
					American	31	21%
					Political	28	19%
					Iraqi	27	18%
	Arab	8	137	36%	World	46	34%
					Iraq	41	30%
					Region	32	23%
					US	32	23%
					Democracy	29	21%
	People	9	131	34%	Iraq	50	38%
					Democracy	38	29%
					Iraqi	36	27%
					Government	23	18%
					Middle East	22	17%
	Country	10	130	34%	Iraq	71	55%
					Democracy	33	25%
					Iraqi	27	21%
					Elections	26	20%
					Government	24	18%

Note: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.