Impartiality Reconsidered: Al Jazeera and Jessica Lynch

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In June 2004, then National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, addressed rumors that President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair had discussed attacking the headquarters of the Al Jazeera network in Qatar. Speaking to members of the press, Secretary Rice stated, "I don't think anybody has suggested the shutting down of Al Jazeera. I do think people have suggested that it would be a good thing if the reporting were accurate on Al Jazeera, and if it were not slanted in ways that appears to be, at times, just purely inaccurate. And so that's been the issue with Al Jazeera." In this way, Rice expressed a criticism common among American government officials at the time, and one that filtered down to the American public. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, and the subsequent 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, Al Jazeera broadcasted videos of Osama Bin Laden and other high ranking leaders of the Taliban. U.S officials criticized its willingness to publish these videos and considered their publication to be anti-American propaganda. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld remarked, "We know that Aljazeera has a pattern of playing Taliban propaganda over, and over, and over again. And they have a pattern of not making judgments about the accuracy of the propaganda." While Al Jazeera’s coverage of the United States’ wars in the Middle East was certainly controversial, the American accusations of propaganda were unfounded. Indeed, it will be argued in this essay that Al Jazeera’s reporting was more accurate and reliable than American media outlets during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S media coverage of the Iraq invasion served to propagate many of the ultimately wholly misinformed claims and accusations made by members of the George W. Bush Administration. The misconceptions regarding Al-Qaeda’s involvement in Iraq as well as the questionable legality of the war disseminated by the American media fueled pro-war sentiments throughout the American public. A poll conducted by the

2 Ibid.
Program on International Policy in October 2003 revealed that 60% of respondents believed at least one of the following misconceptions: that weapons of mass destruction had been discovered in Iraq, that a link between Al-Qaeda and Iraq had been found, and that global public opinion favored intervention in Iraq.³

In this essay, I use Private Jessica Lynch’s capture to both examine and demonstrate the impartial and critical nature of Al Jazeera’s reporting. On March 23, 2003, the United States Army convoy of the 507th Ordinance Maintenance Company, in which 19-year-old Private Jessica Lynch was assigned, took a wrong turn and found itself driving through downtown Nasiriyah, a Saddam loyalist city in Southeastern Iraq. Militants ambushed the disoriented convoy with small arms and rocket fire. One rocket propelled grenade, launched by Iraqi soldiers, slammed into Lynch’s Humvee, causing it to crash. The attack left three passengers dead and Lynch seriously wounded. Lynch was later rescued from an Iraqi military hospital by an elite team of U.S Marines and Navy Seals. As will be shown below, a barrage of inaccurate reporting by U.S media regarding tales of heroic feats on the part of Lynch quickly followed her rescue. In contrast to the exaggerated and dubious American media renditions that included a questionably contrived Washington Post article, as well as a dramatized videotape of the rescue circulated by the US Department of Defense, analysis of Al Jazeera’s coverage of the capture of Private Jessica Lynch reveals accurate and well researched reports that illuminate the bias and misrepresentation of many American media outlets.

A Historic Commitment to Impartial Reporting

Founded in 1995, Al Jazeera has quickly become the largest and most influential Arab news channel in the Middle East. The Arab branch of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) had previously dominated the area; however, after publishing an investigation into human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, its Saudi funding dissolved and the news corporation disbanded.\(^4\) Sheikh Hamad of Qatar, disappointed by this attack on freedom of the press, provided a loan to support the founding of Al Jazeera and promised producers and correspondents their right to "report the news as they see it, [for] I believe criticism can be a good thing, and some discomfort for government officials is a small price to pay for this new freedom."\(^5\) This statement reveals the founding principle of the news station, which is a commitment to fair and accurate reporting.

Al Jazeera has been censored and banned at various times in several Arab countries because of its dedication to presenting complete and balanced stories from all sides, even if that means criticizing powerful government regimes. For example, on January 27, 1999, Al Jazeera broadcasted interviews that reporters had conducted with anti-government Algerian dissidents. At the time, the Algerian government had recently experienced a military coup purportedly aimed at ending an eight-year long civil war between the government and several armed insurgency groups. Accusations of state-condoned massacres and targeted killings prompted Algerian officials to cut power to several large cities to prevent access to Al Jazeera’s coverage.

