

**BBC TV's *Panorama*,
conflict coverage and
the 'Westminster
consensus'**

David McQueen

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David Adrian McQueen

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Doctor of Philosophy***

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'Let nation speak peace unto nation' (official BBC motto until 1934)

'*Quaecunq*ue' [Whatever] (official BBC motto from 1934)

Abstract

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David Adrian McQueen

The BBC's 'flagship' current affairs series *Panorama*, occupies a central place in Britain's television history and yet, surprisingly, it is relatively neglected in academic studies of the medium. Much that has been written focuses on *Panorama*'s coverage of armed conflicts (notably Suez, Northern Ireland and the Falklands) and deals, primarily, with programmes which met with Government disapproval and censure. However, little has been written on *Panorama*'s less controversial, more routine war reporting, or on the programme's more recent history, its evolving journalistic practices and place within the current affairs form. This thesis explores these areas and examines the framing of war narratives within *Panorama*'s coverage of the Gulf conflicts of 1991 and 2003.

One accusation in studies looking beyond *Panorama*'s more contentious episodes is that the series has, traditionally, (over)represented 'establishment' or elite perspectives in its reporting. This charge has been made by media scholars (Williams 1968; Hall *et al.* 1981; Born, 2004), champions of rival current affairs programmes (see Goddard *et al.* 2007) and even by a number of senior figures within the BBC and *Panorama* itself (Day 1990; Dyke 2004a). This thesis tests that view in relation to an archive of *Panorama* programmes made between 1987 and 2004, with particular reference to its coverage of the First and Second Gulf Wars. The study aims to establish if *Panorama* has, in fact, patrolled the 'limits of debate', largely confined itself to 'elite views' and predominantly reflected the 'Westminster consensus' in its coverage of conflict.

The thesis is supported by interviews with current and former *Panorama* staff and contains discussion of working practices at *Panorama*, particularly as they relate to reporting conflicts involving British armed forces. There is an assessment of the BBC's journalistic culture and developments within the News and Current Affairs directorate in the period under discussion; the legal and institutional constraints under which the series operated; challenges and threats to the current affairs tradition; wider concerns relating to television's coverage of war in general, and the two wars against Iraq specifically. Questions of indexing and framing are foregrounded in textual and content analysis of forty-two episodes dealing with the Gulf Wars to assess whether *Panorama*'s coverage was overdetermined by official sources and elite perspectives or if it gave adequate space to a diversity of opinions and explanations for the conflicts and thereby fulfilled its legal obligations and Public Service role.

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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

David McQueen

31st August 2010

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research Project Overview

This thesis is a study of the BBC's 'flagship' current affairs programme *Panorama* between the years 1987-2004. *Panorama's* investigations and reports in these seventeen years are a reflection of national and international concerns at the time. They also shed light on the BBC's journalistic culture, production practices, institutional constraints and the particular policy-making context of the News and Current Affairs Department.

Panorama's coverage of armed conflict between 1987 and 2004 is the main research focus for this thesis, particularly the First and Second Gulf Wars. The history of *Panorama* shows that at times of war, particularly a war lacking wide public consensus, media representations of the conflict may become fiercely contested. Furthermore, *Panorama's* iconic status and close association with the BBC's identity has meant that any disputes over particular episodes with the government of the day have had a powerful impact upon the Corporation when they have occurred (see Born 2005; Lindley 2003a, Bolton 1990; Day 1989). However, it is likely that the sense of frequency, if not the intensity, of such disputes is somewhat magnified by the focus of existing media histories on the more contentious *Panorama* episodes.

This thesis will address itself to identifying major differences in the coverage of armed conflict involving British troops where there has been fairly wide 'consensual support' in Westminster (as in the First Gulf War and Afghanistan) against conflicts where divisions and disagreements in Parliament and beyond have been quite evident (Suez, Northern Ireland and the 2003 invasion of Iraq). The most detailed attention will be paid specifically to seventeen episodes covering the Persian (or First) Gulf War (1991) and twenty-five episodes broadcast between 2001 and 2005 dealing with events surrounding the, so-called, Second Gulf War (2003) as they offer the opportunity for both content and qualitative analysis of two conflicts with highly replicable features. This analysis, in

combination with interviews with staff and research of existing literature will be used to judge how the widely differing levels of parliamentary support for each war was reflected in the framing of *Panorama's* war coverage. Analysis of *Panorama's* war reporting in the 'Gulf I' and 'Gulf II' wars will be used to show if Daniel Hallin's explanatory framework for US media's coverage of the Vietnam and First Gulf War can be applied to a particular British current affairs context. Charges that *Panorama* echoes, and is bound by, Parliamentary consensus and 'establishment' discourse can thus be carefully assessed.

The focus on a single current affairs series can explore in more detail *why* war coverage took a particular form. If *Panorama's* investigations are found to remain within Hallin's 'Sphere of Consensus and Sphere of Legitimate Controversy' or stray into the 'Sphere of Deviance' at what level are these decisions being made? How do programme makers cope with representing perspectives of the war that were outside the 'Parliamentary party view', if they do at all? Can the effect of the BBC's senior management approach be seen at programme making level? Is there a noticeable change in *Panorama's* war coverage post-2000 under the supposedly more 'liberal' regime of Greg Dyke compared to his predecessor John Birt, for instance?

It is hoped that this close analysis of a high-profile current affairs series can provide detailed evidence for some of the wider debates on war reporting and help provide an understanding of some of the many, interconnecting macro and micro processes and forces that shape broadcast journalism, particularly at time of war.

Hypothesis

By surveying the academic literature, interviewing a number of former and current *Panorama* staff and conducting initial work on the archive a hypothesis or ‘tentative generalization concerning the relationship between two or more variables’ (Wimmer and Dominick 1997, p.480) was developed. This is expressed simply as ‘*Panorama*’s conflict coverage reflects the Westminster consensus’. This hypothesis emerged from reading critical literature which claimed broadly similar things about British broadcasters’ and, specifically, the BBC’s News and Current Affairs’ coverage of war (see Chapters 4.3, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1). It also reflected in conclusions reached within the smaller body of literature dealing with *Panorama* directly, specifically in Hall *et al*’s (1981) essay. The *Panorama* archive research presented an opportunity to test a frequently made assertion, expressed with some variation in critical literature. An important variation is the use of the broader terms ‘elite discourse’, ‘elite opinion’ or ‘elite consensus’ (in place of Westminster consensus’) which was also found to be ‘echoed’ in broadcast war coverage, especially at the BBC.

While not synonymous, the terms ‘Westminster consensus’ and ‘elite consensus’ will be treated as broadly parallel in this study, referring to a long history of critical scholarship in which the BBC’s relationship to ‘the government’, ‘The State’ and other political and economic ‘centres of power’ is seen as problematic (see Schlesinger 1992). In this respect the use of the term ‘elites’ in this study is derived from a critical tradition of scholarship that gives due significance to the (structuring) influence of class, and in which political ‘elites’ are often regarded as representing the broadly congruent interests of a relatively ‘small, socio-economically and politically homogenous group’ (McAllister 1991, p.237). Exactly how congruent such interests are or how ‘homogenous’ British ruling elites are is clearly a matter for debate, but Milliband echoes Hall *et al.* 1981 in arguing that these shared or congruent (class) interests are protected and maintained by ‘The State’, composed of various institutions such as parliamentary assemblies, the military, the police, the judiciary and the government and whose interrelationship shapes the form of the state system:

It is these institutions in which ‘state power’ lies, and it is through them that this power is wielded in its different manifestations by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions – presidents, prime ministers and their ministerial colleagues; high civil servants and other state administrators; top military men; judges of the higher courts; some at least of the leading members of parliamentary assemblies [...] These are the people who constitute what may be described as the state elite.

(Milliband cited O’Malley 1994, p.174)

If this definition of ‘elites’ poses a danger of being too all-inclusive, the definition of the ‘Westminster consensus’ (or lack of it) can, it is hoped, be more accurately and narrowly gauged as that publicly expressed in Commons votes on a given issue, such as support for military action in Iraq in 1991 and 2003. Here, ‘the consensus’, of course, is that *public* expression of agreement and compromise represented in an open vote in the House of Commons and does not account for the privately held views of M.P.s whose parliamentary careers may depend on compliance with the party whip or the views of a party leadership, rather than their own views, or those of fellow party members or constituents.

As mentioned already, a survey of the literature (see below and Chapter 4) reveals that while there is a substantial body of research employing textual and/or content analysis-based studies of news coverage of war, there is remarkably little on *current affairs* coverage of wars, especially the two Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003 which are ideally suited to a comparative study, given the widely different degree of ‘parliamentary consensus’ for these military interventions (see Hansard 1991, 2003).

The hypothesis ‘***Panorama’s* conflict coverage reflects the Westminster consensus’** leads to a series of research questions which also emerge from the literature and the archive material viewed. Three key and overlapping questions are:

1. Is ‘the agenda of problems and ‘prescriptions’ which [*Panorama*] handles limited to those which have registered with, or are offered up by, the established Parliamentary parties’? (Hall *et al.* 1981, p.115.)

2. Does *Panorama* report from the ‘sphere of consensus’ and the ‘sphere of legitimate controversy’, but not the ‘sphere of deviance’? This was the conclusion of Daniel Hallin’s (1989, 1994) studies of the US media’s reporting of the Vietnam and the First Gulf War.

3. Is there any evidence of conformity amongst current affairs journalists to the interests and agenda of ‘primary definers’ (see Hall *et al.* 1978)? For Herman and Chomsky, importantly, such conformity is not normally accomplished by crude interventions or ‘conspiracies’, but ‘by the selection of right-thinking personnel and by the editors’ and working journalists’ internalization of priorities and definitions of newsworthiness that conform to the institution’s policy’ (2008, p.xi). Identifying institutional policies and constraints within the BBC’s News and Current Affairs Department and mapping ways in which they might privilege ‘dominant elites’ and ‘centres of power’ is, therefore, a key research area.

4. Is there evidence of ‘institutional filters’ operating within the BBC and *Panorama*, specifically, to ensure criticisms remain within narrow bounds set by the political elite (Ibid)? For this study the two most relevant ‘filters’, given the Corporation’s primarily non-commercial nature, are over-reliance on government (and corporate) experts and ‘flak’ (especially government criticism and pressure).

On the question of flak, described as ‘negative responses to a media statement or programme’ (Ibid, p. 26) there is a great deal of evidence that British governments (both Labour and Conservative) routinely make their negative responses to items known to the BBC. This can be in a more or less aggressive form with the first two terms of Margaret Thatcher’s rule and Tony Blair’s period of office until the resignation of Alasdair Campbell (as the Prime Minister’s Director of Communications) being particularly noted for sustained and highly politicized ‘flak’ (see: Walters 1989, Bell 2003, Brown 2003). These and other issues raised by the research questions are explored throughout the thesis.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

The BBC's 'flagship' current affairs series *Panorama* is Britain's longest running television programme and, according to the *Panorama* website, 'the world's longest running investigative TV show' (BBC 2008a). On air for more than half a century and with a regular audience of many millions *Panorama's* prominence and longevity is a remarkable achievement.

As former *Panorama* presenter and reporter Richard Lindley (2002a) notes in his account of the programme's history *Panorama* was at the peak of its power and influence in the late fifties and early sixties. For Wyndham-Goldie this was time when the political significance of television began to be appreciated by the major parties in Westminster. *Panorama*, in particular, was regarded by politicians as a key venue for discussing 'important' issues that they felt needed the attention of the public:

What was said on 'Panorama' on Monday evening came increasingly to be headlined in Tuesday's morning newspapers. And an interview on 'Panorama' was soon accepted by politicians, including Prime Ministers and Leaders of the Opposition, as a suitable method for communicating with the nation.

(Wyndham Goldie 1977, p.190-192)

Despite the development of a more 'aggressive' interview style in *Panorama* pioneered, to some extent, by Robin Day, the programme remained a favoured platform for the political class to address 'the nation' through subsequent decades (see Kavanagh 2004). *Panorama's* critical and public reputation grew, in part, because of the many 'landmark interviews' and debates with, and between, senior political leaders (see Day 1989, Gaber 2008b). In fact this tradition only fell largely out of use following the January 2007 relaunch of *Panorama* in a new half hour 'investigative' format (cf. Gaber 2008a, 2008b).

Panorama may still claim 'flagship' status, although its 'importance' as a current affairs series had diminished by the 1980s, according to former Director General Sir Ian

Trethowan (1984) and former presenter Robin Day (1989); or in the 1990s and 2000s in the view of, amongst others, former *Panorama* reporters Richard Lindley (2002b) and Tom Mangold (2004). This is partly because, as Holland (2000) explains, the ‘broad canvas’ of topics, issues and events pioneering programmes such as *Panorama* ‘set out to cover is now divided amongst a wide range of more specialised programmes’ (p.148). Nevertheless, over the decades *Panorama* remained of deep significance to the BBC – described by one former Editor as a ‘bellwether’ for changes within the Corporation (Hewlett 2005) and by the writer Michael Leapman (2007) as a ‘litmus test’ of the Corporation’s commitment to serious journalism. While *Panorama*’s reputation for ‘heavyweight’ current affairs coverage has almost certainly declined recently (see articles by Leapman 2007, Rose 2007) it remains, in Ivor Gaber’s view ‘a British broadcasting institution’ whose survival in the transient world of television is a ‘spectacular record, for which the BBC can be justifiably proud’ (Gaber 2008b, p.243).

1.3. Key Literature Review: Previous Studies of *Panorama*

Yet, remarkably, Gaber’s thirteen page essay examining the post-January 2007 ‘new’ *Panorama* and its promotion as an ‘investigative programme’ is one of only a handful of academic studies of the programme, (see Hall 1981; Abell and Stoboe 1999, 2001; Rowland 2000). Despite *Panorama*’s widely acknowledged central place in British television history it awaits detailed, extended critical analysis. Richard Lindley’s (2002) ‘inside story’ *Panorama: Fifty Years of Pride and Paranoia* is a useful, densely researched, and often critical account, but remains a general and sometimes entertainingly anecdotal history with a focus on the programme’s highpoints, moments of crisis and personalities. While never primarily intended for academic use, Lindley’s work is frequently referenced in this study as it offers both a valuable first-hand account and a carefully referenced chronicle of the programme - drawing on the author’s extensive research at the BBC’s written archive at Caversham Park and interviews with former *Panorama* staff.

Former *Panorama* Editor and reporter Robert Rowland's essay 'Panorama in the sixties' (2000) focuses on production practices in *Panorama* in the 1960's, although there are brief sections on audiences, influences and the institutional context of the BBC. Rowland introduces the essay by suggesting it is 'inevitably, selective and subjective' and a 'personal view' (p.155), but the 29 page study, like Lindley's work which draws from it, shows evidence of detailed archive research in addition to relating personal experience, and does not feel markedly out of place in the academic collection of case studies where it can be found. Rowland's essay is referenced, amongst other general works such as Jonathon Dimbleby's (1975) biography of his father Richard Dimbleby, in the chapter on current affairs (Chapter 4.3) and on *Panorama's* history (Chapter 4.4).

Besides Gaber (2008a, 2008b) and Rowland's (2000) work, Hall *et al's* (1981) essay on the ideological character of current affairs television 'The 'Unity' of Current Affairs Television' is one of the few academic studies in the field of Media, Culture and Communications Studies to focus specifically on *Panorama*. Hall *et al's* essay deals with a single episode from Monday 7th October 1974 - three days prior to the General Election - involving a studio debate between the deputy leaders of the three main parties: James Callaghan, William Whitelaw and David Steel. Textual analysis of the transcribed debate is used to elaborate particular characteristics of the 'current affairs field', identified as providing 'informed speculation' about events already accredited significance by their appearance in news bulletins or press reports, with 'the objective of promoting a 'rational' understanding of the issues involved' (p.94).

Hall *et al's* essay attempts to distinguish between news and current affairs programmes (see Chapter 4.3 for further definitions) suggesting that a news story or report becomes a 'topic' for comment in current affairs by 'being framed as a question, or set between seemingly alternate or antagonistic propositions' (p.93). The authors suggest the framing of the news story in this way is particularly characteristic of *Panorama* which regularly 'probes the attitudes and opinions of the actors involved', tests arguments and invites 'expert opinion' (p.94). *Panorama* is viewed as gravitating especially to

‘instances of high controversy between those in authoritative positions’ and topics ‘which stand high on the agenda of ‘legitimate cleavage’ in the political domain’ (p.94).

Hall *et al*’s essay briefly outlines the immediate political context for the studio debate that is analysed, including the Labour Party’s slim Commons majority at the time, the ‘economic and inflationary crisis’ and the various calls for ‘national unity’ before moving on to give a breakdown of the programme’s structure, ‘signifying systems and practices’. The ‘preferred encoding of the topic’ aims, in the author’s view, for a certain kind of ‘ideological closure’ in this case around identification of the themes of national unity with the ‘two (three?) party system’ (p.103). Close textual analysis is then used to explore aspects of the current affairs form, the role of presenters or anchors, the construction of ‘legitimate’ topics and the ‘shared or consensual framework’ (p.113) between the politicians and programme makers. The essay investigates how broadcasters ‘assume a consensus’ and identify ‘what is problematic [as] a divergence at the level of strategy’ (p.104) through discourse analysis of the studio debate transcript. The author’s argue how:

[...]television *reproduces selectively* not the ‘unity’ of any one Party, but the unity of the Parliamentary political system *as a whole*. Panorama, above other Current Affairs programmes, routinely takes the part of guardian of unity in this *second* sense. It reproduces, on the terrain of ideology, the political identification between the Parliamentary system and the Nation. As a consequence, the agenda of problems and ‘prescriptions’ which such a programme handles is limited to those which have registered with, or are offered up by, the established Parliamentary parties. [original emphasis]

(Ibid p.115)

While the studio interview sequence analysed was broadcast more than a decade before the period this research relates to (1987-2004), Hall *et al*’s analysis remains highly pertinent in helping to answer the research questions posed in this study and will be returned to in later chapters. It is worth briefly noting, however, that John Corner (1980) is critical of the loose use of the term ‘code’ in Hall *et al*’s essay (1976) arguing that the linguistic levels, ‘degrees of systematicity and the kinds of organising influence of the ‘codes’ variously indicated in the paper are difficult to subsume within a single, unifying concept of codification’ (Corner 1980, p.76). We may quibble with Corner’s

somewhat rigid reading of Hall *et al.*'s work or the danger of reductionism inherent in the call for a 'unifying concept of codification' and note finally that 'The 'Unity' of Current Affairs' was undoubtedly a groundbreaking and influential essay; as testified by Gurevitch and Scannell's chapter 'Canonization achieved' devoted to the significance of the essay in *Canonic texts in media research*. (Katz *et al.* eds. 2003).

No other academic media research exclusively related to *Panorama* has yet been conducted. There are a small number of essays from a variety of disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, theology, medicine and law that use particular *Panorama* episodes as part of their research, but these are not explorations of the current affairs series, so much as studies using the contents of particular episodes. These include a discourse analysis of the famous Martin Bashir interview with Princess Diana Spencer for *Panorama* in 1995 (Abell and Stoboe 1999, 2001); medical research proposals emerging from *Panorama*'s coverage of the anti-depressant Paroxetine (Medawar *et al.* 2002) and the theological consequences of *Panorama*'s coverage of the Catholic Church (Hutchings 2007). None of these studies or other studies that make use of *Panorama* material for objectives pertinent to disciplines beyond the broad field of media research is drawn on here.

1.4 Main Research Focus

The primary research into the series for this thesis is largely confined to the years 1987-2004, the period for which the Bournemouth University-based BBC *Panorama* video archive is most complete. The period has not been determined only by the availability of recorded programmes. 1987 marks the beginning of John Birt's transformation of BBC News and Current Affairs following Director General Alasdair Milne's sacking by the BBC Board of Governors over *Real Lives* and other issues (see Cotton 2001). 2004 marks the end of Greg Dyke's period as Director General after his 'resignation' following the Board of Governor's reaction to the Hutton Report.