The new government of Algeria did not want Al Jazeera broadcasts to stir up unrest and protest while it still held its fledgling leadership.\textsuperscript{6}

Al Jazeera demonstrated time and again that it would not hesitate to criticize the powerful and autocratic governments of the Middle East. For example, on June 4, 1999, Al Jazeera broadcasted a controversial interview with a Kuwaiti citizen living abroad in Norway. The emigrant interviewed expressed his criticism of the Kuwaiti regime, particularly the Emir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, for Kuwait’s support of the United States during the Gulf War. In response, Kuwait’s Minister of Information shut down the Al Jazeera office in the country and forbid Al Jazeera from performing any activity in Kuwait. He chastised Al Jazeera for attacking the integrity of the country, and for failing to appropriately censor the interview.\textsuperscript{7}

Similarly, Al Jazeera ran footage of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s sixty-third birthday party in April 2000. Al Jazeera journalists juxtaposed videos of starving young Iraqis alongside the broadcast of the decadent and lavish party thrown by Saddam. While Iraqi officials did not ban Al Jazeera at the time, they lambasted the channel for misrepresenting the Iraqi government and attempting to cater to a pro-American agenda.\textsuperscript{8}

The establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 and her subsequent victories over Arab coalition attacks in the 1948 and 1967 Wars, have long since fostered strong sensitivities toward Israel in the Arab world. For the sake of fair and accurate reporting, Al Jazeera has not shied away from addressing these sensitive issues. The network faced a particularly harsh backlash in 1996 when an Al Jazeera reporter interviewed Hebrew-speaking Israelis for a piece regarding the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This interview was the first time that an Arabic news

\textsuperscript{6} Anthony Maalouf, \textit{The Influence of Al-Jazeera in the Arab World & the Response of Arab Governments} (Villanova, PA: Villanova University, 2008).

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
channel had Hebrew-speaking Israelis on air. Many Arab countries, embittered by the continued existence of Israel and the plight of Palestinian refugees, saw the piece as inherently biased towards Israel. The fair reporting given by Al Jazeera on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulted in Arab regimes accusing Al Jazeera of being pro-Zionist, or part of some broad Israeli conspiracy.

Dedicated to fighting censorship and portraying the whole story, Al Jazeera has ruffled many feathers in the Arab world, but its newsroom personnel have routinely defended the network’s duty to present all of the news, regardless of external pressures. Thus, it is not only the government of the United States that criticizes the Arab news channel. The ire of governments in the Arab world toward the news station underscores Al Jazeera's impartiality.

**Controversy in Afghanistan and Iraq**

Criticism and pressure toward Al Jazeera from the United States manifested during the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Criticized by the United States and other Western nations for airing video tapes of Osama Bin Laden during the war in Afghanistan, Al Jazeera also faced accusations of serving as a mouthpiece for terrorism. United States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was particularly vocal in his criticisms of the station. Accusing Al Jazeera of “playing Taliban propaganda over, and over, and over again,” Rumsfeld felt Al Jazeera was placing American lives in danger with anti-Western rhetoric. Referring to Al Jazeera's reporters, U.S State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher stated in 2001 that "we would certainly like to see them tone down the rhetoric."\(^9\) There was some question as to how far the United States government would be willing to go to tone down that rhetoric.

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Between the years 2001 and 2005, Al Jazeera suffered a series of suspicious military attacks upon their offices and journalists that appeared to indicate intervention on the part of American forces. For example, on the morning of November 13, 2001, a U.S. missile destroyed Al Jazeera’s Kabul office. The United States later issued a statement saying that there had been an intelligence error, and that the bombing had been a mistake. Mohammed Jassim al-Ali, the directing manager of the Kabul office, expressed doubts about the purely accidental nature of the missile strike, noting that “They know where we are located and they know what [equipment] we have in our office. We did not get any warning.”\(^\text{10}\) Al Jazeera’s Kabul office had, “on several occasions,” published stories, photographs, and videos of women and children that had been killed as a result of the United States’ campaign in Afghanistan.\(^\text{11}\) U.S. government officials blamed its coverage for the spread of anti-American and anti-Western sentiments in the region.

One month later, on December 15, 2001, U.S forces in Afghanistan arrested Al Jazeera cameraman Sami Al-Hajj and transported him to Cuba for detention at Guantanamo Bay Prison. Held for six years, Al-Hajj claims he suffered through years of physical and sexual abuse, as well as religious persecution. In 2011, WikiLeaks released Al-Hajj’s Guantanamo detainee file.\(^\text{12}\) The file listed Al-Hajj as a known member of Al-Qaeda. However, Al-Hajj claims that almost every interrogation dealt with his knowledge of the Al Jazeera network. His captors displayed interest in how Al Jazeera conducted its newsgathering, particularly how Al Jazeera obtained the Bin Laden tapes.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^\text{11}\) Ibid.
And then, much like the 2001 bombing in Kabul, a U.S missile hit the Baghdad offices of Al Jazeera on April 8, 2003, during the initial invasion of Iraq by the coalition forces. The office caught fire, and journalist Tarek Ayoub perished in the blaze. A spokesman for the U. S forces firmly stated that the Al Jazeera office “was not and never had been a target.”

David Blunkett, Britain’s Home Secretary, vocalized British and Western criticism of Al Jazeera’s coverage of the Iraq invasion. “It's hard to get the true facts, Secretary Blunkett charged, “if the reporters of Al Jazeera… are provided with facilities and support from the [Saddam] regime.”

Rumors that Al Jazeera was a military target persisted throughout November 2005 as tensions between the United States and Al Jazeera reached a climax. Several anonymous sources came forward and revealed a classified transcript of a meeting between U.S President George Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair. During the meeting, Bush supposedly expressed interest in bombing the Al Jazeera headquarters in Doha, the capital of Qatar. White House Spokesman Scott McClellan dismissed the transcript saying, “We are not interested in dignifying something so outlandish and incomprehensible with a response.”

The British government chose not to comment on the document. However, it did prosecute two civil employees for breaching Britain's Official Secrets Act, thereby suggesting some accuracy to these allegations. Al Jazeera released an official response to the rumors of the transcript, stating, "If the report is correct, then this would be both shocking and worrisome not only to Al Jazeera but to media organizations across the world, it would cast serious doubts in regard to the U.S. administration's version of previous incidents involving Al Jazeera's journalists and offices.”

17 Ibid.
Understanding the details surrounding the two bombings of Al Jazeera regional headquarters, as well as the detainment of an Al Jazeera reporter, is crucial when considering latent bias and the intent of Iraq and Afghanistan wartime articles. The threats and pressures Al Jazeera faced certainly contained the potential to have an impact upon the attitudes and perspectives of its reporters, cameramen, and journalists as U.S conflicts unfolded in the Middle East. But as coverage of the Jessica Lynch case will show, reporters did not display any feelings of victimization, as their dedication to presenting impartial and fair reporting persisted.

**U.S Media and the Construction of an American Hero**

Such impartiality can be questioned in terms of how the American media covered the Jessica Lynch capture and rescue. On March 23, 2003, the 507th OMC took a wrong turn and found itself driving through downtown Nasiriyah. Ambushed by militia groups, the convoy took heavy fire. As a maintenance unit ill-equipped for infantry battle, the convoy suffered nine casualties and six of its soldiers were taken captive. The militiamen blindfolded five of the soldiers—Edgar Hernandez, Joseph Hudson, Shoshana Johnson, Patrick Miller, and James Riley—and took them to a prison in Baghdad. Fearful of the advancing U.S forces, their Iraqi captives kept the hostages on the move, transporting them between various government and private buildings.\(^\text{18}\) While this was happening, Jessica Lynch and her colleague, Lori Piestewa, were taken to a military hospital in Nasiriyah by the militiamen because they had been severely injured in the firefight.

On the same day of the ambush, Al Jazeera broadcast-footage of the soldiers the network had received from the Iraqi captors, thereby demonstrating access to information unavailable to

Western media outlets. In watching this video, it is clear that the five members of the 507th appeared bloodied and visibly frightened as their captures asked them to identify themselves and respond to interview questions.\(^{19}\) Al Jazeera material included the interrogation of 23-year old Private First Class Patrick Miller, which involved questioning why he had come to Iraq. He responded, “I fix broke stuff. I come to shoot only if I am shot at. They don’t bother me, I don’t bother them.”\(^{20}\) Al Jazeera also aired footage depicting an Iraqi captor smiling as he showed the cameraman the bodies of several deceased soldiers.\(^{21}\) The United States quickly condemned the display of this footage. In its criticism of Al Jazeera’s decision to publish the video, the United States cited the 13\(^{th}\) Article of the Geneva Convention in regards to Prisoners of War: “Prisoners of war must at all times be protected, particularly against acts of violence and intimidation and against insults and public curiosity.”\(^{22}\)