The wider research identifies a number of factors shaping *Panorama*'s evolving representation of stories and issues during the period 1987-2004. These include: changes in the public service broadcasting environment; regulatory mechanisms and institutional constraints; competition from other news and current affairs programmes; journalistic culture and practices; and the legacy of particular management regimes and personnel within BBC in general, and *Panorama* in particular.

These and other factors can be seen at play through *Panorama*'s coverage of armed conflict between 1987 and 2004 which is the main research focus for this thesis. The reporting on wars involving British troops, both at home and abroad, sometimes resulted in UK-based current affairs series such as *World in Action*, *This Week* and *Panorama* becoming the subject of heated controversy, legal action and, occasionally, government anger (see Ware 2000; Holland 2006; Lindley 2003a; Goddard *et al.* 2007). However, the focus of these authors on the more contentious episodes, particularly those involving some measure of internal or external pressure, political comment or interference serves to skew these histories somewhat away from their regular output, a fact that Head of Channel 4's News and Current Affairs Dorothy Byrne (2002) briefly notes with disapproval of the only comprehensive work on the series by Richard Lindley (2002a).

In fact, challenges to *Panorama*'s representations of political disputes and armed conflicts have come from across the political and academic spectrum, including critiques which suggest that the programme has been too 'close' to the 'Westminster consensus' to provide any real insight into the origins of, or possible solutions to, the issues described (Williams 1971, Hall 1981, Edwards and Cromwell 2002, 2006). Certainly, *Panorama* has had a reputation amongst some critics as a rather 'dull', 'passionless' (Byrne 2002) 'elitist' and 'establishment-friendly' current affairs series and was often resented by its competitors for precisely this reason (Macdonald 1982, Goddard *et al.* 2007).

This charge should be contextualised within the particular regulatory and institutional constraints operating at the BBC. Born (2005) has noted the BBC's historic tendency

towards a cautious, defensive ‘rhetoric of constitutionalism’ or so-called ‘impartial’ umpiring of differences of legitimated opinion. This tendency is exacerbated, it is said, by ‘elitism’ in the News and Current Affairs Department, a defining characteristic that remains entrenched despite recruitment policies that have attempted to widen the social and ethnic background of BBC staff generally. Yet accusations of ‘deference’ (Potter 1963 cited Lindley 2003a p.154) or ‘loss of nerve’; (Goddard *et al.* 2007) against *Panorama* were made less often against other BBC current affairs series. For example, Francis Wheen is one of several critics (see Macdonald 1982 , Watkins 1982) to contrast *Panorama*’s approach to current affairs somewhat unfavourably with the BBC’s *Tonight* (1957-65),

The British programme *Panorama*, for all its authority, still tended to avoid controversy and to interpret ‘news’ as meaning the actions of political leaders. [...] *Tonight* [...] had proved that ‘politicians needn’t be treated with awe, railwaymen with condescension’. And although many of the items were perhaps more whimsical than newsworthy, *Tonight* was not afraid of controversy.

(1985, p.77-78)

Those defending *Panorama* since its earliest days have spoken of its ‘serious’, ‘authoritative’ and ‘distinguished’ qualities (Wyndham Goldie 1977) , while others have noted the programme’s ‘polite aloofness’ (Stuart Hood) or have dismissed it as ‘rather self-important and faintly tiresome’ (Alasdair Milne associated at the time with *Tonight*) (both cited Lindley 2003a, p.126, 127). The programme treads a line in popular and critical commentary between being positively regarded as a ‘heavyweight’ current affairs series addressing the ‘big issues of the day’ and more negatively as ‘pompous’ or concerned too exclusively with the ‘Westminster world view’. This last charge, which even *Panorama* journalists have sometimes acknowledged (Day 1989, Lindley 2003a) will be examined carefully in the proposed research, particularly in relation to *Panorama*’s war coverage.

As mentioned before, the available literature specifically on *Panorama*, often focuses on moments when the series was under ‘government pressure’ over its coverage of various issues, including foreign and domestic conflicts. Reference is frequently made

to three well known flashpoints in *Panorama*'s long history: The 'Carrickmore incident' (1979, Northern Ireland); 'Can We Avoid War?' (1982, the Falklands War) and 'Maggie's Militant Tendency' (1984, the accusation of links between the Conservative Party and racist groups). However, these *Panorama* episodes were unusual to the extent that they involved open dispute between senior BBC management and the government of the day (see Clutterbuck 1981; Cotton 2001; Bolton 1990; Miller 1994; Simpson 1999; Reira 2000; Hussey 2001; Lindley 2003a, 2003; Wilby 2006).

Other controversies, which appear in the literature on *Panorama*, relate to 'internal' efforts to control programme makers in some way. Cautious micro-management of 'contentious programmes' and examples of interference or blocking of particular investigations, particularly under John Birt's period as Deputy Director General 1987-1992 and to a lesser extent as Director General 1992-2000 are documented in quite damning detail by Lindley (2003a), Barnett and Gaber (2001); Curtis and Jempson (1993) and Horrie and Clarke (1994) (see Chapter 4.2).

What is less common in the literature is analysis of more 'routine' *Panorama* output. An assessment of *Panorama*'s coverage of the First Gulf War (1991); the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (1999); the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) or the invasion of Iraq (2003) reveals little real 'controversy' or government protests on a scale comparable to the uproar over Carrickmore in 1979 or of the Falklands War in 1982, for instance. The absence of close attention to the 'unexceptional' programmes in the literature dealing with current affairs, particularly in the work of Lindley (2002a) and Godard *et al*'s study of *World in Action* (2007) is a gap which this research intends to address. These studies tend to focus more on programmes which were the subject of internal or external scrutiny, either by BBC management, the courts, the ITA/IBA (in the case of *World in Action*) or, in the most controversial cases, the government. But what of the majority of programmes that did *not* 'ruffle feathers'? What might a critical analysis of these episodes reveal? What, if anything, does *Panorama*'s war coverage reveal about the programme's and the BBC's relation to power?

At a wider level, an examination of the broadcasting ecology and historical context within which *Panorama* operated between 1987-2004 will help contextualise the debates about ‘objectivity’, ‘impartiality’, ‘balance’ and the ‘range of opinions’ covered by, and expressed in, its coverage of conflict. Rather than seeking single explanations for *Panorama*’s coverage of recent wars, this thesis will consider the institutional context, regulatory issues, the government’s relationship to the BBC, wider questions of war reporting and agenda setting, the specific journalistic culture at *Panorama* and the BBC, notions of ‘elitism’ and ‘populism’ and the corrosive effects of a competitive broadcasting ‘market’ on current affairs frequently made within the critical tradition of media and communication scholarship. Finally, *Panorama*’s place within the tradition of British current affairs will be assessed through this study of the archive, by interviews conducted with former and current *Panorama* staff and through the body of literature indicated in the bibliography.

2. Theoretical approach

2.1 The Critical Paradigm

For Boyd-Barrett and Newbold (1997) the very broad field of media and communications research invites attention to the industries and industrial practices which lie behind communications media such as television. Within this field two paradigms have been identified. The first is described variously as ‘administrative research’ or ‘conventional research’ which Lazarsfeld defined as ‘carried through in the service of some kind of administrative agency of public or private character’ (1941 pg.8-9) . ‘Critical research’, by contrast, is posed against the practice of administrative research, challenging its assumptions and the narrow boundaries of study as defined by media practitioners and politicians. Halloran (1981) summarises the characteristics of the critical approach as follows:

First and foremost, it deals with communication as a social process; second it studies media institutions not in isolation but with and in terms of other institutions, and within the wider social context (nationally and internationally); and third, it conceptualises research in terms of structure, organisation, professionalisation, socialisation, participation, and so on.

(pg.37)

However, the critical umbrella, as Halloran further notes, is understood more by its opposition to conventional work and independence from professional interests than any single theoretical stance. Critical research covers a variety of positions including the cultural studies tradition, ethnographic audience research and the political economy tradition. In recent years these various traditions have informed each other in interesting ways, which has led to richer insights and understandings of complex social and economic phenomenon.

For the purposes of this research which focuses on an archive of current affairs series, textual and content analysis will be employed drawing on established techniques of media and cultural studies. Furthermore an analysis of the institutional context of the series drawing on the political economy tradition will be tested and given more nuanced understanding via interviews, research of the available literature and by reference to the archive material. Assumptions frequently made within the political economy approach that, as Mosco (1995) explains, foreground social relations, particularly the power relations that influence the production of communication resources, can be tested against this triangulated body of evidence.

The central charge made by those critical scholars who identify ‘institutional bias’ on behalf of an elite consensus will be addressed in this research, in relation to *Panorama*’s war coverage. Does *Panorama*’s coverage of the wars against Iraq (in 1991 and 2003) offer evidence of the explanatory power or the weakness of persistent criticisms of the BBC’s journalism found within the critical or ‘radical’ tradition (see Hall *et al* 1981; Philo and McLaughlin 1993. Edwards 2003; Edwards and Cromwell 2002, 2006, 2009; Miller 2003 Berry and Theobald 2006)? What does close analysis reveal of the relationships between ‘the State’ (see O’Malley 1994, p.174), elite power and the media and ‘the tactics and strategies of control and resistance in that sphere’ (Eldridge 1993b, p.349)?

3. Methodology

3.1 Content Analysis, Textual Analysis and the ‘multi-methodological’ approach.

John Corner (1998) divides ‘theories about television’ into four types; theories of representation, theories of medium, theories of institution and theories of process. The research approaches adopted here can mainly be traced back to theories of representation and theories of institution and the various methodologies that emerged from these traditions. As Corner writes, the work of the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies under Stuart Hall’s leadership was of the most formative significance in theories of representation, supported by theoretical developments of Althusserian ‘ideological critique’ in literary studies and film studies (p.150-152). Hall’s foundational work on coding and encoding was then taken in various directions, sometimes against the Marxist traditions they were built on, in various post-modern readings (see Fiske 1987).

Theories of institutions are, for Corner, primarily concerned with the organisational structure of television and the embedding of this within specific political and economic systems. Corner also notes that at the level of theory it is the political economy strand which has been most active. However, not all attention to institutions has drawn on the primarily Marxist inflection of the political economy tradition. A more recent strand of television historiography, for example, has focused on ‘meta-narratives of television’s production, organisation and regulation’ as well as ‘micro-histories of television production’ (Wheatley 2007, p.7). For Wheatley institutional history remains at the centre of British television studies because ‘questions of public service broadcasting in the UK, and the BBC’s place as a publicly funded institution, remain such pressing issues’ (p.9).

It is clear that a variety of questions are raised when studying the institutional context for the production of programmes. In reviewing the literature and conducting interviews the: ‘Intentions, aims, purposes, policies, organisational frameworks, modes of operation, professional values, funding, general circumscriptions, external pressures and ideological considerations all need to be taken into account’ (Hansen *et al.* 1998, p.19). Representational issues can then be dealt with more directly in relation to the archive of material, sharpened by an understanding of how the institutional context may have constrained or affected the choices available to the programme makers. This focus on both institutional and representational issues presents a significant challenge to the researcher, but a focus on either element in isolation can only give an incomplete answer to the research questions posed.

The evidence for this study is gathered in three ways. Firstly, a review of the literature dealing with the following areas relevant to the research: the broader political context and broadcasting environment of the period, debates and concerns about ‘public service broadcasting’ (PSB), the BBC, current affairs and war reporting, particularly relating to *Panorama*’s conflict coverage. The ‘literature’ includes academic studies, books and journal articles, material written by or about associated media professionals, relevant press coverage and audio-visual material (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Secondly, structured and semi-structured interviews with former and current *Panorama* staff, BBC personnel and other interested parties. Interviews have been conducted with reporters David Lomax, Michael Crick, Paul Kenyon, John Ware and Tom Mangold; producers Eamonn Matthews, Gary Horne, Mike Rudin, Tom Giles, former Editor Roger Bolton and former Director General Greg Dyke as well as numerous other ‘off the record’ chats and discussions. These interviews have been transcribed and referenced, where appropriate, in the study.

Thirdly, content and textual analysis (explained in more detail below) of the *Panorama* archive between 1987 and 2004 focusing on coverage of the First and Second Gulf Wars (1991, 2003). Triangulating the evidence gathered in these ways will help draw conclusions as to the effects of a number of perceived influences and constraints

operating on and around the BBC current affairs series *Panorama* in its coverage of contemporary conflicts. This approach has been trialled in a pilot study of *Panorama*'s coverage leading up and following the 2003 invasion of Iraq (McQueen 2008), drawing on the strength of a 'multiperspectivist approach' which, in Douglas Kellner's words, 'deploys a multitude of theories and methods of interpretation to provide more many-sided readings and critiques' (2003, p.33).

The use of content analysis and textual analysis provided a body of complimentary evidence to draw upon and test the hypothesis. With regard to the content analysis conducted, the pilot study took the form of coding the transcripts for all pre-recorded *Panorama* transmissions dealing with the 2003 war. The programmes were divided into pre-war, war and post-war coverage. A coding scheme was developed that could identify patterns and shifts in the reporting of 'pro-war' and 'anti-war' views, scaled (coded 1-7) to track if the debate strayed beyond the sphere of 'legitimate controversy' (i.e. the Westminster consensus) into the 'sphere of controversy' (see Hallin 1989, 1994b). Content analysis has been characterised as the 'systematic categorisation and counting of content elements in a given media item' (Corner 1998, p.81). This describes the work of the pilot study where the full transcripts for each programme were coded and the number of words allocated to each 'position' were counted and expressed as a percentage of the total. As Hansen *et al.* note, content analysis can offer valuable insights because it provides evidence of structured absences as well as helping to measure what *is* represented: 'Content analysis can help provide some indication of relative prominences and absences of key characteristics in media texts' (Hansen *et al.* 1998, p.95).

The coding scheme adopted is included in the Appendix, with accompanying notes. In defining the analytical categories effort was made to ensure that the text characteristics singled out related to the overall research questions and hypothesis (see section 1.1). The coding criteria selected (codes 1-7) were 'general categories' indicating the themes, issues, lexical choice and value dimensions of particular utterances within the programme. Above all, these codes are an 'an attempt at classifying coverage in terms of value judgements, or assessment of the ideological stance' (Hansen *et al.* 1998,

p.114) of the individual actors, sources and ‘primary definers’ as well as the programme/series as a whole.

While useful in providing some evidence in support of the hypothesis the pilot study has, to some extent, further underlined the interpretive role of the researcher in both ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ studies (see Jensen 2002 p.100-107). The content analysis raises significant doubts as to the ability to ‘measure’ in any consistent, replicable way discreet messages in complex communicative texts which, to quote Hall *et al.* never deliver one meaning, but rather a ‘plurality of meanings’, in which ‘one is preferred and offered to the viewers, over the others, as the most appropriate’ (1981, p.90). ‘Measuring’ *Panorama* reporter/presenter’s contribution to the programme in a reliable, replicable way is shown to be particularly problematic in this respect given their role as supposedly impartial mediators in the debate (see chapters 4.2, 4.3; McQueen 2008). For this reason the reporter/presenter contribution was initially excluded from the coding exercise (for the pilot study), but as this contribution was shown to be a dominant one (up to 65% of total contributions in some programmes) it was judged that it could not legitimately be wholly excluded from the final content analysis.

Hence a framing analysis that links into and elaborates on the coding criteria used for pilot study was developed that also allowed an analysis of the reporter/presenter contribution. While this was problematic, as we shall see, it provides some insights into the various ways the debate was framed in the crucial pre-invasion phase of Gulf 2 when consensus was most conspicuous by its absence and the public was, arguably, most open to influence. Consequently, the *Panorama* reporter/presenter’s contribution in the pre-war period is also mapped (and correlated to the study of interviewees and participants) through a frame analysis which draws on the work of Taylor (2008). Taylor’s schemata does not attempt to ascribe firm positions on the pro-war/anti-war continuum, but instead identifies four areas of contestation: security, international law, morality and opportunity and highlights *how* the issues are reported and discussed (cf. Weaver 2007) with reference to a range of ‘competing frames’ (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, p.14).

Consequently, framing analysis allows presenter/reporter contributions to be categorised in relation to a set of themes, ‘problem definitions’ and ‘treatment recommendations’ which inform particular ‘schools of thought’ around the justification for war (see Taylor 2008). This approach has the benefit of analysing reporter/presenter contributions without arguing that they actively championed any particular ‘views’ along simple pro- or anti-war lines. Nevertheless, by exploring, developing or eliciting certain ‘problem definitions’ or frames of understanding over others the reporters and/or presenters effectively gave airspace to perspectives or schools of thought that were ranged in favour or against a military intervention in Iraq. In the case of the ‘anti-war radical’ or ‘neoconservative’ school of thought some of the problem definitions ranged beyond what might be regarded as the ‘Westminster consensus’. For instance, the notions that there were direct links between Iraq and Al Qaeda, or that the war was a thinly disguised opportunity by the US to control access to that country’s energy resources, while popular amongst particular groups and frequently rehearsed in elite debate abroad, were not major themes in British Parliamentary discussions (cf. Hansard 2002, 2003).

It should be noted that the results of the coding/framing scheme are presented here primarily as supporting material to the interpretive textual analysis in order to illustrate broad trends and patterns within the texts. Any percentage figures drawn from the study should not be judged as final, empirical or ‘objective’ proof, or seen as an uncritical commitment to the ‘positivist’ tradition of media analysis. They can, however, show how broadcast debates and investigations relating to the conflicts were broadly structured and framed in relation to a so-called ‘Westminster consensus’,¹ or lack thereof.

Furthermore, if the limitations, approximations and (often) de-contextualised results of quantitative analysis are foregrounded the approach can provide further insight into

¹ Undoubtedly a problematic term for a range of opinions as this study shows.

questions of ideological reproduction, particularly if used to complement more fine-grained, interpretive content and textual analysis. Certainly, Krippendorff's (1980) definition of content analysis as 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context' (cited Jensen, p.103) does not exclude latent meanings from the researcher's 'legitimate horizon of interest' and acknowledges the necessity of interpretative work by the researcher (see Deacon *et al.* 1999, for further discussion).

To re-iterate, whilst the (quantitative) content analysis is an important component of this study a greater part of the research work is (qualitative) textual analysis. Following Hall *et al.*'s 1981 study of *Panorama*, this research employs a number of approaches, including those developed in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2006) and particularly in the thematic analysis developed by the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG 1985; Philo 1995a, 2002a, 2007). At the level of transcribed spoken text discourse analysis allows the researcher to document 'a close relationship between the linguistic details of media texts and the production of ideology' (Jensen 2002, p.104). Thematic analysis enables an examination of 'explanatory frameworks or perspectives' underpinning the descriptions given with close attention to the 'assumptions' that underlie the deployment of various textual strategies (Philo 2007 p.178-192). In many cases this focus on 'thematic related attributes' complements and informs the framing analysis described above (see Weaver 2007, p.143). However, as in the work of the Glasgow Media Group, this study recognises the need to look beyond the text and consider various institutional factors and production contexts, including the practices of journalists, which help shape media coverage.

The discussion of methodology has so far omitted to deal with the moving image as an object of study. Hansen *et al.* (1998) argue that qualitative discourse analysis has been successfully employed in the analysis of visual information, although it has been given several different formulations, usually with recourse to one of two theoretical sources: Roland Barthes and Charles Sanders Peirce. Hansen *et al.* go on to discuss the use of the term 'anchorage' and note that for Barthes the anchoring text has 'a *repressive* value' which is able to 'remote control [the reader] towards a meaning chosen in advance'

(Hansen *et al.* 1998, p.111). The qualitative textual analysis conducted for this study incorporates a review of the audio-visual content of these programmes.

Allan (1999) reminds us that ‘critical researchers have borrowed a range of conceptual tools from various approaches to textual analysis’ (p.87.). A number of specific approaches in Media and Communication Studies have been developed for the study of news and other ‘factual’ forms that will be drawn on for the insights they offer. While drawing from the diverse critical methods and terminology outlined above has undoubted dangers, good research, as Hansen *et al.* (1998) remind us, usually benefits from the use of a combination of methods. Selecting from methods, or combinations of methods, can help illuminate what are multidimensional and complex processes and phenomena:

Social reality – real life – is multi-faceted. Although not universally accepted, its adequate study requires various theories and approaches applied together, and no single approach is capable of providing more than the partial picture of social reality permitted by its own narrow perspectives and conceptual limitations. In this sense we should welcome eclecticism, not apologise for it.

(Hansen *et al.* 1998, p.29)

The following chapters include a review of literature relating to the broadcasting environment in the period under discussion and a critical historiography of the BBC, current affairs and conflict coverage pertinent to the discussion. This review includes a decade-by-decade overview of *Panorama*’s history as well as reference to interviews with former and current *Panorama* staff in relation to the journalistic practices and specific issues, events or episodes under discussion.

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4. Contextual research and critical historiography

4.1 Broadcasting

Broadcasting in Britain comes from two sources: the public sector British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the commercial or 'independent' industry. An important feature of broadcasting in Britain is that it has operated under relatively strict public service requirements since the 1925 Crawford Committee made its long term recommendations about the scope and conduct of British broadcasting (Scannell 1990; O'Malley 2001). These requirements, as Scannell indicates, have changed significantly in a number of ways since the first British television transmissions began from the BBC studios at Alexandra Palace in 1936. As Scannell's essay (1990) on the history of the concept makes clear 'public service broadcasting' (PSB) is a term that lacks an agreed definition, although definitions abound (see Schlesinger 1987; Scannell 1990; O'Sullivan et al. 1994; Ofcom 2004; Born 2004). Whilst these definitions often share core characteristics, they are subject to considerable change over time (see O'Malley 2001).

Barnett and Docherty (1986) identify eight normative principles and conditions for the existence of public service broadcasting. These stress universal availability; protection from vested interest, 'particularly the government of the day'; the role of broadcasters in developing community and national identity; special provision for minorities and the encouragement of 'good programming'.

Scannell's (1990) work shows how some of these principles were partly developed at the BBC and how, in Britain, national public service broadcasting was tied to notions of democracy, Englishness and nationhood. His account outlines how the BBC's first Director General John Reith's original conception of public service broadcasting was based on the principles of universality and equality of access, as well as the desire to educate the

populace while binding them together in a nationally imagined community. However, the idea that public service broadcasting's origins emerged from such 'high principles' is given short shrift by Sorlin (1994) who argues that the BBC's creation owed more to fear amongst politicians and opinion leaders of 'the rapid expansion of revolutionary ideas' (p.107). O'Malley also offers a more critical explanation for the emergence of public service broadcasting which was, he believes, 'in part a consequence of the perception among political elites that the new medium of broadcasting was, potentially politically dangerous and needed to be controlled' (O'Malley 2001, p.18).

In an earlier essay Scannell (1989) argues that the relationship between broadcasting and the world of politics is a 'history of manipulation and pressure' exerted on broadcast news and discussion in overt and covert ways 'by politicians, parties and governments' (p.135). However, he defends broadcasting in general, and public service broadcasting in particular, against those (like Stuart Hall) who regard it primarily as a form of 'social control' or of 'ideological misrepresentation', arguing instead how it has 'unobtrusively contributed to the democratization of everyday life' (p.136). He further argues that the introduction of ITV 'gave the BBC something other than their political masters to worry about', reducing deference to authority which came to be replaced by: 'a more populist, democratic stance as the broadcasters asserted the public's right to know by making politicians answerable and accountable to the electorate for their conduct of the nation's affairs' (Scannell 1989, p.145).

Stevenson (1995) agrees that the initial impact of commercial broadcasting following the Television Act of 1954 was to undermine the 'cosy, reverential disposition of the BBC towards the British state', but adds that the end result was an enhancement of commercial forms of culture over the promotion of political identities. Stevenson further suggests that 'a relatively stable, nationally articulated identity' has been at least partially displaced by a more 'fluid, fragmented and shifting construction' (p.204). Stevenson also notes that since the end of the 1970's notions of public service broadcasting have been showing signs of crisis. The rise of the New Right and attendant public spending cuts, combined with the

arrival of new technologies capable of global penetration opened new broadcasting markets to private investment and weakened government commitments to public service ideals. The view that purely commercial forces provide the best broadcasting service and that public service broadcasting commitments represent a restriction of the freedom of the market is rarely, if ever, proposed in British Media and Communications Studies academic literature. Nevertheless, there is a substantial body of polemical material, political policy recommendations and debate along these lines (see Aitken 2007, North 2007, Murdoch 2009) which has, to some extent, become an increasingly influential view since the late 1980s in the British political establishment. This has been reflected in broadcasting legislation under both Conservative and New Labour governments that has 'liberalised' the television market and gradually rolled back PSB requirements, particularly for the independent sector (see Williams 1996; Curran and Leys 2000; Fitzwater 2008) .

Scannell (1990) believes that the PSB requirement to cater for a variety of cultures, tastes and minorities (following the pluralistic ideals championed by the Annan Committee 1974-79) is also threatened by the commercial logic of the market place that values either mass audiences or wealthy niche audiences. Scannell argues that market forces threaten genuinely mixed programming, replacing it with generic programming which fragments and atomises audiences, destroying 'the principle of equality of access to all entertainment and informational resources in a common public domain' (p.26).

Powerful technological and institutional forces increasingly shaped the broadcasting landscape in the period studied in this research (1987-2004). A more aggressive pursuit of audiences was reflected in scheduling policies and programme-making by the terrestrial stations in Britain which faced increased competition from satellite and cable (see Born 2004, McNair 1999, McQueen 1998). The consequences of what Curran and Leys describe as 'creeping marketization' has been, in their view, the eroding of the autonomy of broadcasters both in the commercial and public sector.

The effect of active regulation of commercial broadcasting before 1990 had been to create pockets of space in which some broadcast staff had considerable

freedom to make important programmes. These pockets are becoming smaller, and less insulated. At the same time, the BBC's survival strategy during the Thatcher era involved increased centralisation and managerialism in ways that reduced staff autonomy. The mainspring of British broadcasting's quality, the relative freedom it allows to production teams, is being steadily depleted.

(Curran and Leys 2000, p.230-231)

Thussu (2003) and Kellner (2003) have shown how, internationally, forms of entertainment permeate news and information, and a tabloidized 'infotainment' culture has become an increasingly common feature displacing factual programmes in 'harder' categories such as 'history', 'politics', 'development, environment and human rights' and 'conflict and disaster'(Thussu 2003, p.129). Reeve (2005, 2006) explains the difficulty in Britain of producing current affairs as competition from satellite television gathers pace:

In multichannel homes there are always drama/comedy and entertainment shows on, and this creates a challenge for more informative, thought-provoking programmes, which now have to work hard to attract more than just a core of well committed, curious viewers.

(Reeve 2005, p.23)

BBC1 and ITV, which Reeve describes as 'the polar ice caps of the old broadcasting world', have, in his view, suffered erosion from multichannel competition resulting in a marked drift towards more populist, mass-market and entertainment-driven programme making (Reeve 2006, p.13). For Greg Philo (2002, 2004) the inexorable commercialisation of British television is likely to make it increasingly difficult for audiences to have a grasp of national and international affairs. Research by Philo on television news and understanding of war indicates that poor understanding of the origin of conflicts

[...] is in part the result of television coverage that tends to focus on dramatic, violent and tragic images while giving very little context or explanation to the events that are being portrayed. The development of television organised around crude notions of audience ratings is likely to make this situation worse.

(Philo 2002, p.185)

4.2 The BBC

The BBC is the world's largest media organisation and has dominated British cultural and political life since it became a nationalized corporation in 1926. Consequently, there is an enormous volume of both academic and non-academic literature relating to the BBC, much of which is pertinent to the research area of this thesis. This includes legal, constitutional, regulatory and corporate literature, historical surveys, studies of news and current affairs, critiques of the Corporation's relationship to the government and the wider political establishment, memoirs of Director Generals, senior management and journalists, conflict coverage research and a relentless stream of newspaper, magazine and journal articles examining every aspects of the Corporation's output.

Given the time and space constraints this literature review can, therefore, only indicate a sample of the available work on a number of issues that are central to this study. Asa Briggs monumental five volume history of the BBC *The history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (1961, 1965, 1970, 1979a, 1995) is a key reference for many academic studies of the BBC, although it presents an 'official' account of the Corporation's history which concludes before the relevant years for this research and therefore is of less value than more recent work. Georgina Born's (2004) ethnographic account *Uncertain Vision* offers a more critical and up-to-date view and is particularly useful at exploring the different management cultures of Director Generals John Birt and Greg Dyke and their effect on the News and Current Affairs Department in the time frame for this research. Born's work is considered in relation to particular themes later in this chapter.

A number of texts deal with the BBC's constitutional character and the history of the Corporation's chequered relations to the British state. General accounts of this highly complex phenomenon are laid out by Curran and Seaton (2003); Beetham *et al.* (2002); Kuhn (2007); Born (2004); Barnett and Gaber (2001), Curran and Leys (2000) and Ward

(1989) amongst others. Curran and Leys examine deteriorating relations between the BBC and Mrs Thatcher's Conservative Government of the 1980s and 90s in a subtle manner. They suggest that a frontal assault on the BBC failed because it did not secure the support of the Cabinet, Conservative parliamentary party or the public. The BBC's 'reputation for being independent of government' earned the Corporation respect and Public Service Broadcasting remains popular in Britain, in their view, 'because it made, relatively early on, a strategic compromise between high culture and market values' (2000, p.228).

Yet they qualify the BBC's 'independence' in important ways asserting that television practitioners are not as far removed from authority as they like to claim. Broadcasters, they explain, are obliged by law to display 'due impartiality' and that this has been understood to mean that opposed interpretations should be foregrounded in reports of controversial issues:

However, these opposed interpretations tend to reproduce the narrow range of disagreement between the two competing Parliamentary leaderships rather than the full range of disagreement in society. Moreover, the definition of what is controversial is strongly influenced by what is contentious between the political parties. If an issue does not come within an area of legitimated controversy, the conventions of balance tend to be downplayed or set aside.

(Curran and Leys 2000, p.228)

Born (2004) is also sensitive to these tendencies, particularly the contradiction in the supposedly independent relationship between the BBC and the state which she feels spills over into the corporation's stance on politics. She explores the constitutional character of the BBC and the Government's leverage through its appointment of new members of the Board of Governors (BBC Trust since 2007) and its power to set the license fee and renew the Corporation's charter (see also Curran and Seaton 2003). She retraces the formative history of the BBC, particularly under Reith at the time of the General Strike (explored also by Briggs 1961, 1979b, 1985; Curran and Seaton 2003 and others). Born describes the

establishment of a tradition of journalism in which ‘politics’ was an activity which only happened ‘between major political parties’ and never the ‘expressive politics of the street’:

The implication is that the BBC’s professional journalism of impartiality and of the mediation of party politics was born of defensiveness and expediency. It is a journalism that was formed by over-close relations with the state; and it is a journalism that, over decades, has aided a widespread depoliticisation.

(Born 2004, p.32-33)

Interviews with current and former *Panorama* programme-makers reveal mixed views on relations with the state. Reporter John Ware, for instance, argues that the BBC is ‘genuinely independent’:

The one thing I would say about the BBC and I have been there twenty one years, with one or two exceptions the BBC is a genuinely independent broadcasting organisation and almost to the point of relishing combat with governments or any institutions when it has got the evidence to back it up. And that’s an entirely healthy position for a public service broadcaster to be in and I think it’s pretty much how the BBC has always been.

(personal communication, February 19, 2007)

This view is made forcefully despite Ware’s strong suspicion that under John Birt programmes that were ‘politically combustible’ such as ‘Spycatcher’, ‘Sliding into Slump’ or ‘Supergun’, or investigations which he felt ‘might compromise license fee negotiations’ were subject to greater scrutiny, interference and delay, such as Ware’s second report on alleged gerrymandering (see Lindley 2003a) in Dame Shirley Porter’s Westminster City Council. Transmission of this was delayed on technical legal grounds, a move Ware suspected was motivated by Birt’s desire to protect the BBC in its negotiations with the government:

Now I happen to think that’s wrong. You take a principled approach to these things, but I’m not the Director General and the fact is that he secured an extremely generous license fee deal for the BBC. I think that John, I strongly suspect, I can’t prove it, that he delayed the second of my Porter programmes

because it came at a difficult time just before the local elections and I do suspect that he was concerned that might affect the negotiations he was having with the Major government about the license fee. I don't know that, but I do suspect it and it wouldn't surprise me and I was very cross about it. But in the end he got a very good license fee for the whole of the BBC so....

(Ibid)

Ware's faith in the ultimate independence of the BBC, despite the evidence of political caution and compromises apparently made by senior management, is an assessment shared by many of the current and former BBC staff interviewed. However, Roger Bolton, draws somewhat different conclusions from his experience as Editor (see Bolton 1990, 1997) and from a consideration of Birt's period of control:

R.B. [...] he needed to get rid of a generation, to impose considerable central control and negotiate through a licence fee, the continuation of the BBC and a licence fee agreement against a sceptical Government. He decided, and I'm not saying it's dishonourable, I think it's essentially disastrous, but I don't think it's dishonourable, he decided once or twice to postpone programmes, to hold the journalism back. And I think he did so because he was primarily concerned with the survival of the BBC as an independent organisation. But of course if it did survive it wouldn't be independent because he'd compromised its name. From my position I would have taken a different approach, but I think one should be properly sensitive of the problems. So the licence fee probably is the best way of ensuring the maximum independence of the BBC. But anybody who says it's an absolute independence is an idiot.

D.M. *Yes, OK. So it's a compromised independence in that sense.*

R.B. It's a compromise and, as long as you're open and honest about that, it has a better chance of being real.

(personal communication, October 23, 2008)

Both internal and external pressures and related influences on the reporting of current affairs, including relations between the state and the BBC, are a major focus of this research and will be returned to in subsequent chapters through exploration of a number of issues. At a more general level, however, interviews, articles and memoirs of senior BBC

managers and journalists, many of whom have worked for *Panorama*, usually reassert the BBC's proud history of independence from government interference. Yet these same accounts often reference specific and telling examples of state influence and pressure which come in a variety of forms, including surveillance and infiltration by intelligence services (Bell 2003; Simpson 2002); political appointments at management level (Simpson 1999, 2002; Attenborough 2002); 'bullying' of various kinds including implicit and explicit threats to licence fee funding levels, charter renewal (Day 1990; Simpson 2002, 2003) or warnings 'that it might be dismantled' (Simpson 2002, p.225); numerous news management strategies - including preferential treatment for 'compliant' reporters and denial of access, or even public denunciation, for 'awkward' ones (Bowen 2006; Simpson 1999, 2000, 2002); and systematic monitoring, lobbying and complaints about 'unbalanced' or negative coverage (Lindley 2003a; Simpson 1999, 2000, 2002, 2004).

Despite a great deal of factual and anecdotal evidence of government attempts to 'steer' editorial policy, particularly around contentious issues, opinion appears divided both in the academic community and amongst BBC managers, journalists and producers over how successful government pressure is at influencing coverage. Many of the journalists, producers and BBC managers interviewed for this research are emphatic that, when it comes to investigative journalism, the Corporation never 'pulls its punches' under government pressure (discussions with John Ware, Tom Mangold, Mike Rubin, David Lomax, Andy Bell). Others, some of whom remain off-the-record, are more sceptical and provide numerous examples of managerial caution or the 'chilling effect' of government pressure and inquiries (discussions with Roger Bolton, Michael Crick, Eamonn Mathews, Toby Sculthorpe) (see also O'Malley 1994; Barnett and Gaber 2001; Davies 2008).

Closely associated with questions of the BBC's independence is the Corporation's legal requirement under the terms of its charter to maintain 'balance' and 'impartiality' and how this is carried out in practice, already briefly referred to in terms of the scope of the 'legitimated controversy' of Westminster politics. Questions around the issues of objectivity, bias, balance and impartiality are dealt with in the critical literature (see chapter 4.3), but it is worth mentioning here that opinion differs as to how useful and effective the

BBC's own interpretation of these qualities has been, even amongst practicing journalists (see Simpson 1999; Bell 2003).

4.2.1 Management control

Questions of the BBC's independence are inextricably linked to internal mechanisms of management control and 'self-censorship'. An assessment of the BBC's current affairs coverage requires careful examination of the freedom journalists have to do their job set against the obligations, constraints and levels of scrutiny imposed by the managers (see Bell 2003). A common theme of much comment and analysis is the degree to which the BBC is institutionally unsuited to producing controversial material. There is a perception amongst some observers that the BBC employs 'trouble spotters' and 'controversy stoppers' at managerial level, a practice that accelerated under John Birt, was checked somewhat under Greg Dyke and has reasserted itself since the Hutton Report (see Lindley 2000; Born 2004). This viewpoint is vigorously opposed by many senior BBC managers and journalists (see Simpson 2004), including former *Panorama* journalist Tom Mangold who argues that Birt protected the BBC's 'gold standard' of journalism and believes there was a 'collapse in editorial control' under Dyke that led to the 'Gilligan fiasco' (Mangold 2004, p.1).

Panorama staff spoken to for this research appear somewhat split on the issue of John Birt's management, with a majority identifying his period in control as highly cautious, over-managed and restrictive of good journalism. Amongst the most outspoken comments was the following off-the-record observation by a former member of the *Panorama* staff:

Censorship is much more dangerous when it becomes self-censorship. That's what happened under Birt. Nobody ever said we couldn't make programmes on certain subjects. Everybody thought they knew what would be acceptable, so they adjusted their proposals accordingly allowing a margin for safety. Most wanted to keep their jobs, all hoped the troubles would pass.

(personal communication)

Yet others spoken to were somewhat defensive of Birt including, somewhat surprisingly Greg Dyke. When asked if he thought Birt ‘tamed’ Panorama, or whipped them into line he replies:

GD: Birt’s view was that they were out of control. Some of those old *Panorama* guys, were pretty - I’m not saying they were villains, but a lot of them lived pretty well off expenses and a lot of them cut corners I think.

DM: *So you’ve got sympathy for Birt trying to...*

GD: Well I think he was right. Actually, it was not my... I remember going to talk to them and I complained to the whole Current Affairs Department that they hadn’t made enough trouble in my first two years.

When pressed on whether he thought Birt had a detrimental effect on current affairs he replies:

GD: Well, Birt had a view on current affairs that I ... I came out of the London Weekend stable and I tend to agree with him that the job of current affairs is to analyse and understand first and then to make a programme second. *Panorama* didn’t come from that tradition. They squirted film at everybody and saw what they could make of it in the cutting room. And they got terribly upset when you said that. But if you talk to John he’ll tell you quite blatantly that he failed to change current affairs at the BBC in terms of analytical approach.

(personal communication, October 16, 2009)

Most accounts of the BBC’s recent history appear to agree on the substantial and markedly different influence of Director Generals Birt and Dyke. A common theme, expressed with some variation, is that Birt imposed a degree of ‘discipline’ on News and Current Affairs and thereby helped strategically defend the Corporation from further attack by a Conservative government hostile to critical coverage. John Birt’s own account emphasises the economic necessity of his centralised control. He describes how the BBC had, before

his tenure, become a ‘vast command economy’ of ‘entangled, integrated baronies’ which was ‘Byzantine in many of its structures’ and where creative freedom was frustrated. His description of the Corporation he came to manage, first as Deputy Director General (1987-1992) and then as Director General (D.G.) (1992-1999) suggests that change was necessary and inevitable and that reforms were better self-imposed than forced upon the BBC by the government:

The BBC could not fossilise. The monolith could not continue. If we in the BBC had not been ready to learn from the experience of others - and to take our destiny into our own hands - the job would have been done for us. And as ITV’s experience with the Broadcasting Act demonstrates, it is better to do the job yourself.