Some members of the 507\(^{th}\) were absent from the Al Jazeera broadcasted video, most notably the female soldiers Jessica Lynch and Lori Piestewa. American intelligence would later confirm that in the melee of the convoy ambush, a rocket propelled grenade launched by an Iraqi militiaman hit the Humvee containing Lynch and Piestewa, gravely injuring Private Lynch and Private Piestewa. Three hours later, the Iraqi fighters dropped Lynch and Piestewa off at a military hospital in Nasiriyah. Lynch would later recollect no memories of events following the crash.\(^{23}\) The Iraqi doctors and nurses set to treating Lynch’s severe wounds, wounds that included a shattered shoulder, broken leg, and fractured spine. Piestewa, however, had sustained fatal injuries and died shortly after arriving at the hospital.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.
\(^{21}\) Ibid.
The United States government proved that it was not above choreographing a news story, for it decided to utilize the rescue of Jessica Lynch from the hospital to evoke national pride in American troops, thereby cultivating support for the war. On April 1, 2003, after over a week in an Iraqi hospital, the Defense Department sent an elite team of U.S Marines and Navy Seals to the military hospital in Nasiriyah purportedly to rescue Lynch. Supposedly, there were armed militia guarding the hospital, and this video shows the Marines and Seals acting as if they were. But in fact, the militia had moved on days before, and the American military was up against no more than sick patients and overworked doctors. The video begins with footage of military personnel sitting around a large table apparently planning Lynch’s rescue, followed by scenes of the soldiers arming themselves and their convoy for battle. Once near the hospital, the video turns to the green light night vision camera, and the soldiers are seen entering the building. There is no gunfire or signs of resistance during this entry. Multiple cameras were used to produce this film, as the footage shifts from first person video to a placed camera several times. Lynch is shown on camera whimpering as she speaks to officers before being lifted down the stairs and out to an awaiting aircraft where she is quickly draped with an American flag and told, “can you smile, can you smile for (pause)… for the (pause) family.”

While Lynch recovered at hospitals in both Iraq and Germany, dramatized stories of her heroics in battle, stemming from an ill-informed Washington Post article, quickly spread through the nation's media, capturing the American imagination. On April 3, 2003, The Washington Post ran an article entitled, “She Was Fighting to the Death: Details Emerging of W. Va. Soldier’s Capture and Rescue.” Based on an interview with an unnamed government official, the article asserted that “[Lynch] fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers after Iraqi forces ambushed the Army’s 507th Ordinance Maintenance Company, firing her weapon until she ran

out of ammunition.”25 The article reported that Lynch had gone down fighting and “did not want to be taken alive.” It also said that Lynch had been stabbed as well as shot. Subsequent medical reports, however, revealed that Lynch did not fire a single shot at the enemy, nor was she shot or stabbed. The initial details of Lynch’s ordeal ultimately failed to match those that she herself provided to the Congress during testimony in 2007.

One American journalist, Rick Bragg, made a highly speculative claim that Lynch was raped by the Iraqi soldiers that ambushed her convoy, arguably a claim that taps into Orientalist fears of Americans who have preconceived notions of Muslims as sexually depraved and violent. He did so in a much quoted biography of Lynch published in the fall of 2003. Lynch, herself, has never claimed to have been raped, nor does she remember ever being assaulted. However, because she lost her memory for three hours following the Humvee crash, Bragg ventured that it was during this time that Lynch was anally raped and beaten.26 The Iraqi doctors that treated Lynch are adamant that her injuries were consistent with a car crash, not of beatings, and that there were no signs of sexual assault. The doctors maintain that she arrived fully clothed at the hospital with no indication that her clothing had been, at any point, ripped open or removed.27 To this day, Lynch does not claim to have been raped by her assailants. Bragg, however, felt that it was necessary to show the American public what can and does happen to female soldiers overseas, and so included the reference to rape against Lynch’s own testimony. The inclusion of this false assertion only furthered the misinformed and inaccurate story line that American media disseminated to the public.