(Birt 1993, p.9)

Born’s (2004) ethnographic study of the Corporation under Birt and Dyke *Uncertain Vision* demonstrates in detail how their ‘regimes’ differed. Born records BBC employee’s dissatisfaction with John Birt’s management style and alleged over-controlling tendencies in News and Current Affairs. The evidence produced echoes Lindley’s account of Birt’s tenure as Director of News and Current Affairs and Deputy Director General (and later as Director General), and the largely negative effects on staff morale and the journalistic culture of the BBC. In contrast to Birt’s own account, Born also documents examples of the economic absurdities associated with elements of Producer Control.

While *Uncertain Vision* recognises some of John Birt’s achievements, the study gives a more favourable account of Greg Dyke’s command of the Corporation and the direction he took it between 2000 and 2004. The ‘reinvention’ of the BBC under Dyke, in Born’s view, involved a significant ‘relaxation’ of the often hated script approval system and ‘centralised control’ of current affairs output instituted by Birt (further detailed in relation to *Panorama* by Lindley, 2002). Amongst the other changes Dyke introduced, this loosening and reduction in managerial oversight resulted, according to the study, in a restoration of ‘trust’ in, and the morale of, programme makers.

This view is supported in many, but not all, of the interviews for this study. For former *Panorama* producer Gary Horne, Greg Dyke's appointment meant 'the culture changed in the BBC and people felt for the first time liberated'. He argues that that Dyke used to send round memos saying 'Look we want stuff that's going to make some waves' and contrasts this approach with the Birtist 'school of boring, bland, non-challenging journalism' in which investigations were conducted in such a way that 'would rip the guts, just suck the ideology out of anything, sucks the cold points out of anything and just produces a technocratic sort of report' (personal communication, October 10, 2007). Horne is scornful of what he regards as the Birt-inspired folly of keeping closely to a carefully prepared script whilst making a current affairs programme. He suggests that *Panorama* staff had to produce heavily rehearsed scripts before filming, but that: 'sometimes the script didn't correspond with what people were going to tell you. So what happened? They didn't change the scripts, they changed what people said to them.' (Ibid).

This ties in with similar observations made by Lindley (2003a) and by veteran *Panorama* reporter David Lomax who found the insistence on detailed pre-scripting absurd and complains about 'the whole awfulness of Birt':

[...] there were ridiculous charades of having to produce papered versions of what you'd have to be able to say and gaps for interviewees who would say X, Y, Z and some would say 'Hang on a minute, we haven't even found .. I don't know if that's the right interviewee. We certainly haven't done the interview, we don't even know whether they'd say that.' Everybody felt that that was bizarre and ridiculous. It's all very well talking about the need to be more disciplined, but that was absolutely fatuous.

(personal communication, November 14, 2007)

John Birt was, and remains, an extremely divisive figure for many current and former BBC staff. For some he is credited with dramatically boosting spending in News and Current Affairs, transforming the BBC into a global brand to become 'the biggest newsgathering

organisation the world has ever seen' (Simpson 1999, p.303) whilst encouraging 'well-funded, well-made, demanding and conclusive current affairs' (Aaronovitch 2002, p.1). John Ware is one journalist who defends his record robustly, despite misgivings about his handling of a few programmes:

The point is, in my dealings with John he was very supportive, and you really, really shouldn't forget that for news junkies like me he invested a huge amount of money into it and developed a very big department. He actually built up the BBC into a world player that it is today. Whatever people may say about him, he invested a vast amount, he was ahead of the technological curve, he helped build the BBC's brand of news and current affairs into this global player that it is today. That's what I think.

(personal communication, February 19, 2007)

Former BBC Chairman Marmaduke Hussey (2001) questions Birt's political judgement at points in his memoirs, but credits him with making good appointments and 'clearing out the dead wood and slimming down the numbers in the news and current affairs directorate' (p.237). Two other long-serving former *Panorama* reporters and presenters Charles Wheeler and Richard Lindley remember Birt in less flattering ways. Wheeler is particularly scathing of Birt's notoriously controlling tendencies according to Bell (2006):

"He'd just sacked Peter Pagnamenta, who was head of current affairs, one of the best current affairs producers we ever had, so we were a bit upset," said Wheeler. "This fascist - and I mean it, he really was behaving like someone with power - had come in from outside the BBC slicing people's heads off."

(Bell 2006, p. 27)

Tom Mangold argues that while he was never interfered with by the management 'all the scripts had to be cleared three days in advance by whoever the media police were, whether Samir Shah or John Birt himself'. He claims that 'Birt was pretty ruthless in the beginning' and even goes so far as to suggest that Birt wanted every *Panorama* reporter fired:

T.M. I mean he sacked several. Mike Cockerell was fired, Richard Lindley was fired, he wanted me fired, but other people wanted me kept there.

D.M. *He wanted you fired? Do you know that?*

T.M. He wanted all the reporters fired. He told Tim Gardam that he wanted every single reporter fired.

(personal communication, September 4, 2009)

Martin Bell suggests, along with Born (2004) and Lindley (2000) that the BBC suffered a collapse in morale under Birt, which was only recovered ‘under the piratical leadership of Greg Dyke’ (Bell 2003, p.154). Simpson (2002) echoes this sense of a ‘renaissance in self-esteem’ for the Corporation (p.227) under Dyke.

Horrie and Clarke’s (2000) biographical account of Dyke’s rise to power and early leadership of the BBC verges on hagiography and presents an oddly uncritical contrast to their previous scathing work on Birt’s tenure at the BBC (1994) or to Horrie’s account of management of Murdoch’s tabloid paper *The Sun* (Chippindale and Horrie 1990). They describe ‘spontaneous cheering in parts of the BBC’ when he was appointed (Horrie and Clarke 2000, p.xii) and how most of the people they spoke to emphasized Greg Dyke’s abilities as a leader who was frequently described as being an ‘inspirational’ person to work with or for (Horrie and Clarke 2000, p.xi). While Dyke’s reputation remains a contentious issue amongst BBC journalists there is evidence of his real popularity. For Simpson (2004) Greg Dyke and Gavyn Davies were ‘the best and most successful chairman/director-general partnership it has been my privilege to work for in thirty-eight years at the BBC’ (p.409). Tim Luckhurst, writing in *The Independent* quotes ‘one senior former executive’ describing the day Birt left as ‘like the overthrow of a communist regime. Greg Dyke was the Lech Walesa of Television Centre’ (1995, p.1).

Horrie and Clarke also attribute some of Dyke’s popularity to the fact that he was such a break from the ‘climate of fear’ of Birt regime:

Dyke's appointment might not have played well in the Tory party or in the Wapping headquarters of *The Times*, but it was an immediate hit with most people in the BBC and with the overwhelming majority of people in the TV business. Quite apart from his various qualities, Dyke had one huge and overwhelming advantage as far as the troops were concerned – he was not John Birt. (Michael Grade later compared the end of the Birt era to the finale of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, as prisoners grope their way out of Pizarro's dungeon, 'blinded by the unaccustomed sunlight, their years of incarceration behind them'.)

(Horrie and Clarke 2000, p.273)

Horrie and Clarke's biography supports the perception amongst many observers that, in a number of ways, Dyke drove the BBC in a less 'elitist', more 'populist' direction than Birt had done, being more concerned with BBC ratings and that, consequently, he was willing to allow *Panorama* to be moved to what Tom Mangold (2004) and others regarded as a Sunday night 'graveyard slot'.

John Birt (1993, 1996, 2002) and Greg Dyke's (2004, 2007, 2008) own memoirs, lectures and articles provide useful, if often self-serving, accounts of their periods of control and are referenced in the research alongside the memoirs and work of previous Director Generals – Alasdair Milne (1989); Ian Trethowan (1984); Hugh Carleton Greene (1969) – and other senior BBC managers and staff – including Hussey (2001); Cotton (2001); Wyatt (2003, 2004); Wyndham-Goldie (1977) and Sambrook (2002, 2004). These, and numerous academic accounts, suggest that, historically, the Director General has been a decisive influence on the BBC's wider culture and News and Current Affairs in particular, with some disagreement over the merits and negative qualities of those who have occupied the position. Certain Director Generals appear as more 'liberal' figures (such as Hugh Carleton Greene and Greg Dyke) while others have more 'conservative' reputations (Ian Trethowan and John Birt) (see Snoddy 2006).

Whilst the influence of Director Generals is widely acknowledged, there is also a perception that the Corporation's sheer size and longevity have acted as an anchor against

sudden or dramatic changes. For John Simpson ‘this strange, hugely powerful organisation [...] stays very much the same, whoever is in charge at the top’ (p.227).

4.2.2 Selection of journalists, background and class composition

Another issue pertinent to the research questions which emerges as significant in much of the literature on the BBC is the Corporation’s journalistic culture and the extent to which this is shaped or influenced by the selection, background and gender/race/class composition of the journalists, senior producers and managers employed. Accusations of ‘elitism’ and of dominance by an unrepresentative, disproportionately-high number of white, male, middle class, Oxford and Cambridge University-educated staff have been made from various quarters (see Burns 1977; Born 2004) although the charge has been qualified elsewhere (Tunstall 1993). Rupert Murdoch’s MacTaggart lecture at the Edinburgh TV festival condemned British television generally, and the BBC particularly, of being in the ‘grip of a self-serving Oxbridge elite’, an accusation York University-educated Director General Greg Dyke later dismissed as ‘quite flattering’ (Horrie and Clarke 2000, p.169), despite his own concerns about the BBC’s racial composition (BBC 2001). A similar charge of elitism was made against the BBC by Rupert’s son James Murdoch in 2006 (see Wray and Gibson 2006).

Studies often separate the highly-paid, well-connected and influential journalists, producers and managers from regular BBC staff and junior journalists. For Stevenson (2002) the BBC’s neutrality has been compromised in practice partly by a ‘bureaucratic elite’ sitting at the apex of the BBC’s organisational structure which has, in his view, ‘traditionally been drawn from those with privileged social backgrounds, whose definition of the public interest has tended to bear a close resemblance to that of the government of the day’ (Stevenson 1995, p.63).

Hallin and Mancini (2004), more generally, note that ‘journalistic and administrative professionalism involve similar world views’ (p.57) while Johnstone *et al.* (1976) assert that, ‘those in charge of mass communication tend to come from the same social strata as those in control of the economic and social systems’ (cited McQuail, 2005, p.300). Some of the *Panorama* staff interviewed suggested that while moves were being made to address traditional ethnic and gender imbalances at the BBC, those efforts towards ensuring greater diversity do not give enough attention to the question of class. This was a complaint by former *Panorama* producer Gary Horne, one of a minority with strong northern, working-class roots to have worked at *Panorama* at this level:

Obviously you’ve got to address the fact that people are represented from those [ethnic] communities, but ultimately, diversity in the newsroom is a perspective, it’s a point of view, it’s a representative of things, that’s the essential thing to have that intellectual diversity, based on experience and perspectives and viewpoints and all the rest of it. And the class element of the diversity argument has been out of the equation for fifteen years.

(Gary Horne, personal communication, October 10, 2007)

Born (2005) also suggests that the BBC has its own class divisions, arguing that the institution is riven by contradictions: ‘[...] at once liberal and elitist, arrogant and fragile, a cornerstone of British democracy yet replete with internal hierarchies mirroring Britain’s broader social inequalities’ (p.5). Echoing this point, one former *Panorama* staff member, who prefers to remain anonymous, complained about growing divisions at the BBC under Director General John Birt:

The BBC pay scale used to be based on the Civil Service. It was a flat pyramid. Under Birt things began to change quickly. Birt had his own pay deal - Private Eye has the details. Managers began to think what they would earn if they ran British Airways. This once nationalised industry had become a Corporation. The pyramid's shape changed rapidly. I suspect if you compare a *Panorama* producer's salary with the DG before Birt and afterwards you would find a fourfold difference. Money matters because it has a symbolic power. Big differences divide. People think about what they earn rather than what they do. Money used in this way produces all kinds of changes. [...]

This was not the BBC I joined. I remembered sitting down in the canteen in Lime Grove in the 1960's. Even technicians had a voice. Controllers ate their chips with us. It was all first name stuff. People knew each other and we talked about work and politics. It was an open and collegiate society. Birt and his apparatchiks arrived in fleets of black limos that hovered in the forecourt of White City. They disappeared up lifts to dine with managers. I think they dreaded bumping into 'the great unwashed,' the many who made programmes, became the enemy.

(personal communication)

The sense of an increasingly remote and authoritarian managerial structure can be found in much of the literature dealing with the Birt era, but questions about the class composition and rigidly hierarchical nature of the corporation have a long history (see Audit 1937). Reira's (2000) study of the BBC picks up on concerns about the composition of the BBC Governors, concerns also expressed by Dyke and Milne in their memoirs. Burns (1977) is struck by the presence of a 'BBC type' with a similar educational background (cited Chignell 2006, p.94-95). A detailed study by the Sutton Trust in 2006 confirmed the unrepresentative class composition of the leading news and current affairs journalists in Britain, at least judged by their educational background. It revealed that the majority of the country's 100 'top journalists' (of which the BBC had the most entries – twenty-nine) were privately educated and that representation of the 'maintained sector' amongst this elite group had declined since 1986: '[...] in 2006 just 14% of the leading figures in journalism had been to comprehensive schools, which now educate almost 90% of children' (Sutton Trust 2006, p.2). Furthermore, the Sutton Trust study appears to offer a small measure of support for those complaining about the BBC being in 'the grip' of an 'Oxbridge elite' with seven Oxford and six Cambridge-educated senior journalists identified of the twenty-seven who attended university (i.e. 48% 'Oxbridge' graduates).

The Sutton Trust study, while important, requires some reservations. It only indicates the educational background of 100 well-known national journalist, of which the BBC accounts for twenty-nine (some of whom have worked at *Panorama*) a statistically insignificant number. The Corporation's wider recruitment targets or records were not made available to the researchers, despite the Sutton Trust using the Freedom of Information Act to attempt to

obtain this information. Importantly, the report acknowledges that the BBC has made efforts in recent years to widen the social background of its recruits, noting that while, ‘in the past’ the Corporation ‘attracted a high proportion of private school educated types [...] now recruitment policies are geared to meet targets for employing staff from a range of backgrounds’ (Sutton Trust 2006, p.14). Furthermore, the figures revealed reflect recruitment policies at the time these senior journalists were hired, in some cases decades ago, rather than present recruitment patterns. Nevertheless, the Sutton Trust (2006) report does indicate broad tendencies in the educational backgrounds of many leading BBC journalists which, significantly, are shared by a majority of Britain’s leading politicians and MPs (see Sutton Trust 2005).

Interviews carried out for this study give some anecdotal support for this concern. *Panorama* reporter Paul Kenyon who graduated from Trent Polytechnic observes how difficult it was for him to get into the BBC twenty years ago and notes that traditionally the C.V.s of *Panorama* staff showed that they went to ‘a particular university’ and to ‘a particular public school’ - ‘the number of people who went to St Paul’s School in *Panorama* or in current affairs is quite extraordinary’ Paul jokes about his embarrassment at attending polytechnic: ‘It’s almost like a swear word’ and admits that he spent much of his career ‘trying to disown that bit’ about his educational past. However, he argues that under Editor Sandy Smith there were attempts to move away from the white, middle-class, Oxbridge-educated image that *Panorama* had. (personal communication, April 27, 2007). For further discussion of the BBC’s News and Current Affairs Department’s shifting class, gender and ethnic composition see Tunstall 1971; Scannell 1996; Curran and Leys 2000; Tumber and Prentoulis 2003.

4.2.3 Journalistic culture

Some of the literature suggests that the selection and background of the BBC’s journalists is partly reflected in the Corporation’s current-affairs journalistic culture which is often

characterised as 'elitist' (see McNair 1999; Chignell 2006) and too close to the political class it reports on to offer dispassionate and critical commentary. Conversely, there are frequent descriptions of BBC journalism as being in some way 'remote' or 'detached' from the affairs of 'ordinary people', descriptions which can even be found in the memoirs of BBC journalists. Martin Bell describes the traditional news reports from the BBC World Service as being 'delivered in the tones of the officer class' and having: 'a distinctive character -- cautious, Olympian, evenhanded, passionless, and strangely remote - as if it were reporting events on another planet (Bell 2003, p.154-155). Senior political correspondent John Sergeant, reflecting on his own experience of joining the BBC, suggests that the elitism and 'Olympian detachment' with which news was reported had its roots in the earliest history of the Corporation:

I discovered that the BBC was a world of its own; many senior members of the staff were convinced that anything which might carry too much of a flavour of ordinary life was better left outside the imposing entrance of Broadcasting House. It was more than 40 years since the first director-general, Lord Reith, had decreed that staff who divorced could no longer be employed, and the days of announcers in dinner jackets and long since passed, but the impression was still given that you have signed up to an exclusive club and the sooner you adapted to its rules and manners the better.

(Sergeant 2001, p.105)

However, 'elitism' and compromise with the political establishment were not qualities unique to the BBC, particularly before the establishment of Channel 4 in 1982, according to Anthony Smith former BBC current affairs editor. In his view all British broadcasting institutions in the 1970s were hierarchical and self-important:

[...] embodying an ethos that informed all their action and utterances, they were licensed by the state to fulfil a conformist and consensual role. Competing with each other in theory, in practice their output converged towards a norm. The institutions, unconsciously almost, schooled their staff to think safe and produce predictable work; bureaucracy lay heavy upon them.

(cited Isaacs 1989, p.5)

This view commonly persists in critical academic studies of broadcast institutions. According to Corner (citing studies by Schlesinger (1978), Ericson et al., (1987) and Jacobs (1996)), there is a strand of workplace ethnographies which has opened up a broader theoretical agenda about the construction of public knowledge along these lines (Corner 1998, p.160-161). The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1998) writes of a 'journalistic field' defined as 'a microcosm which has its own rules, which is constituted autonomously and which cannot be understood from external factors' (Bourdieu cited Marlière 1998, p.222-223). Within this 'field' attention is focused, quite 'cynically', on the manoeuvres of politicians, but the political establishment nevertheless depends on this attention to promote its rising stars. This 'journalistic field':

[...] becomes a "caucus" increasingly responsible for "making" both politicians and their reputations. In this exclusive attention to the political "microcosm" and to the facts and effects that can be attributed to it, tends to produce a break with the public, [especially] with those segments of the public most concerned with the real consequences of these political positions on their lives and on society at large. This break is duplicated and greatly reinforced, particularly in the case of journalism's big television stars, by the social distance that comes with high economic and social status.

(Bourdieu 1998, p. 5)

Bourdieu's notion of a 'journalistic field' helps shed light on 'hidden forms of domination' exercised by television (Marlière 1998, p.219). Bourdieu's theory of the 'field' is a complex one and it is not the intention to engage in a detailed way with this theory here. It is worth noting however that Bourdieu argues that television is not a 'free' medium since it is constantly the object of 'censorship' from the political and economic fields (Marlière 1998). This view is understandable given the particular context of French broadcasting institutions and their relationship to the French state (see Adamou, Gaillard and Mustata 2008).

Nevertheless, the notion of a predictable, consensual journalistic mindset has been recognised even within the BBC (BBC 2007b) and the desirability of challenging institutional 'group-think' has gained some recognition in recent years. This is picked up in

discussion with a former *Panorama* producer Eamonn Matthews who now runs his own documentary production company Quicksilver:

I think the other difference if you're working outside the BBC is that clearly, again, as John's [Bridcut] recent report [BBC 2007b] dealt with, there can be danger of 'group-think' within any organisation. Not just the BBC but any organisation, you know...universities. Where everyone has a similarish view of the world, or in the BBC because of the newsroom agenda and so on certain stories can get pushed to the fore, which perhaps aren't so relevant to the audience and other stories will get pushed to the back.

(personal communication, June 27, 2007)

How might we characterize the category of journalism to be found within the BBC's News and Current Affairs Departments and more specifically at *Panorama*? Is there a distinct and unified 'journalistic field', a set of working practices, assumptions and relations to power that mark the programme out from other current affairs series? Is there evidence of compliant journalism remaining with 'acceptable' parameters of debate, or what Hallin has described as the 'Sphere of Consensus'? Or does the title *Panorama* provide an umbrella for various approaches, traditions of journalism and particular world views that defies such neat categorization?

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4.3 Current Affairs

4.3.1. Definitions and origins

In a report on 'The Provision of Current Affairs' published by Ofcom (2006) 'current affairs programming' is defined as:

A programme which contains explanation and analysis of current events and ideas, including material dealing with political or industrial controversy or with public policy. Also included are investigative programmes with contemporary significance.

(p.2)

This, a verbatim quotation from the BBC's own official definition, exemplifies many of the Corporation's 'classic current affairs programmes such as *Panorama*, *Question Time*, *File on Four* and *From Our Own Correspondent*' (BBC 2006b, p.1). However, unlike the terms 'documentary' or 'news' with which it shares overlapping concerns, 'current affairs' is not a category widely employed or understood beyond the United Kingdom and, even amongst British academics, institutions and practitioners there appear some vague and uneven applications of the generic designation, if not fundamental uncertainty as to its exact meaning (see Goddard *et al.* 2001; Corner 2006). Ofcom's 2005 Current Affairs Audit, for instance, as summarised in their (2006) report includes *Question Time*, *The Money Programme* and *999 Frontline* (p.10-11), yet excludes BBC's *Newsnight*, *Sunday AM* and *The Daily Politics* from many of their calculations of current affairs provision 'because they are classified by the BBC as news or politics even though they contain some current affairs style analysis' (p.12). Such definitional issues are significant in this case as it excludes 166 hours of programming in the sixth month period reviewed. Confusion over the term appears to dog the report with programmes such as *The Daily Politics* and *Sunday AM* both excluded and included in the definition on the same page without any clear rationale (p.10). Possible confusion for television audiences is also indicated by Ofcom's audience research which showed that 'viewers tended to define current affairs programming quite widely citing examples such as *Have I Got News for You* and *Jamie's School Dinners* as programmes that they felt had current affairs values' (2006, p.3) Ofcom's response to

apparent confusion over the meaning of current affairs is the introduction of a new 'genre tracker' which allows for 'cross genre programming and therefore will enable such programming to have both a primary classification and a secondary classification'. This dual classification, intended to 'more accurately reflect the range of programming with current affairs elements or values' (Ibid), may explain many of the apparently contradictory passages in the report.

Amongst academics there appears to be some hesitation to commit to a stated definition of current affairs. The form is usually explained through example and developing practice with reference to such well-known series such as *Panorama*, *This Week/TV Eye*, *World in Action* and *Dispatches* (Channel 4 1987-), or through its difference to news and documentary, rather than on its own clear-cut terms (see Tunstall 1993; Creeber 2001; Bignell 2004; de Burgh 2008). Holland (2000) identifies the core objectives of current affairs when she describes long-running series such as *Panorama* and *This Week* as providing 'a model of journalist-led programmes whose aim was to address the news and the political agenda in greater depth than the news bulletins allowed' (p.148). This comes as close to a definition of the form as can be found in the mass of material written on British news and current affairs output, even amongst the few recent studies primarily focussed on particular current affairs series (see Curran 2000; Lindley 2003; Holland 2006; Corner 2006; Goddard 2006; Goddard *et al.* 2001, 2007; Gaber 2008; de Burgh 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d). Reluctance to employ a working definition extends to a suspicion of the term in Goddard *et al.*'s study of *World in Action* which frequently employs the description 'current affairs' for 'this particular type of television series', yet argues the term 'documentary journalism', while 'awkward', better describes the two central ingredients which 'provided the basis for the category of work in which *World in Action* achieved its success' (p.217). The authors further distance *World in Action* from the category 'current affairs' in the title of their study '*Public issue television: World in Action, 1963-98*'. For the authors the term current affairs is 'the most obvious, because most used label' for this kind of work, but are clearly uncomfortable with the term's imprecision:

Current affairs is essentially a description of content and its way of

indicating news-related themes carries what has often been seen as a very British ring of the off-hand and the vague.

(Ibid)

The lack of an entry for the term 'current affairs' as a televisual form in the Oxford English Dictionary [see OED online 2009] (unlike say, 'documentary' or 'soap opera') is further indication of semantic and definitional uncertainty which can be traced back to the term's earliest use. This is found in debates at the BBC in the early 1950s led by Grace Wyndham Goldie, then a producer in the Television Talks Department, and Richard Dimbleby who had made his reputation as a radio reporter in the war and who was attempting to distinguish between the 'immediate news' of the newsreel, the 'permanent news' of the documentary and 'current news' for which no form as yet existed (Schlesinger 1987, p.43). As Schlesinger's footnotes explain the concept 'current affairs' as referent of a distinctive form of television programming first appeared in the 1960 BBC Handbook, shortly after Hugh Greene's appointment in 1959. Current affairs programmes are labelled in the Handbook as 'the wide range of topical programmes' which are 'in some sense complementary to the news bulletins' (cited Schlesinger 1987, p.276).

Schlesinger's (1987) classic study of BBC News first written in 1977 includes a detailed discussion of the news/current affairs distinction which, at the time of writing, involved a consideration of the 'well-established orthodoxy regarding the division of journalistic labour in broadcasting' (p.247) between fact and comment. While such an absolute distinction is, for the author, 'philosophically dubious', he notes 'its institutional reality at the BBC is inescapable' despite the contradictions apparent in practice of attempting to separate fact from value:

News is supposedly about fact alone, current affairs coverage providing for explicit evaluation, commentary, contextualisation, informed speculation. The news correspondent, however, has an official brief as a kind of analyst/commentator, albeit in a very low-key style. While the public image sought in such news evaluation is neutral, and the correspondents are generally low on personal charisma (unlike current affairs 'stars'), it is clear that the role itself, even in the BBC's questionable terms, is one which mixes the retailing of fact with evaluation. The overall justifying account underlying the news/current affairs distinction is therefore weak,

undermined by internal organisational arrangements themselves.

(Schlesinger 1987, p.247)

Schlesinger's account here and his discussion of the distinct 'attributes of news and current affairs in newsroom thinking' (Ibid, p.249-253) helps underline that while such distinctions were weak in 1977, they grew weaker over time, particularly following Birt's reorganisation of News and Current Affairs Divisions after his appointment in 1987 (see Blumer and Gurevitch 1995) and have very much reduced force today. Contemporary British news programmes - whether the 'rolling' news of *Sky News* (1989-) and *BBC News 24* (1997-) or the in-depth reporting of *Channel 4 News* (1982-), *BBC 4 News* (2002-) and *More 4 News* (2005-) - provide far more 'interpretation', 'analysis', 'background' and 'opinion' than Schlesinger's 1977 schema suggests and in much greater volume (see Tunstall 1993; McNair 2003b). Furthermore, news correspondents are as likely to possess 'charisma' (Andrew Marr as political editor until 2005 or Robert Peston as business editor come to mind) as any on-camera faces in current affairs today (see discussion of personalities below). Contemporary news programmes, such as *GMTV* (1993-) or the BBC's *Breakfast* (2000-), also regularly include aspects of 'entertainment' as well as 'information', such as the inclusion of celebrity news and cultural reviews, further distancing contemporary news provision from that described by Schlesinger. Hence, if the 'established orthodoxy' regarding the division of labour in broadcasting between objective, factual reporting, balanced and impartial commentary and 'opinion' was opaque or under stress thirty years ago, it is far more so today (see McNair 2003a, 2003b).

On occasion the difficulty in discerning between 'objective reporting', 'impartial comment' and 'opinion' has allowed governments, the popular press and other vested interests to attack broadcasters and, most often, the BBC accusing the Corporation of partiality or lack of objectivity (see Leapman 1987; Moore 2003; Seaton 2003; Gaber *et al.* 2009). Significantly for this study, current affairs programmes have borne the brunt of some of the most sustained criticisms, including attacks against *Panorama* (see

Lindley 2003a; Bolton 1990; Leapman 1986); *This Week* (see Bolton 1990; Holland 2006) and *World in Action* (see Goddard *et al.* 2007) (see discussion on impartiality below).

The continuing erosion of boundaries between news and current affairs may partly explain the confusion over definitional issues which for Stewart Purvis, broadcast media professor at London's City University and former chief executive of ITN, lies at the root of concerns about what many have argued is a 'crisis' in television current affairs:

[..] if you call it [current affairs] topical journalism I think it is in one of its healthiest states for years. Some of it is defined as current affairs and tends to be branded programmes, such as *Panorama* and *Dispatches*, but there is so much other journalism popping up in other places.

(cited Snoddy 2007a, p.23)

Claims for the abundance of current affairs and discussion of the blurred boundaries between different types of factual television are not especially new. As long ago as 1993, Executive Producer of *World in Action*, Charles Tremayne, was arguing that the viewer was 'now better served than ever' in current affairs and documentaries. Tremayne compared the 'early days' of just three current affairs programmes on two channels: *Panorama*, *This Week* and *World in Action* (broadcast historians might dispute this claim) against a list of ten programmes on four terrestrial channels: *Dispatches*, *On the Record*, *The Money Programme*, *Public Eye*, *Channel 4 News*, *The Big Story*, *Assignment*, *Inside Story*, *Newsnight* and *First Tuesday* as well as ten more series 'which often compete in the same territory': *Heart of the Matter*, *Cutting Edge*, *Everyman*, *On the Line*, *The Cook Report*, *40 Minutes*, *Secret History*, *Timewatch*, *Horizon* and *Nature* (1993, p.18). Tremayne also explained that the dramatic decline in foreign coverage in current affairs was due to the introduction of electronic news gathering and portable satellite technology which meant that news bulletins could transmit images from locations around the world within minutes of being shot. Former BBC Director General Greg Dyke also identifies technology as the key reason for what he describes as news's 'triumph' over current affairs:

GD: When I came to the BBC there was an historic battle between news and current affairs. By the time I left news had won. Current affairs had become less and less important. Had less and less resources

DM: *Why do you think it became less important?*

GD: Oh, I think the technology of news meant it took over. If you watch [BBC] 24 Hour News you've got all that.. in fact very few people watch 24 Hour News. The actual audiences are tiny. For 24 Hour News, I think the technology, the ability to be there became so much easier.

(personal communication, October 16, 2009)

The expansion of broadcast news provision that has accompanied the development of cable and satellite television, including the availability of 24-hour news channels provided by the BBC, ITN and Sky is evidence, for McNair (2003b) that more broadcasting journalism is available to the British viewer than ever before and that 'the prospects for public service broadcast journalism [...] are good' (p.214). The author acknowledges, however, that the expansion in provision has been accompanied by the need to maximise ratings in a much more commercial and competitive environment. While challenging the more pessimistic 'narratives of decline' and accusations of 'dumbing down' which have driven many of the debates on news and current affairs provision in the 21st Century, McNair admits that there has been a broad 'shift in content away from the in-depth, often critical investigative journalism for which British public service broadcasting has been internationally renowned, towards the racier style characteristic of the tabloids' (Ibid, p.68) (see Barnett *et al.* 2000 for a discussion of the terms 'tabloid' and 'broadsheet' and a detailed study investigating charges that British television news between 1977-1999 went 'downmarket'). The threat to current affairs posed by the proliferation of news programmes and analysis and the difficulty of maintaining audience ratings is raised repeatedly in interviews conducted for this research, as in the following comment by Michael Crick:

Well I think current affairs is in deep trouble, [...] the problem is that it is constantly squeezed by the explosion there has been in news programmes, both in television and radio in the last twenty-five years and the fact that

Newsnight and *Channel 4 News* are so much more powerful. I mean when *Panorama* began there was no bloody competition from anywhere really and then ITV had *World in Action* and *This Week* and there was some competition there and now it's very difficult for the poor buggers out there to think of an item that they can work on for three months and be confident that nobody will scoop them on it. They are finding it increasingly difficult to find a role for themselves and they are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain audiences with 24 hour news and a lot more analysis in your basic news programmes as well: the nine o'clock, the ten o'clock news, the six o'clock news.. The future for current affairs does not look bright. Having said that the new editions of *Panorama* at 8 o'clock on a Monday night are doing well but clearly they have had to be more populist and downmarket a bit...

(personal communication, February 16, 2007)

The phrase 'populist' is used by many of the interviewees for this research to describe the post-2006 *Panorama* relaunched under Sandy Smith as Editor, although not always in a negative context. John Ware's diplomatic comments are typical of how the shift was viewed by several reporters:

JW: I think they have become more populist, but I don't think that that's a bad thing. I've avoided, in anything I've said, using the words 'dumbed down' because I don't think the programmes *Panorama* have put out so far are dumb at all. They are perfectly decent programmes. I think if the trend continues they will be a little too predictable for my taste, a little unambitious. I mean, you know, tagging, have a go heroes, IVF clinics. It's all good and important consumerist stuff, but it isn't really counterintuitive, none of it is iconoclastic and certainly none of it is what I call 'big statement TV' which is what I'm more interested in and what I think the old *Panorama* used to do occasionally quite well, but too often badly.

4.3.2. Genre boundaries, objectivity and impartiality

Alongside the so-called 'tabloidisation' of current affairs (see Sparks and Tulloch 2000) there has been continued blurring of the distinctions between current affairs, documentary and other factual and 'reality' genres (a hugely complex area which this thesis can only touch on). This has manifested itself in various ways, but at an institutional level Born (2004) notes 'a tense relationship' between BBC Documentaries and Current Affairs (the departments). Her interviews with senior executives and producers from both departments expose rivalry and territorial ambition between a small, underfunded Documentaries 'punching above its weight' in terms of impact and

ratings and eager to take on Current Affairs on its own jealously guarded ‘patch’, including ‘mainstream politics’. One senior executive boasts how they made a ‘brilliant’ documentary on a pensions bill going through the Commons:

If Current Affairs had done it, it would have got 0.1; this got 2 million. [...] The film speaks more about what makes politicians tick, the Tory Party, the DSS, than any *Panorama*. I can’t think of one great Current Affairs series, yet they have millions ring-fenced! I don’t have any guaranteed money. We should be allowed to fight those bastards for the money and slots. All I want is to be able to pitch for the territory.

(cited Born 2004, p.402)

The interviews with staff from Documentaries and Current Affairs, as with so many conducted by Born, are very revealing of the perceived roles and distinct output of each department, as well as underlying tensions, rivalries and power relations within the Corporation. Another executive producer in Documentaries points to an ‘anxious’, bureaucratic structure in Current Affairs constantly worrying about the ‘political repercussions’ of programmes in the wake of Birt’s reforms (p.401). The unnamed producer wonders how Documentaries was unscathed by these reforms since, s/he argues, *Real Lives* and all the trouble it drew from the government came from Documentaries. The low opinion Current Affairs is held in by the producer is made explicit:

Current Affairs don’t benefit from a dialogue with the outside; they could have more independent production in their strands, and it would be reinvigorating. They’re obsessed with rigour; they talk a lot about being “journalistically sound”. It’s all in the tone: neutered, authoritative, that “covers the whole story”, that claims some sense of “objectivity”, whatever that means. And you have a much bigger *hierarchy* in Current Affairs than in Documentaries. [original emphasis]

(Ibid)

The rather contemptuous language employed here disguises deeper parallels between the producer’s view of current affairs and a long history of critical academic discourse that has drawn attention to ‘the myth of objectivity’ pervading broadcast journalism and the subtle culture of compliance and control particularly characteristic of the BBC (Mattleart 1972; Schlesinger 1992; Eldridge 1993; Philo 1995a, 2002; Tumber and

Prentoulis 2003). For Garnham (for instance) writing more than thirty years ago, this is achieved through recruitment, training and the inculcation of ‘Establishment’ values and standards, ‘defined as impartiality and objectivity in factual coverage of political and social affairs’ (1978, p.31). The author then makes clear that a major mechanism for ensuring such ‘Establishment’ standards is the ‘referring-up’ process:

This process gives to the producer the illusion of freedom while in fact inhibiting the exercise of that freedom. A good producer learns to avoid worrying his [sic] over-worked boss by keeping off troublesome areas. If he refers up too often he will be accused of lacking individual initiative. If, on the other hand, he oversteps the mark without having referred up he will be labelled as irresponsible and will rapidly, in the words of an official BBC memo on Current Affairs coverage, ‘use up all his creditworthiness’.

(Ibid, p.32)

Garnham’s sceptical account is worth contrasting briefly with former *Panorama* Editor Robert Rowland’s (2000) praise for the ‘upwards reference’ process, or ‘devolved responsibility’ at *Panorama* in the 1960s, which he places at the heart of the success of the programme at that time:

This was rarely defined, but all producers were expected to have an instinct for knowing when they needed advice, or when those senior to them needed to know that a course of action would be initiated which might need approval. BBC staff selection processes probably underpinned the relative security of the system, together with a sense of pride in working for *Panorama* and the BBC which many of us felt and which we would not abuse. Great freedom was given ‘down the line’. With that freedom went great trust. And that trust was rarely unaccompanied with a sense of responsibility to the well-being of the corporation. Trust given down the line was reciprocated by a transactional loyalty.

(Rowland 2000, p.162)

The ‘relative security’ of the system that Rowland refers to suggests that ‘errors of judgement’ continued to occur from time to time, but were minimised by careful recruitment, training and loyalty to the Corporation. From all the interviews conducted with *Panorama* staff for this study a deep commitment to the Corporation continues to motivate current affairs producers and reporters, partly stemming from professional pride in the independence granted to those working on the *Panorama* team. This

independence is based on a very strong awareness of the responsibility to ‘balanced and impartial’, ‘factually accurate’ and ‘rigorous’ reporting which interviewees stress underpins their work as journalists and producers. A view that is repeated in many of the interviews conducted for this research is that if a report is factually accurate and gives fair space to different perspectives on an argument then no topic or vested interest is off limits, up to and including large corporations, the Government and the BBC itself. *Panorama* producer Mike Rudin comments as follows:

[...] I mean I’d point to the programme we did about the Hutton Report. I’m always *amazed* about how much freedom you get to make programmes at the BBC. People from outside always see it as, you know, we’re controlled and we don’t get chances to make.. I mean, it’s *remarkable* how much freedom you get. Basically you get the chance to go off and spend several months doing something and at the end of it you have to justify what you’ve done in your conclusion, but you’re given a remarkable amount of freedom.

(interviewed 15-06-2009)

Former *Panorama* Deputy Editor Andy Bell (BBC Editorial Complaints) gives an example of a *Panorama* investigation of alleged corruption in the International Olympic Committee (IOC) which the Corporation defended despite ‘huge’ pressure from the IOC to drop the case (presentation to Investigative Journalism Conference, University of Westminster, 13 June 2008). Similarly, John Ware, although ‘under pressure to get it right’ describes the freedom he was granted in reporting on alleged government and BBC’s failures over the Gilligan-Kelly affair in *Panorama’s* A Fight to the Death [tx: 21-01-04]:

JW: [...] The pressure to get it right and to be fair was enormous, obviously, because you knew you were going to be judged by your peers and if the tone of the programme didn’t ring bells for senior BBC management then they were never going to trust anything else you did, because they would know in their heart of hearts if what you said was true or not, or fair or not. And actually the first person to call me, and I’ll never forget it, after the transmission of that programme was in many ways the person against whom many of the criticisms had been directed.

DM: Greg Dyke?

JW: No. (laughs) ... Richard Sambrook. I mean Richard in the sense that he

had been, I think, too trusting of Gilligan.