26 Bragg, I Am a Soldier Too: The Jessica Lynch Story.
Captivated by these news stories, Lynch's captivity also attracted the attention of Hollywood producers and garnered numerous movie offers, thereby fortifying the false construction of an American hero. One of the films produced was *Saving Jessica Lynch*, a made-for-television special that aired on NBC in November 2003. Even though many of the claims of heroism would be revealed to be false, by Lynch herself, *Saving Jessica Lynch* caters to the erroneous tale of courage and “little-girl Rambo” bravery that initially captivated the public. One crucial inaccuracy in the film *Saving Jessica Lynch* was a scene in which Lynch was interrogated and slapped. Lynch has been consistently adamant about her treatment at the hospital. She has firmly stated that she was never questioned or struck. Lynch also has, on numerous occasions, expressed her gratitude to the Iraqi doctors for their kindness and hard work in treating her wounds after the firefight. The inclusion of such a scene shows a motive on the part of the filmmaker and sponsors to present a dramatized, politicized version of Lynch’s story. Portraying Lynch as being beaten and interrogated by militant fighters goes against all known facts of the case and contributes to the perpetration of the inaccurate stories that were spread about Lynch’s capture. The film is blatantly inconsistent with fact and is not conducive in attempting to depict the accurate story to the American public.

Although Lynch herself would ultimately dismiss the authenticities of these tales, the country remained captivated by her story of battle and survival. However, in addition to admirers, Lynch also found many critical of the way in which her story developed through the media. For some, the story seemed to possess the characteristics of government propaganda. Only a few months old, the Iraq War needed a stronger support base. Proponents of the war needed the heroic, captive teenager to provide a rallying point for Americans that displayed

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indecisiveness about the war. As a whole, media outlets in the United States did not provide accurate and consistent reporting of the facts in the Jessica Lynch case. Unanswered questions and accusations surrounded the story, many of which still remain unresolved. An attempt for resolution was made in 2008, when Lynch testified to the United States House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform about her time spent in Iraq in a case that sought to determine whether parts of her story had been intentionally fabricated by government or military officials to serve a greater political agenda.²⁹

Al Jazeera Representations of the Lynch Capture and Rescue

The articles examining the Lynch capture and rescue that are available through the Al Jazeera archive do not address the initial story of the March ambush of the 507th or capture of the 507th POWs. Instead, the articles on its English-language website, america.aljazeera.com, pertain to the portrayal of the Lynch case by the American military and media outlets, and its archived coverage of this story begins in May 2003. A review of these articles shows that this news outlet took great pains to investigate the Lynch case, thereby bringing to light many of the inaccuracies in Western media reporting of it.

The first archived piece regarding the capture of Private Lynch appeared on May 24, 2003, nearly two months after her rescue.³⁰ Entitled, “US Rescue Mission May be Hype,” this article—and every subsequent Al Jazeera article mentioned herein—does not list authors for the piece, probably because the author is representing the Al Jazeera network as a whole entity. The article expressed skepticism regarding the intentions of the American government in sending an

elite team of Marines and Navy Seals on April 1, 2003 to raid the Iraqi hospital where Lynch had been held. The Al Jazeera article analyzes the political purpose the dramatic rescue and video served by referencing a BBC investigation that cited, “after interviewing Iraqis, the rescue may have been a Hollywood-style stunt designed to boost patriotism at a difficult time in the war.”

The Al Jazeera author balances this negative evaluation by allowing for testimony from Pentagon spokesman Marine Lt. Col. Dave Lapan who, “insisted there were fire-fights outside the hospital with ‘irregular Iraqi forces’ and to suggest blanks were used was silly.’ Ultimately, the article acknowledges that “there have been a number of reports with varying claims,” and proceeds to address several of these, including allegations Lynch had been abused at the hospital as well as the “mistaken” coverage of the Lynch case in the Washington Post. The author introduces the American perception of the Lynch rescue as a “daring heroic act,” but also addressed the fact that “questions are beginning to emerge about the validity of some points.” This Al Jazeera article inserts facts to dispel some myths and rumors surrounding the story of Lynch’s rescue. The language of the article is designed to raise doubts among readers regarding the accuracy of American portrayals of the rescue. And yet, it still incorporates a variety of sources ranging from the Pentagon, U.S. news outlets, and the BBC to provide a balance of perceptions.

The next article regarding Lynch in the Al Jazeera archive was published two months later. On July 22, 2003, Al Jazeera published an article entitled, “US Army ‘Heroine’ in Iraq Returns Home.” The tone of the article is set when Al Jazeera decides to place the word "heroine" in quotation marks, thereby calling into question American media coverage of her story. Unlike the prior article, “US Army ‘Heroine’ in Iraq Returns Home” opens with an

31 Ibid.
aggressive criticism of the way in which American media outlets presented Lynch and her story. “Her experience was over-dramatized by a section of the US media,” the Al Jazeera journalist writes, "to the point of turning it into blatant government propaganda.” The author of this article describes Lynch’s actions during the events of March 23 as being “far from a scene of battlefield heroism.” The attitude of the author and Al Jazeera in this article is critical and condemning of American media, claiming the case had been “hyped into a media fiction of US heroism.”