(Interviewed 19-02-07)

Ware goes on to say that although Director General Greg Dyke was reportedly 'livid', he did not put any pressure on Ware after the broadcast. Writing in 2004, Ware also argues that the circumstances of the making of 'A Fight to the Death' and the reaction to the transmission by senior executives was a 'powerful testimony to the health of the BBC's public service ethos of objectivity'. Both Sambrook and Damizer, who are criticised in Ware's investigation telephoned him 'quite independently' straight after transmission: 'Both said that while they did not accept all our conclusions, it was clear we done our best to be objective and fair. "I don't have a complaint," said Sambrook. "Well done" ' (Ware 2004, p.15).

The extent to which 'balance' and 'objectivity' are regarded as defining characteristics of *Panorama* is, to some degree, bound up in notional understanding of the current affairs form as well as legal requirements placed upon British broadcasters and the BBC's particular public service broadcasting 'responsibilities'. These responsibilities, historically, included the duty to set out 'impartially, objectively, with the most rigid standards of accuracy to ensure that the idea of the British nation as an informed democracy shall be not an ideal but a reality' (BBC cited Briggs 1979a, p.615). Holland (2000) explains how the exercise of 'impartiality' is crucial to broadcast authorities' distinctions between news, documentary and current affairs. News 'carries the authority of the broadcaster, and so must be seen to be neutral and without editorial voice'; current affairs, 'carries the authority of the programme team, and so may express carefully balanced editorial opinion, supported by evidence'; authored documentary, in which the individual reporter is named, allows the expression of 'more extreme and idiosyncratic opinions' (p.149).

The legal framework in which current affairs operates is laid out, for the BBC, in Clause 13 (7) of its Licence and Agreement which forbids the Corporation from broadcasting its own opinions on current affairs and matters of public policy (see Creeber 2001). This regulatory requirement is codified in a series of detailed instructions contained in the

BBC's Producer and Editorial Guidelines which, in 2004, describes 'accurate, robust, independent, and impartial journalism' as the 'DNA of the BBC' (cited Starkey 2007, p.99) and which were substantially updated in 2005 following 'the BBC's biggest editorial crisis, the Gilligan-Kelly affair' (BBC 2005a, p.1). 'Balance over time' has also been the essence of the BBC's policy historically according to Starkey (ibid). With British politics traditionally dominated by two main political parties balance was, for many years, achieved by apportioning approximately equal time to representatives from those parties. Wyndham Goldie writes of how political impartiality was preserved in current affairs by maintaining 'rough equality in the number and nature of the appearances in current affairs programmes of Labour Party sympathisers and of Conservatives' (Wyndham Goldie 1977, p.284). This situation, where Labour and Conservatives viewpoints dominated political debates, changed somewhat from the early 1980s with splits in the Labour Party and a new electoral force - the SDP - emerging, which finally allied itself with the Liberal Party and attracted more media attention to the minority third party than had previously been the case. Corner (1995) explores how what he terms a 'stopwatch' culture occurs both in the studio and at the headquarters of the major political parties, particularly around elections. This stopwatch culture is designed to present opposing views according to a sliding scale reflecting electoral popularity (see also Horrocks 2006). The stopwatch, in this way, can become the arbiter of 'balance' both figuratively and literally - with the main political parties dominating the debate and exercising enormous pressure and influence on TV news production. Such reductive stopwatch practices are further complicated when there are more than two positions or parties. Where the point of 'balance' for the presentation of different views would seem to be between two parties - the 'middle ground' - a further problem occurs when this position is occupied by a centrist party, in which case the slant of reports would tend to be 'biased' in favour of that party above others.

Corner makes distinctions between the journalistic principle of 'impartiality' and the associated and often confused notions of 'accuracy', 'objectivity' and 'balance'.

'Accuracy' he takes to mean the correctness of facts - names, dates, quotes and so on, although this is not always as straightforward as it sounds. Estimates of the numbers attending anti-war marches in Britain and around the world on the 15th March 2003, for

instance, varied so widely that news broadcasts reported both police and march-organiser estimates, a long-standing practice that goes back to CND marches of the 1980s and earlier. *Panorama*'s generally sympathetic report 'Blair's War' [tx: 23.03.03] opts for a figure of one million – significantly less than the 'up to two million' claimed by the Stop the War Coalition, but more generous than police estimates of 'in excess of 750,000' (BBC 2003b, p.1). Clearly the dividing line between facts and opinion is sometimes a disputed one, but, as Corner notes, 'no one doubts the possibility of a journalist being 'accurate' about a lot of things for a lot of the time as agreed by the very widest spectrum of political and social opinion and very few people doubt the desirability of them being so' (cited McQueen 1998, p. 104).

'Objectivity' as defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary as '..that which is external to the mind' and '..that which is unaffected by subjective mental operations' is clearly, Corner (1995) observes, philosophically and practically as impossible for journalists as for anyone else. To say 'objectivity' is possible assumes that an unarguable interpretation of an event exists. In fact, all reporting implies a point of view - in the selection or non-selection of stories, the placement and angle of the cameras, the selection of interviewees and relevant questions, and the language and tone adopted by reporters and presenters. Ironically, as Fiske (1987) points out, despite unanimous critical agreement that no communication can be totally 'neutral' or 'objective', the idea that, as both *Panorama* and *This Week*'s strapline once proclaimed, television is a 'window on the world', now known as the 'transparency fallacy', still survives, if anywhere, in television.

Lack of 'balance' or 'bias', the term applied to the media when they give an 'unfair' advantage to one side in a dispute, either by misrepresenting, underplaying or ignoring alternative points of view (see Gill and Adams 1988) is an accusation which current affairs must be careful to avoid. The BBC's 2005 Editorial Guidelines are clear: 'we strive to reflect a wide range of opinion and explore a range and conflict of views so that no significant strand of thought is knowingly unreflected or under represented' and 'we must ensure we avoid bias or an imbalance of views on controversial subjects (BBC

2005a, p.26). As Holland (2000) remarks current affairs programmes have, throughout their history, been the centre of accusations of bias drawing fire from governments, corporations, the press and the academy:

[...] risking attack either for bias or for cowardice. If their position is overtly oppositional, the press and government have cried that television is peopled by left-wing activists; if their criticisms are too mild, academics and the left have complained that their very structure makes them unable to question the status quo.

(Holland 2000, p.149)

Graham (2004) argues, more broadly, that an obligation to provide ‘balance’ in current affairs is a powerful constraint on current affairs, a ‘lazy option for “due impartiality”’ [...] which says ‘that no particular point of view should be favoured’ (p.11). Graham describes this as impeding the more important and socially valuable aim of ‘trying to convey the objective truth about a matter, or offering an honest expression of opinion’ (Ibid). In its most ‘inert form’ this has meant respecting the position of the dominant parties more or less in proportion to their dominance, which may favour a government in office:

[...] an opposition’s view is recorded and minor parties may or may not get a look in, depending on the scale of the items or perceived importance of the issue. This is not only a recipe for routine journalism, but it places the whole discussion of public affairs firmly within a context of Westminster, Parliament and the process of government.

(Ibid)

The aim of ‘balance’ or avoidance of ‘bias’ is, therefore, not only closely bound up in broadcasting organisations’ legal obligation to show ‘due impartiality’, but also, more defensively, the need to satisfy ‘the powers that be’ as represented by the major political parties in Parliament. As Chignell (2004) shows, discussions of balance and impartiality can be traced back to the earliest years of the BBC (when it was the British Broadcasting Company) and they became ‘core values’ of the Corporation, particularly following the lifting of government restrictions on broadcasting ‘controversial’ material

in 1928 (p.29). The BBC's first Director General, John Reith argued that if there was a balanced presentation of opposing views on a controversial matter, 'stated with equal emphasis and lucidity, then at least there can be no charge of bias' (Scannell and Cardiff, cited Ibid). This idea that balance might shield the BBC from accusations of partiality endures and is reiterated in in-house literature, although Lindley (2002) suggests that partial views were indeed expressed by an 'early generation' of *Panorama* presenters and reporters 'as long as they did so in a personal, non-party way' (p.71). This was possible because they were not presenting 'BBC editorial opinion' but their own view, based on their experience researching the story. Lindley's switches to the simple present tense in the following passage suggesting that *Panorama* reporters may still offer 'opinion' if they believe this is where the 'balance of truth lies':

A *Panorama* reporter's job is to decide where, in his [sic] opinion, and on the evidence he offers, the balance of truth lies. Unlike the Pope speaking *ex cathedra* he is not laying down his interpretation of the facts as something that must be accepted. He is suggesting that his opinion is worth considering seriously. And whether we agree with him of course depends on the quality of the reporter, the evidence he has produced and the way he has presented it.

(Ibid, p.73)

As Chignell (2004) notes, a presenter's right to express their view seems bound up, for Lindley, in ill-defined 'personal qualities' 'or because of their 'calibre'' (p.30). Two conflicting definitions of 'impartiality' also appear to be in operation here: the first is bound up in the 'search for truth', the second in the BBC's 'need for an apparent balance in the cause of 'self-preservation'' (Ibid). Yet as a recent report by the BBC Trust (2007b) on 'safeguarding impartiality' points out, the BBC Charter specifically states that 'due impartiality does not require absolute neutrality on every issue' (p.42). The report also reiterates Lindley's point about giving space for experienced journalists to express opinions when they state that 'impartiality is no excuse for insipid programming' and that there must be room for 'fair-minded, evidence-based judgements by senior journalists':

Programmes would be bland and sometimes pointless, if they were never able to reach conclusions based on evidence. That is a proper role for BBC's senior journalists and documentary-makers. There should also be greater

scope for contentious authored programmes, provided the authorship is clear, and that over time there is balance of opinion across the intellectual spectrum.

(Ibid, p.7)

'Due impartiality' is, in fact, carefully defined by the BBC charter and the various Acts of Parliament covering independent broadcasting, as well as in detailed editorial guidelines (see BBC 2005a). It involves taking into account a 'wide range of views and opinions', even at times of war (Ibid, p. 106) but also giving prominence to mainstream opinions, whilst reflecting 'the range of public attitudes and behaviour realistically' (Ibid, p.82). Where 'points of view' are given they must be clearly signalled as such and matched, where possible, by an opposing view. For ITV and the BBC this principle is supposed to operate within any programme; on Channel 4 impartiality is required only across the range of programming shown (McQueen 1998, p. 105). For a current affairs series such as *Panorama*, balance may be achieved across a number of programmes (see Seymour-Ure 1990). 'Bias' therefore, need not be thought of as the opposite of truth. As Goodwin (1990), notes: 'The real issue is whether the range of biases represented is fair. In other words, does it adequately reveal the range of points of view held by the public?' (Goodwin 1990, p. 54).

The establishment of Channel 4 in 1982 which was required to present diverse viewpoints and reflect tastes and interests not normally catered for by other television channels was an acknowledgement that Britain's racial and cultural minorities, for instance, were not being fairly represented and that political debate could be extended beyond the parliamentary 'consensus' represented by three political parties to include more marginal or extra-parliamentary movements and voices. Consequently, by the 1990s, as Born (2005) points out, the doctrines of objectivity and impartiality which had operated as 'strategic rituals' binding the professional culture within news and current affairs were being challenged by a changing intellectual climate and conception of what broadcasting should achieve. The fresh approach Channel 4 permitted, particularly in its early years, to cultural and political coverage, combined with various critical academic studies by the Glasgow Media Group, Philip Schlesinger and others, had gradually enabled what Born describes as a more 'sophisticated grasp of the interpretative nature of journalism' within the Corporation (2005, p.382). Consequently, notions of

'balance' in broadcasting today are more complex than in the era of Wyndham Goldie's *Panorama*, for instance, reflecting a shift towards a more pluralistic view of society. The metaphor of a wheel has recently been employed, rather than a pendulum or 'see-saw', to characterise the diversity of political views that broadcasters, and specifically the BBC, should reflect (BBC 2007b). Public service requirements obliging the BBC to serve the whole nation, reflecting and responding to different tastes and views, are now also reflected in a drive by some current affairs programmes, including *Panorama*, to give expression to a wider range of political perspectives than might have been sought in earlier decades (see recent appearance of BNP leader Nick Griffin on *Question Time* tx: 22.10.2009). Contested notions of impartiality and objectivity are particularly important then in understanding debates about *Panorama's* political coverage, or in accounting for the range of voices found in its coverage of the Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003.

The contrast between current affairs' duty to maintain standards of impartiality and objectivity as compared to documentary are further explored in Born's (2004) interviews (carried out in the example cited below in 1997). They include a characteristic defence of the values of impartiality by an unnamed Current Affairs senior executive. The executive complains that they can never have some of the 'brilliant documentary values' of a series like *Modern Times* because they are obliged to give 'impartial' attention to the argument: 'Life here is more complicated. We're not into advocacy or observational journalism; we're into the clash of big vested interests. It's less glamorous' (p.401).

The distinctions made in this interview between documentary and current affairs supports Tunstall's view of a 'spectrum' of broadcast factual coverage which places the quick turnaround of daily television news journalism at one end and television documentary, usually crafted over several months, at the other: 'Television weekly journalism – called 'current affairs' in Britain – tends to have a turnaround time of several weeks, but even these programmes are much closer to British Sunday newspapers than to documentary' (1993, p.47). *Newsnight's* political editor Michael

Crick compares the work of television journalists to runners:

I think reporters break down into.. they are like runners really. The hard news guys are the equivalent of sprinters; people like myself who work for *Newsnight* and *Channel 4 News* are sort of middle-distance runners and those working for *Panorama* are more of a sort of long-distance runner – five thousand, ten thousand metres.

(personal communication, February 16, 2007)

Crick goes on to observe that because *Panorama* reporters made around four programmes a year they were under huge pressure for the programmes to be ‘really good’ so that ‘even on your days off you’d be worrying about it’. He also complains that it was a very producer run programme ‘so they don’t allow any of the personality or individuality of the reporter to come out, that’s why I hated it. The worst two years of my career’ (Ibid).

Crick’s comments relate to *Panorama* in the period he worked there (1990-1992) and it could be argued that there has been more scope for the personality of the reporter to emerge in recent years, as in the work of mixed-race reporter Raphael Rowe whose South-East London background and wrongful imprisonment for twelve years are experiences drawn on in his investigations (BBC 2007c). Nevertheless, as Tunstall points out, in contrast to the more subjective or ‘authored’ work of the individual documentary film-maker and his or her small team, current affairs operates within the requirements for political neutrality and objectivity legally placed on TV journalism. Tunstall’s interviews with producers suggest that these neutrality requirements do cause anxiety for producer and reporter, but less than do ‘the normal complexities of journalism, overlaid by cumbersome television logistics’ (1993, p.47). The interviews conducted for this thesis confirm this view is still common within Current Affairs more than twenty years later, with anxiety over factual accuracy and evidential proof outweighing concerns over any supposed balance or ‘neutrality requirements’. Mike Rudin, for instance, who produced ‘The Case Against War’ (tx: 8.12.02) argues that it is possible to make a case or ‘state a thesis’ so long as you make sure everything is fair as

you do it: '[...] there's a huge amount of work that goes into it, sort of sweating through it to make sure that you can stand by everything and that it's fair' (personal communication, June 15, 2009).

Despite their quite different production routines and the distinct interpretive remits of news, current affairs and documentary, these and other factual formats have, in fact, continued to cross-fertilize since Born's interviews cited above. Commercial pressures have played an important role in the rapid evolution of factual television, often leading to concerns about the 'dumbing down' of current affairs (see Humphrys 1999; Sparks and Tulloch 2000; Aaronovitch 2002; Kuhn 2007) amounting for some, to a crisis in the form exemplified by *Panorama's* recent alleged 'soft focus', 'superficial', 'gimmick-led', 'human interest approach' (Cummings 2004; Reeve 2005; Mangold 2007; Heffer 2007).

This view is far from universal, however, with some academics and industry personnel celebrating what they regard as a boom in lively, factual output in the digital, multi-channel era, a boom that pays little respect to conventional generic boundaries (see Hill 2005; Murray and Ouellette 2008; Oldenborgh 2008). Channel Five's senior programme controller News and Current Affairs Chris Shaw, for instance, dismisses the notion of a crisis either for documentary or current affairs, suggesting that only definitions have changed. He wonders if a documentary is restricted to 'the sort of thing you'd see at the Grierson Awards or does it include *Wife Swap*, *Faking It* and a whole range of factual entertainment offerings?' (cited Snoddy 2007a, p.23). Shaw, who counts *The Wright Stuff*, the call-in TV show, as 'the bulk' of Channel 5's current affairs output, argues that the drama-documentary *The Government Inspector* provided more insight than 'the very good *Panorama* on the Kelly affair'. The relevance of this comparison is made clear by a reminder that *World in Action* successfully used drama-documentaries to illustrate written accounts and testimonials on 'inaccessible' topics by a dedicated unit first established for the making of the acclaimed 'The Man Who Wouldn't Keep Quiet' (1970) about the trial of Soviet dissident Pyotr Grigorenko (cf Goddard *et al.* 2007; McQueen 2010). Furthermore, increasing use of dramatic recreation in current affairs based on the available evidence, once frowned on, is now so commonplace that it rarely

provokes comment or censure (see *Panorama*; A Good Kicking tx: 13.03.07).

George Entwistle, Head of Current Affairs at BBC in 2007, agrees that concepts of current affairs have been changing and dates the arrival of *Jamie's School Dinners* as a significant moment: 'It was then that popular factual television started to explore topics that would previously have been the province of current affairs' (cited Snoddy 2007a, p.23). In fact, important changes mark each decade of *Panorama*'s history with ideas of what it is 'important' to cover under constant review (see Chapter 4.4).

It is worth noting, for instance, that more 'soft focus', 'human interest' and 'domestic' themes were a common element in *Panorama* at the height of its popularity in the 1950s when Grace Wyndham Goldie affirmed a 'mixed diet' of items was essential to secure the broadest possible audience, even cautioning against a third week of coverage devoted exclusively to Suez at the height of the crisis in November 1956 (see Thumim 1998, p.98). Arguments over 'soft' and 'hard' current affairs coverage are not, Thumim shows, new and are often expressed as hierarchical 'objective:subjective' scales 'which also map onto the masculine:feminine opposition determining language itself' (Ibid, p.93).

Finally, the issue of defining current affairs as a unique form is not simply an arcane academic question or obscure territorial dispute within the industry. Head of Channel 4's News and Current Affairs Dorothy Byrne has written how a current affairs producer she commissioned to make a programme about Gordon Brown was refused admission into the Labour Party conference:

She had completed and paid all relevant forms and had been assured of her pass when she turned up but she was barred from entering. She didn't even have a camera crew with her. All she wanted to do was to look at Gordon Brown - as anyone could if she turned on her TV. So it seemed pointless to block her. But we were told documentary filmmakers were not allowed into Labour Party conferences. We protested that we were not documentary

makers but current affairs journalists. We were told that current affairs was not recognized as a separate genre by the Labour Party. Which is odd considering Gordon Brown used to be a current affairs television journalist.

(Byrne 2007, p. 8)

4.3.3 The Public Service Broadcasting role of current affairs

The role of television current affairs in providing weekly, in depth monitoring of the social political and global landscape has led, as Holland (2006) notes, to occasional spectacular revelations, such as *This Week's* Death on the Rock (1988) on the shooting of three members of an IRA unit in Gibraltar. Existing histories naturally devote considerable attention to the more controversial episodes of particular current affairs series which have involved interventions or reprimands from governments, broadcasting authorities, the management of broadcasting institutions or the courts (see Lindley 2003a; Holland 2006; Goddard et al. 2007). Beyond these more controversial episodes, the regular appearance until the late 1990s in the peak-time schedules of such prestigious series as *This Week*, *World in Action*, *Panorama* and *Dispatches* was regarded as a sign of commitment by broadcasters to 'quality television'. For Holland, 'their seriousness and sense of purpose underpinned television's, and particularly commercial television's, claim to nurture informed citizenship and the core values of democracy itself' (Holland 2006, p.xiv).

This sense of purpose for current affairs and its contribution towards sustaining an informed electorate and promoting wider debate in society is a common thread in much of the available literature. For example, in setting out the context for their independent inquiry into *This Week's* 'Death on the Rock' Lord Windlesham and Richard Rampton QC make the following observation:

We start out with the proposition that the freedom of the press and broadcast media is an integral part of free society. The degree of freedom and the pressures upon it will always be contentious, but the principle should be

beyond challenge that the public interest is advanced 'by publishing the facts and opinions without which a democratic electorate cannot make responsible judgements'. (Royal Commission on the Press, Final Report)
(cited Windlesham and Rampton 1989, p.9)

The importance of news and current affairs to what cultural theorist Jürgen Habermas called 'the public sphere' has been written about extensively (see Stevenson 1996, 2002 Curran 1997; Gripsrud 1999; Jensen 2002; Bignell and Orlebar 2005; McGuigan and Allan 2006). For Corner *et al.* 'current affairs' is a programme category where television's power of popular engagement and visual impact intersect most directly with its functions as a provider of knowledge and as a major 'forum' of the public sphere' (2001, p.74). While the language used here to characterise current affairs may be different, the sentiment is much the same as that expressed within broadcasting institutions. Describing its relaunch in January 2007, for instance, the new *Panorama* Editor Sandy Smith wrote that the programme '[...] will be right at the heart of the nation's conversation' (Guardian 10/11/2006), and in another article *Panorama* is described as carrying the heavy burden of the BBC's public purpose to 'sustain citizenship and civil society' (Liddiment 2006, p.8). The notion of a 'public sphere' of debate to which current affairs contributes is clearly an influential one both for academics and for those working in broadcasting.

As Gripsrud (1999) remarks, the ideals of the liberal public sphere still form the basis for notions of democracy and for the ethical principles which are, according to liberal pluralist perspectives, supposed to govern the functions of the media within democratic societies. This conventional account of the democratic role of the media, according to Curran (1997), rests on three key concepts in the liberal canon – 'the media as watchdog, public representative ('fourth estate') and source of public information' (p.83). Curran's critical reassessment of these concepts is a useful counterweight to more naïve or celebratory accounts of the mass media's independence from, and relation to, power and privilege, but putting such a critique to one side for a moment, it is worth noting how current affairs programmes are often organised around the three concepts Curran identifies: watchdog/exposé, public representative/debate and public

information/reportage. Gaber, for instance, argues that *Panorama's* importance is bound up in its duty, along with other media, to keep people informed about the overall 'state of the nation' which it does through reportage and analysis, but also through 'substantive' investigative journalism whereby they can carry out their 'oft-quoted watchdog role' (2008a, p.254). In this respect television current affairs series such as the BBC's *Panorama*, *Newsnight* and *Question Time* continue to carry out an important 'democratic function' as defined by liberal media theorists and according to the BBC's own understanding of its 'public service broadcasting' responsibilities (see Briggs 1979a). This democratic function is achieved by maintaining and, where necessary, fighting to protect a public service tradition that has placed value on independent inquiry, communicative rationality and political dialogue.

Former *Panorama* Editor Roger Bolton argues in relation to current affairs that this democratic function may at times extend beyond the limits of arguments and debates in Parliament to reflect the wider concerns of society. He suggests that as *Panorama* Editor he was made more aware by the academic work of the Glasgow Media Group and others of the need for inquiry and dialogue in areas that might challenge the 'Westminster consensus':

[...] One of the great dangers there that came to bear in the seventies and eighties was this being drawn to the consensus. The other danger was that people like Robin Day thought that essentially Parliament should establish the nature of the argument. And I think what the Glasgow Media Group and others helped us to do in its awareness is that our approach was far too narrow. So when it came to Ireland, for example, we realised that there never has been a debate on the unification of Ireland in the British Parliament. And we knew this from polls saying that 45/50% British public thought [...] the British should pull out [of Northern Ireland]. There was never a debate. And so what we thought then, we can't do that, we have to represent, find out what people want to talk about, represent their interests. After all they're voting at elections, their children are dying etc., etc., there's no debate, we must do that. Not driven by the Republicans, driven by an awareness, a sudden sort of awareness, that often the Parliamentary consensus was not representative of the attitudes of the country.

(personal communication, October 23, 2008)

For Holland (2006), writing about ITV's *This Week*, the tension for current affairs programmes between 'adding to the democratic debate' and pleasing a sizeable audience were never mutually exclusive options, but were constantly argued over and worked through in many different ways. However, legislative changes, particularly following the 1990 Act which 'freed' commercial television from the legal obligation to screen current affairs in peak time, amongst other changes, led to 'a moment in current affairs history that was fraught with anxiety' (p.213). Holland contrasts the self-consciously 'serious' current affairs coverage that characterized John Birt's regime at the BBC, 'from an unashamedly populist approach taken by a restructured ITV' (Ibid). Similarly, Ray Fitzwalter, former Head of Current Affairs at Granada, in his book *The Dream that Died: the rise and fall of ITV* (2008) describes the effect of the breakup of a regional ITV system following the 1990 Broadcasting Act which he shows contributed directly to the undermining of public service commitments, the release of raw commercial forces and the destruction, for instance, of the radical, challenging and popular current affairs culture at Granada.

Subsequent government interventions, such as the 1994 White Paper, have accelerated moves towards a more audience-led, 'consumer aware and commercial' broadcasting environment (Born 2004, p.401). This has ultimately affected both public and independent broadcasting institutions and fed through to current affairs such as *Panorama* which, following its 2007 relaunch in peak viewing hours, has a greater obligation to maintain audience ratings, an obligation made explicit in its mission statement which is to 'deliver impact either in terms of audience size or in take-up by the wider media' (cited Mangold 2007, p1.)

Arguments over such moves, particularly in relation to current affairs, are a recurring feature of media commentary (see Holland 2001) and are regularly rehearsed in relation to *Panorama*, often by serving and former Editors, BBC managers and senior journalists. On the one hand there are those in the industry calling for the preservation

of a core public-service commitment to ‘intelligent’, ‘challenging’, ‘substantive’ and ‘in-depth’ current affairs coverage at peak viewing hours (see Cozens and Plunkett 2004; Gibson 2007; Ingrams 2007); on the other those pressing for a more ‘relevant’, ‘creative’, ‘competitive’ and visually compelling approach that connects to people’s experience (see Wells 2004), or that at least schedules ‘heavy-weight’ current affairs ‘realistically’ - outside peak viewing hours (Dyke 2004b). Fears that *Panorama*, like its erstwhile rivals *This Week* and *World in Action* (see Holland 2006; Goddard *et al.* 2007), has shifted towards a more populist agenda have dominated discussion of the series in the post-Dyke era (2004-) and intensified dramatically around the time of its relaunch as a half-hour series in peak time in 2007 (see Gaber 2008a, 2008b). Arguments have often focussed on the perceived current health of *Panorama* as a kind of ‘litmus test’ of the BBC’s commitment to public service principles, but as the apparent shift towards more popular subjects following Sandy Smith’s appointment as Editor occurred outside the main period of interest for this study (1987-2004) this thesis does not deal directly with that particular controversy. Nevertheless, concerns about declining ratings for ‘traditional’ current affairs and how best to respond to this apparent decline are a running motif in the literature on *Panorama* throughout the Birt-Dyke era.

4.3.4 Ratings – declining or increasing?

A brief survey of available viewing figures for some of the longest running current affairs series, including *Panorama*, shows that mass audiences have been in significant decline for many decades. For example, according to Briggs (1995) in the 1950s ‘one out of every four in the United Kingdom was watching *Panorama*, presided over by Richard Dimbleby’ (p.303-304). In 1960 both *Panorama* and *Tonight* could boast audiences of 9 ½ million, or around 20% of the population (BBC Memo cited Tracey 1976, p.86). *Panorama*’s audience shrank down to an average of 4 million in 1975 and briefly rose again to this level in 1998 before falling to around 3.1 million in 2001 (see Guardian 2004) following its move to the Sunday night ‘graveyard slot’ the previous year, with viewers composed increasingly of ‘older, middle class men, and less by younger people’ (Lindley 2003a, p.378). This decline has not been without periodic

reverses and *Panorama*'s highest ever audience of 22.8 million viewers was gained on 20th November 1995 with Martin Bashir's sensational interview with the Princess of Wales (Ibid, p.369), but the general trend since the programme's heyday in the late 1950s has been downwards. and since 2000 there have been occasional dips below the two million mark - a 'dismal' 10% audience share (Wells 2000). As British television's longest running current affairs series and comparatively well resourced BBC's 'flagship' *Panorama* must settle for audiences around the three million mark in its new prime-time, half-hour, post-2007 form that has been criticised for populist tendencies but also praised for attracting a younger audience (Lindley 2008, p.9). However, declining audiences are not unique to *Panorama* and it is often lamented that the days when once-popular current affairs series such as *World in Action* and *This Week* could regularly manage ratings of ten million are gone. Perhaps one of the few remaining long-form current affairs flagships to take on major domestic and international stories – Channel 4's well-regarded *Dispatches* – achieves 'something closer to the one million mark a figure that may be in long-term decline now that the programme is in direct competition with *Panorama* and *Tonight*' (Snoddy 2007a, p.22). Snoddy compares this with *Celebrity Big Brother* which saw its audience soar to more than nine million during some of its episodes. Historically *Panorama* has been rather more protected from ratings pressures than its commercial rivals, although industry observers seem agreed that with its move back to prime time the programme's future would look uncertain if ratings fell significantly from their present levels (see Mangold 2006c).

Reevell (2005) argues that 'of all the public service programme genres, current affairs is one of the most fragile' (p.23) comparing it to religious programming and non-news regional coverage as being under threat in the new competitive environment. Reevell (2006) reiterates this view a year later picking up on a metaphor employed by Barnett and Seymour (1999) by arguing that 'while the ice caps of broadcasting are unlikely to disappear overnight, that some of the 'core assumptions of the past 30 years about public service genres will have to be rethought' and that current affairs is likely to come 'under greater pressure' in that time, possibly being increasingly 'marginalised' (2006, p.15). Rating emerges as a major concern with many of the *Panorama* staff interviewed, particularly since the post-2007 shift back to BBC1 (see Chapter 4.4). For John Ware,

reflecting on the tension between maintaining high ratings and investigating complex but important issues, the risk is that ratings may win out:

I think there is a risk that the only currency that matters is ratings. Now the BBC will say it is not and that's true, but only up to a point. The fact of the matter is that the first email that the editor sends around the department after a *Panorama* is a note of the audience and what the ratings were and if the ratings are good, irrespective almost of the quality of the programme that produces a note of heartfelt gratitude to the programme makers and generally says how well everyone is doing. So I think ratings are the driving force whatever the BBC might say. And I think they would say they are for a good reason – to justify the programme's existence.

(personal communication, February 19, 2007)

4.3.5 Personalities

Closely associated with the issue of ratings is the use of 'personalities' in current affairs programmes. *Panorama* is well known for, and to some extent still trades on, a history in which 'star' performers such as Richard Dimbleby, Robin Day, Ludovic Kennedy, Charles Wheeler and David Dimbleby played a significant role in maintaining the programme's popularity and reputation. Lindley's unofficial history of *Panorama* devotes a chapter to some of the more well-known reporters from the 1950s to the early 1970s entitled 'They were giants' (p. 52-118) and another to the programme's 'poor, well-paid presenters' (p.149-189), but each of Lindley's (2003) thirteen chapters focuses to some degree on the personalities both behind the scenes and on the screen. The list is impressive and includes still-active senior reporters such as Jane Corbin, John Ware, Peter Taylor and John Simpson, BBC senior management up to and including Director Generals, Sir Ian Trethowan and the present incumbent Mark Thompson (*Panorama* Editor at the time of the first Gulf War) and a roll call of well known faces and personalities which are listed at various points in this work. As a short film celebrating *Panorama's* history on the programme's website puts it, with little overstatement: 'those who have worked in front of or behind the camera reads like a who's who of British journalism' (*Fifty Years of Panorama*, 2009). Writing an account

of *Panorama's* coverage of the two Gulf Wars without reference to the personalities helping shape those programmes would be absurd, yet it is not the intention of this thesis to prioritise or examine in great detail the role of individuals in the programme's make up.

However, it is worth reflecting on the influence of 'star' presenters and reporters on the programme in general terms. Kumar (1975) expertly accounts for the role of such 'professional broadcasters' once associated with *Panorama* presenters such as Robin Day, Richard Dimbleby (and son David), Ludovic Kennedy and Michael Barratt in controlling studio exchanges and steering debates away from very contentious areas and 'inhibiting the expression of attitudes that openly flout the codes, political and moral, of the powers that be' (p.82). Kumar makes the point, based in part on his own experience as a BBC producer, that a 'remarkably small' group of 'reliable' presenters 'who to a disproportionate extent have made their names in current affairs programmes' dominate a whole variety of programmes (p. 80). Their power, Kumar suggests, extends to establishing the overall framework of any subject by drawing up the questions to be put as interviewer. If a chairman, 'he [sic] has the power to select problems and people, raising and accentuating some and playing down others, thereby giving a definite and directed shape to the discussion' (p.74). As well as imprinting a particular profile on pre-recorded items, an experienced presenter is, almost uniquely, completely at home in the studio environment, a place that can be extremely intimidating to those brought in as contributors. In live topical programmes, Kumar argues, the orchestration of a debate by a 'virtuoso presenter' can submerge contributions under the general onward flow of the programme. Thus, contributors, who are sought for their expertise, often find this expertise 'engulfed' by the expertise of the medium itself.

Kumar makes clear that producers are held responsible for programmes made and are therefore made aware that they 'represent the BBC'. Presenters, by contrast, are not burdened with this responsibility and many, like the Dimblebys, Robin Day or Fred Emery, billed as 'Fred Emery of *The Times*' according to Lindley (2002, .184), were hired on a freelance basis and were not BBC 'staff' at all. However, as Kumar observes,

the public ‘stubbornly’ refuses to see it like that and identifies the regular personalities, presenters, reporters and anchors with the BBC, a fact that ‘both the producer and his superiors are very aware of’ (p.76). Furthermore, ‘professional broadcasters’ often have very long public lives, lasting for many decades in some cases (Simpson, Dimpleby, Ware, Taylor, Mangold and Corbin for instance, at *Panorama*) and many of the regular presenters and star personalities are highly paid, well-connected and influential. Kumar argues, provocatively, that not only are presenters ‘agents of control over contributors’, but that they are also ‘part of the control system over producers’:

Their broadcasting experience after all is usually much greater than that of producers (and indeed of most administrators, even the most senior). Moreover they had been selected and promoted precisely because they have shown the capacity to internalise the BBC's dilemmas and problems, and to resolve them in some sense by the style and manner of their presentation. Since producers in any case need these presenters, what better agents of producer socialisation could there be?

(Ibid, p.75)

Hence, Kumar goes on to argue that, whether ‘overtly’ or more ‘subtly’ done, the producer finds that they are confined within certain ‘norms and practices’, which may be rationalized in technical terms but which nearly always involve other considerations, ‘of which the presenter is the carrier and embodiment’. Producers may therefore be constrained from attempting certain innovations or ‘from inviting certain people to participate’ by presenters who communicate ‘directions and pressures which are the dictates of the BBC as such, distilled from its whole history’ (p.82).

Kumar’s account does not square with the description of producer-reporter relationships at *Panorama* put forward by Lindley (2002), or from my own interviews with producers and reporters which suggests that partnerships are usually based on a more equitable power relationship. Nevertheless, it is clear from anecdotal material produced by Day (1990) and Lindley (2002) that relationships between producer and ‘star’ presenters could, indeed, be very fractious particularly as producers took on a more important, shaping role for filmed reports than had been the case in the 1950s and 1960s.

Furthermore, Lindley argues that there was a conscious decision at the BBC not to allow Richard Dimbleby's successors as presenters anything like the same controlling power over the programme:

Though long one of the best-known figures on British television, Day had specifically been told not to think of himself as the new Dimbleby. He was there, as he noted himself, to 'introduce the acts', and do the interviews, not be 'Mr *Panorama*'. There was in general a growing feeling that television people were throwing their weight about, and that it was wrong for any individual to dominate a programme as Dimbleby had done.

(Lindley 2003a, p.174-175)

Panorama's various presenters: Robin Day, David Dimbleby, Charles Wheeler, Fred Emery, Robert Kee and Richard Lindley, Gavin Esler and, more recently Jeremy Vine have played different roles, sometimes doing little else than 'topping and tailing' a programme, at others – especially as interviewers or in chairing debates – they have a more substantial role in shaping the programme. Their role in such exchanges will be examined in more detail in the close analysis of coverage of both Gulf Wars (see chapters 5.4 and 6.2).

For Kumar, the presenter's traditional role of what he calls 'holding the middle ground' became increasingly difficult from the mid-1960s as the BBC struggled to negotiate the beginning of the break-up of the so-called postwar consensus: 'whether or not such a consensus existed and, if so, whether or not it has broken up, does not matter here. The point is that the BBC believed it, along with many others' (p. 83). Unable to address the nation as one great national audience 'in the same firm and rather aloof manner that it had adopted for so long' the BBC now addressed an audience that was perceived to be more sectionalized, fragmented and less willing to be submissive if its demands were not met. The Corporation was thereafter attacked from Left and Right, by 'progressives' and 'reactionaries', by 'those outraged at its boldness as much as those contemptuous of caution' (Ibid). Hence the BBC's mission moved further away from the Reithian vision of raising public taste and speaking to and for a unified nation towards acting as a

‘register’ of the many different ‘voices’ in society (p.84).

Schlesinger (1987) picks up Kumar’s theme, arguing that this new vision of the BBC’s place in society presupposes a theory of the nature of that society in which there are no predominant groups or interests but only competing blocs of interests, whose competition ‘is sanctioned and guaranteed by the state itself’ (p.166). The BBC’s identification with a system of democratic pluralism in which power is supposedly diffused and balanced, for Schlesinger, puts it in a similar (mythical) position to that of the state:

Just as the state is supposed to act to promote some hypothetical ‘national interest’ in balancing demands, so is the BBC supposed to be in itself a market-place for ideas and competing viewpoints, endorsing none, admitting all, a national institution above the fray.

(Ibid)

Crucially, Schlesinger adds that ‘this form of legitimation’ becomes untenable for broadcasters when consensus becomes increasingly strained because the very viability of the state presupposes a consensus. Adopting a remote ‘Olympian vantage-point’ is not possible when there are fundamental disagreements over ‘definition of social reality’ and the nature of conflicts such as that in Northern Ireland (p.167).

For Kumar (1975), however, this conception of the BBC’s role – as ‘middleman’, ‘honest broker’, ‘manager and impresario’ only heightened the significance of the professional broadcaster whose role of keeping the BBC on an even keel and ‘warding off the clutching embraces of all around it’ had gained fresh urgency (p.84). One consequence of the breakdown of the ‘post-war consensus’, Kumar argues, is that presenters must increasingly underline their professionalism and non-partisanship by standing far removed from political position either of the Left or Right. Neither for unions, nor for capital; neither professional ‘moralists’ nor ‘libertarians’, but rather identifying with and taking the role of ‘us’, the unrepresented viewers, ‘the consumers’,

'the suffering public' against planners, public servants, powerful industrialists, selfish trade unions, property speculators and even politicians. Written thirty-five years ago, Kumar's essay might well describe a Paxman or a Humphrys when he writes:

Ministers are questioned as aggressively as trade unionists, environmentalist pressure groups as much as planning agencies, along the lines of, 'what are the gains and losses in all this for *us*, the public?'. More generally there is displayed an attitude of faint cynicism and scepticism towards almost all 'official' sources, whether in governmental or private organisations.