In November, upon the publication of Rick Bragg’s biography, Al Jazeera documented an even more controversial aspect of the Lynch case, the alleged rape that occurred during her capture. Conflicting reports following Lynch’s rescue claim that militants had sexually assaulted her during a “missing” three hours between the time of the ambush and her arrival at the hospital. Published by Al Jazeera on the very same day of the book's release, which was Veteran's Day, the article does not blindly celebrate the American military. Titled “Jessica Rape Claim Shocks Iraqi Doctors,” the journalist instead interviews the hospital staff that treated Lynch after the attack on her convoy, something that Western media failed to do. Dr. Jamal Kadhim Shwail, the first doctor to examine Lynch, did not think to check Lynch for signs of rape. “The thought did not cross my mind,” he said. “Her injuries were consistent with severe trauma, a car crash, nothing else. Her clothes were not torn, her boots had not been removed. There is no way she could have been raped.” Al Jazeera’s interviews with the Iraqi doctors are novel in that no American news channels or journalists had reached out to the Iraqi staff for answers, perhaps because they had no reporters fluent in Arabic. The interview conducted by Al Jazeera with the

33 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
presiding doctor offered a unique point of view that had not been evident in prior American articles. Particularly dense with quotes, the article offers few of the author’s own words, making analysis of his or her personal opinion more difficult. However, the author selected quotes that would indicate that Al Jazeera did not believe the representation of Lynch’s hospital stay had been entirely accurate and complete in American media portrayals.

Al Jazeera published a couple of articles pertaining to the investigation into allegations that the Pentagon deliberately used Lynch as a “propaganda pawn.” These articles began in November 2003 with a piece entitled “Jessica Lynch Criticizes Pentagon” and ended in April 2007 with “‘Heroes’ Take aim at Pentagon Lies.” The first article, “Jessica Lynch Criticizes Pentagon,” published on November 8, 2003, addressed Lynch’s response to the way in which the U.S military portrayed her rescue from an Iraqi hospital the previous spring. The article runs through a quick summary of interviews and highlights some of the myths that were circling the Lynch affair including how “the dramatic images stoked American patriotism and Lynch was transformed into an icon.” The author goes on to state, “Her [Lynch] criticism is certain to stoke the ongoing debate over the veracity of the official account of the "rescue mission" as well as the wider issue of the "spin" the US government continuously gave to the Iraq war.” The author’s inclusion of quotation marks around certain words in this statement casts doubts in the readers' minds of the veracity of not only American representation of the Lynch case, but also the U.S-led war in Iraq as a whole.

The second article, “‘Heroes' Take Aim at Pentagon Lies,” pertains directly to the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee hearing that investigated whether the stories of Lynch and former NFL football star, Pat Tillman, had been intentionally sensationalized to serve

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political and military purposes. Published on April 25, 2007, the article summarizes both cases, with a primary focus on Tillman’s story. The author addresses the investigation into whether “the Pentagon deliberately lied to turn soldiers Jessica Lynch and Pat Tillman into heroes.” With sub-headlines of “Manufactured Narrative” and “Sensationalized Details,” as well at the placement of “Heroes” in quotation marks in the title, the author of this article chose words that advanced a belief that the United States and her media deliberately misinformed the American public in order to serve its own purposes of warmongering.

Conclusions

Al Jazeera distinguished its portrayal of the Lynch ordeal from that of the American press and other international media in that they did not appear to have ever run any of the dramatized or exaggerated storylines that circulated following Lynch’s rescue. Given the preexisting tensions between the United States and Al Jazeera at the time of Lynch’s capture, one may have anticipated jabs at U.S propaganda and cover-ups, or at least a consistently skewed perspective displayed. Although critical of the US government and American media, Al Jazeera never engaged in unprofessional attacks. Furthermore, although condemned for their broadcasted footage of the American POW’s, Al Jazeera did not seem to advocate an Islamist or religiously biased representation of Lynch’s capture and rescue. Al Jazeera appeared to have remained true to their founding principle of impartially presenting the news "as they see it." The articles published by Al Jazeera criticized American misrepresentations and made efforts to resolve conflicting stories by interviewing the doctors and nurses who interacted with Lynch firsthand. The unknown authors of the articles did not openly rebuke the United States or her military,

rather, they took a journalistic high-road in addressing controversy without being overly prescriptive in their opinion.
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