(p.85)

This 'quizzical, amused and slightly sceptical' style of address, which Kumar attributes to the popularity and influence of the 'seminal' current affairs series *Tonight* passed down at the BBC through a series of Radio 4 presenters, in particular, including John Timpson, Jack de Manio and William Hardcastle, and can be found today, most clearly, in current affairs programmes such as Radio 4's *Today* and BBC1's *Newsnight*. It is a description, incidentally, which comes close to Bourdieu's (1998) characterisation of the 'cynicism' of star reporters in France, one effect of which, he suggests, is a general 'de-politicisation or, more precisely, disenchantment with politics' (p.7). It is in this style of presentation, for Kumar, 'compounded equally of aggressiveness, scepticism, irony, and detachment, that we can most clearly observe the role played by the professional broadcaster in the BBC's strategy of survival' (1975, p.85). However, for some observers, this 'aggressive' manner has degenerated into 'hyperadversarialism' (Fallows cited McNair 2001), sometimes described as a 'rottweiler' journalistic culture which has contributed to a collapse in public trust in Westminster politics and politicians (see McNair 2001, 2003b; Richards 2007). So-called 'attack journalism' of the type typified by Jeremy Paxman and John Humphrys has come under fire from several quarters. Former Labour Minister Charles Clarke dismissed their interview style as 'the easiest interviews of all' - a 'jousting game' 'ritualised exchange' and 'ridiculous theatre' from which viewers learn nothing (Bell 2007, p.23). However, former Director General Greg Dyke (2007b) defends the Paxman and Humphrys style as an inevitable consequence of the Government's introduction of 'Nixonian politics' into Britain. According to Dyke, this approach, led by former Director of Communications Alastair Campbell, amounted to the view that if you weren't on the Government's side 'you

were the enemy'. In these circumstances, he claims, there is little room for intelligent political debate:

Well it's true that the relationship between media and politicians is at an all time low but then that is hardly surprising after a decade of the most media manipulative government in British history.

(Dyke 2007b, p. 9)

By contrast, the (then) Director General Michael Grade decried 'knee jerk cynicism' in a 2005 lecture which was interpreted by Leapman as a call to 'muzzle the mad dogs of the *Today* and *Newsnight* studios'. Leapman described the speech as a 'pragmatic' response to soured relations with the government which he supported (2005, p.1). Leapman links Grade's call for a 'scheme of lifelong learning in which the BBC's journalists would repeatedly be retrained in what was expected of them' to the Hutton Inquiry 'debacle' of 2004 claiming that:

The central dilemma, never properly addressed in the BBC's 78-year old history, is whether a state-owned broadcaster, relying for its funding on the goodwill of the government of the day, can insulate itself from its paymaster and be free to engage in journalism that denounces government policies. That is what the Gilligan row was about.

(Ibid)

Leapman argues that when Alastair Campbell took over the Downing Street 'publicity machine' he followed eagerly in the intimidatory tradition established by Margaret Thatcher who had reduced 'the governors and management to quivering jelly over coverage of Northern Ireland and the Falklands war' (Ibid). With Charter renewal due in 2006 Leapman concludes that 'it is time for the Corporation to accept that, by definition, it can never be truly independent, and that political exposés are best left to those sections of the media not financed by the state' (Ibid, p.2).

The 'uncomfortable' lesson Leapman draws for BBC's current affairs coverage may

dismissed as a pessimistic over-reaction to the fallout over the Hutton Inquiry. Nevertheless, with the tone as well as the manner of the BBC's current affairs coverage now under attack it is worth revisiting Kumar's claims about the dominant style of its star presenters. I would suggest that the style and journalistic approach of BBC's current affairs output is far from uniform or even very consistent and that a strong streak of 'scepticism' is *not* the Corporation's only 'strategy for survival'. As the *Panorama-Tonight* rivalry of the 1960s made clear, the somewhat rebellious air of detached irony and faint amusement that *Tonight* made its trademark was not universally welcomed by 'professional broadcasters' such as Richard Dimbleby (see Macdonald 1982). It is interesting in light of that to note that while the more 'sceptical' and aggressively challenging style which Kumar identifies, was continued by some journalists in some current affairs programmes, it has rarely been adopted by *Panorama* presenters, with the possible exception of Robin Day. *Panorama's* less confrontational and (at least under Richard Dimbleby) more 'deferential' presentational approach partly accounts for the programme's historical reputation as a more 'establishment' programme (see Rowland 2000, p.166). David Dimbleby and Gavin Esler's role as presenters in the two Gulf Wars will be examined in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 in relation to some of the issues raised here.

4.4 *Panorama*: a brief critical history

The BBC's flagship current affairs series *Panorama* is Britain's longest running television programme and, according to the *Panorama* website, 'the world's longest running investigative TV show' (BBC 2008). Yet as Gaber (2008) has pointed out, *Panorama* was certainly not an investigative show on its launch and for much of its history, following its re-launch in 1955, the programme was largely composed of straight reportage, analysis and landmark interviews, rather than investigations.

Panorama developed as an important 'forum for public political debate' (Dimpleby 1975, p.362) and has often 'conveyed the sense of speaking on behalf of a socially concerned establishment for an equally concerned audience' (Sassoon 2006, p.1201). In doing so it has provided a template for other current affairs series both in Britain, Europe and around the world, whilst undergoing several transformations in form and style since its launch in 1953, the latest and arguably most dramatic being in 2007. This section of the thesis will briefly chart the development of *Panorama* as a distinctive, 'flagship' current affairs series over six decades. Much of this research is based on material found in Bournemouth University's *Panorama* archive, in the BUFVC *Panorama* Project database and in the BBC's excellent online *Panorama* archive in addition to the literature referenced. An attempt will be made to characterise and specify the *Panorama* 'brand' of current affairs and pinpoint the series successes and failures in reinventing itself in a rapidly changing media context, whilst providing important historical context to help answer the research questions outlined in chapter 1. Some of the issues relating to *Panorama*'s coverage of particular conflicts are studied in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.4.1 *Panorama* in the 1950s

First broadcast on 11th November 1953 as a fortnightly topical, general-interest magazine programme *Panorama* was introduced on that opening night by presenter Patrick Murphy as reflecting, 'the lighter side of life as well as more serious matters which affect us all.' The early, fortnightly *Panorama* (1953-55) was a loosely topical,

magazine format programme with a broad remit that covered around five items dealing with culture and the arts, theatre and book reviews, debates on topics of the day and interviews with people in the news, mostly recorded on the British mainland for reason of costs. However, the early programme lacked a clear identity and failed to impress audiences and critics and by the summer of 1955 the BBC's Controller of Television Programmes Cecil McGivern had decided that that programme was not making its mark or justifying its cost. McGivern met with Grace Wyndham Goldie, then Assistant Head of the Television Talks Department, and asked her to take charge of the programme. Goldie, a pioneer in early current affairs programme making, agreed on condition that she could appoint staff of her choosing to achieve the authoritative tone she wanted: 'We all wanted to give *Panorama* a new look; to make it harder, more concerned with the world outside Britain and outside the confines of the studio' (Goldie 1977, p.191).

As it was effectively going to be a new programme Goldie also wanted to change the title, but Cecil McGivern would not agree, insisting that the title '*Panorama*' was too valuable a property to be discarded. As Lindley (2003) writes Cecil McGivern 'recognised that the *Panorama* brand was already worth too much to discard' (p.40) underlining a basic concern with brand properties at a very early point in the programme's history. In an effort to distance the re-launched *Panorama* from its earlier manifestation the team added, what Goldie describes as, the 'somewhat absurd' subtitle 'A Window on the World' to indicate the programme's new intention of reporting on significant events at home and abroad. New music by Robert Farnon entitled 'Openings and Endings' was added and 'this assured and authoritative piece fitted in nicely with the heavyweight image of the BBC at the time' (BBC 2005, p.1).

The new-look weekly *Panorama* went on the air on Monday 19th September 1955 just days before the launch of ITV. Richard Dimbleby presented the programme from a set that resembled a tower, or lighthouse¹ introducing films from various locations. These included a report by Woodrow Wyatt from Malta whose leaders were then engaged in round table talks with Britain on the island's future independence. There were also filmed interviews with foreign tourists in Britain and a direct line to France using the

¹ The edifice, dubbed 'The Dimblebox' by stagehands, got in the way of the cameras and was quickly abandoned according to Goldie.

‘Eurovision’ terrestrial microwave network. Press reviews the following day indicated that *Panorama*’s re-launch had been a success and ratings for the programme quickly rose.

A typical *Panorama* programme in the 1950s was 45 minutes long and made up of around three or four items, mixing more lightweight with more serious national and international stories. These stories often made Tuesday’s newspaper headlines because, as Robin Day remarks, ‘*Panorama* was not only explaining the news but making the news’ (1989, p.144). Wyndham Goldie continued to exert influence over the programme for some years and she believed *Panorama* could not afford to omit any major developments at home or in international affairs. If possible *Panorama* should interview those with the power to make vital decisions and politicians quickly learnt it was a suitable method for ‘communicating with the nation’ (Goldie 1977, p.190-192).

Panorama’s growing popularity and authority attracted politicians on to the programme to explain their plans and policies to the public, but in terms of more serious reports the programme maintained the tendency of political current affairs programmes at that time to favour international stories. Scannell (1991) argues that this preference reflected the BBC’s aversion to chairing contentious debates on home affairs and towards reporting an arena of broad consensus, until the 1956 Suez Crisis, between the political parties on foreign policy:

Foreign affairs had prestige for the BBC [...]; it was the terrain of grand issues, of global themes, of the balance of power between East and West. It transcended the local, the sectarian and the petty. Whereas to enter into the politics of home affairs might be to recognize divisions within the nation, with foreign affairs the nation could be presumed as united and presented as such. Not until after the debacle of Suez did the cracks begin to show.

(1979, p.100)

The reporting of the Suez crisis presented particular problems for *Panorama*. Forbidden from discussing domestic and parliamentary opinion on matters before Parliament for a fortnight before the debate by the so-called ‘fourteen day rule’ the BBC was unable to report on widespread domestic opposition to the invasion of Egypt by coordinated British, French and Israeli forces. The two week rule, a convention invented by the BBC itself in 1944 and given legal force in 1955 with cross party support, only allowed *Panorama* to report foreign reaction to Britain’s expeditionary force. Mass protests in

London went unreported and editions of *Panorama* in November 1956 could only cover events in Egypt and reaction to those events abroad, with filmed interviews from America, Australia and India.

According to the historian Tony Shaw the BBC, under the threat of funding cuts or more direct government 'supervision', adopted a 'wholly passive role in relation to the sensitive subject of the deep cleavage in British opinion' (1995, p.328). *Panorama* was reduced to skirting around the fundamental issues involved, including the political storm on the home front; the pre-invasion military build-up in the Mediterranean; the Egyptian government position; and the widespread, and later substantiated, allegations of collusion between the British, French and Israeli governments (Morgan 1990; Hourani 2002). Once military action was underway Richard Dimbleby explained that *Panorama* could not 'discuss the right and wrongs of the situation' and relied instead on conducting Rear Admiral Nichol round his relief maps of Suez 'as if he Dimbleby was in charge of the landings at Suez that morning' (Lindley 2003a, p.45). *Panorama* Editor Michael Peacock was even refused permission by the BBC Board of Governors to ask for an interview with Foreign Secretary John Selwyn Lloyd following the Anglo-French landings: 'Little wonder that Michael Peacock [...] later claimed that *Panorama* covered Suez 'with a degree of neutrality which denied the proper function of journalism' (Shaw 1995, p.326).

As Lindley writes, this did not prevent the BBC and *Panorama* from being attacked by MPs supporting the war. Peter Rawlinson, Conservative MP for Epsom, for instance, accused the BBC of 'systematic bias against the government' during the crisis. Following more criticism during a Commons debate on 14th November, and subsequent allusions to government 'plans and proposals' from the Assistant Postmaster-General, the BBC's Director of Administration Sir Norman Bottomley ordered a comprehensive review of the Corporation's Suez output (Shaw 1995, p.340-41). The Governors later reviewed the evidence and found the accusations of bias were groundless. But as the BBC's own account explains, in the end it was the government, not the BBC, which had backed down. Faced with Soviet threats, pressure from the US and the United Nations,

Eden was forced to withdraw British troops and, ultimately, resign (BBC 2006a)² (*Panorama*'s coverage of Suez is examined again in Chapter 5.1).

Panorama showed in its coverage of the Soviet action in Hungary in 1956 that it was capable of brave and searching journalism. If clear parliamentary consensus was lacking, however, as it was with Suez or over domestic policy, a far more cautious line was taken. This was by no means unusual for the Corporation. Until the arrival of ITV in September 1955 politicians were usually interviewed by BBC journalists in what Michael Cockerell described as a 'grovelling' manner (cited Holland 2006, p.13).

The launching of ITV in September 1955 was to change that situation. The relatively combative style of news and current affairs interviews on the independent channel soon forced BBC to review its approach. Subsequently, as Robin Day writes in his memoir 'Grand Inquisitor', political interviews became 'less sycophantic'. Robin Day's brisk style at ITN typified the new more challenging coverage of news and politics that was emerging - mixing description with evaluation, asking probing questions of politicians in unrehearsed interviews, assuming a more authoritative and less deferential air.

In 1959 Leonard Miall, needing replacements for *Panorama* reporters Christopher Chataway and Woodrow Wyatt who had both been elected to Parliament that year, offered Robin Day a contract. The fact that the BBC was poaching ITN talent was a recognition of the need for a sharper, less stuffy and deferential approach. Day's colleagues at *Panorama*, which he joined in November 1959, would include Charles Wheeler, Robert Kee, James Mossman, Ludovic Kennedy and John Morgan. *Panorama* was to enter the sixties with probably 'the strongest reporting team ever gathered together for one television programme'³ The programme had showed that it was ready to learn from its rivals and move, albeit at a stately pace, with the times. *Panorama*'s place in the BBC's Monday evening schedule and in the nation's cultural and political life was now secure.

² The article's conclusion 'On this occasion, the BBC had faced down its government critics and upheld its independence' (p.3) is somewhat at odds with the view of more critical accounts, such as those by Shaw (1995).

³ According to Michael Peacock, 'to whom flattery was foreign, when Editor of *Panorama*'. (Day 1989, p.146)

4.4.2 *Panorama* in the 1960s

Panorama entered the sixties at the peak of its power and influence with audiences frequently over 10 million in prime time and still very much at the centre of British cultural and political life. Yet Rowland (2000) reminds us that *Panorama's* success and 'heavyweight' reputation had to be seen in the context of limited competition, restricted audience choice and the 'freshness' of everything to television. Reporter John Ware, reflecting on the challenge faced today in a multi-channel age compared with this period, observed that *Panorama's* main advantage was that 'there was nothing else that mattered':

I remember watching it when it was the only show in town. There weren't any other shows dealing with those sorts of subjects in that sort of depth with reporters who were worldly and knowledgeable and confident and could write. I mean people like James Mossman could write a mean script and would hook you into a subject so that it made you feel like it was the most important thing going on in the world really. Now it is pretty well impossible to do that on television today and that's got nothing to do with inadequate journalism or production staff. The multi-channel age has simply showered us with choice and with that choice – we can't do it. So I think we have laboured under a very difficult act to follow.

(personal communication, February 19, 2007)

From the launch of ITV there had been an awareness, even amongst those working on the programme, that *Panorama* could no longer sustain an effective monopoly on the BBC's current affairs reporting. As new current affairs-oriented programmes were launched on ITV and the BBC, *Panorama's* 'Window on the World' was soon competing against other perspectives of the sweeping political and social changes of the sixties. *Tonight*, (1957-65) provided the first serious challenge to *Panorama* from within the BBC. Then came the Arts strand *Monitor* (1958-65), *Whicker's World* (1959-88) first seen on BBC, *24 Hours* (1965-72), the science programme *Horizon* (1964-), *Tomorrow's World* (1965-2003), *Man Alive* (1965-81) and *Nationwide* (1969-83). All of these - in addition to the strong documentary, news and current affairs competition ITV provided - strayed onto territory that was once almost exclusively *Panorama's*. By 1960 current affairs had come to dominate television in the way Outside Broadcasts had

done in the early fifties and *Panorama* was forced to rise to the challenge of its competitors by adapting and specialising:

With *Tonight* taking much of *Panorama*'s local workload, and the News, particularly ITN, 'scooping' the 'hot' stories which had once been *Panorama*'s preserve, the BBC's longest-running programme was left with a narrower field. It began to concentrate increasingly and almost exclusively on the major national and international events of the era; and they did so in ways that were to make the first years of the Sixties the heyday of serious television.

(Dimbleby 1975, p. 353)

Jonathan Dimbleby, writing his father's biography in 1975, argues that Hugh Greene was able to use the prestige of *Panorama*, and particularly the perception of Richard Dimbleby as an 'establishment' figure, as a counterweight to the more freewheeling and critical programmes such as *Tonight* and its spin-off *That Was the Week that Was* (*TW3*). Richard Dimbleby also gave cover to more critical voices within *Panorama*.

It is difficult almost fifty years later to appreciate Richard Dimbleby iconic status and fame at the start of the sixties, or his powerful influence over *Panorama*, the programme that he helmed. Having established his name in radio during the war, famously reporting from the bombing raids over Germany and the liberation of Belsen; making his mark on post-war radio in series such as *Down Your Way* and *Twenty Questions*; and on television - commentating on the Queen's Coronation – he had survived criticism of an 'unctious', 'pompous' manner that had occasionally been noticed in the 1950s (see Dimbleby 1975, Chapters 7-13). By the early sixties, still working from his own scripts and always without a teleprompter, Dimbleby had grown 'beyond reproach' and 'despite and perhaps because of his critics [...] he had become the nation's 'father figure', 'almost a tribune of the people' (Rowland 2000, p.167, Dimbleby 1975, p.328)

Paul Fox, who became Editor in 1961 wanted Dimbleby to play a bigger part in *Panorama* than simply 'announcer' and link man. Fox shared Dimbleby's 'obsession' with the Outside Broadcast which he believed could add a sense of urgency to the programme. He soon employed his presenter in a number of historic broadcasts - speaking live without notes with the same relaxed authority that he had in the studio.

Some of these, by chance, were on Monday nights, while others were *Panorama* 'specials'. They made use of the latest, but less than reliable, technology to introduced 'live' from France, Denmark, Italy, Germany, the Soviet Union and within the UK.

Memorable live broadcasts of this kind include reports from Moscow in 1961 on the return of Major Yuri Gagarin from the first manned space shot and the May Day Parade some days later (see Schwach 2009); from America in 1962 with Dimbleby as the first Englishman to make a live trans-Atlantic broadcast; also in 1962 from the Macedonian town of Skopje almost totally destroyed by an earthquake, an appeal which helped raise £400,000 from the public; and in 1965 for the Queen's visit to the Berlin Wall (Miall 1966). In *Panorama's* special programme on the Cuba crisis in 1962, 'Flashpoint Cuba' [tx: 23.10.62], Dimbleby's tone 'soothed the watching millions' after Kennedy announced the naval blockade that brought the two superpowers to the brink of war (Rowland 2000, p.167). One nervous viewer reportedly telephoned the BBC saying she would not send her children to school 'unless Mr Dimbleby can promise me that there will be no war' (Wheen 1985, p.73).

Perhaps in order to keep up with the competition, *Panorama*, was now giving space to more sceptical, investigative voices and reports. Yet, as the sixties progressed the BBC's 'young Turks' saw in *Panorama* - and in Dimbleby - the embodiment of all that they disliked about the BBC:

[...] its subservient allegiance to the status quo and the Establishment; its pontifical airs and: its self-imposed isolation from the people; its pervasive middle-class, middlebrow morality. The young avant-garde who arrived on training courses, to work as researchers and producers, who saw the start of *Tonight*, and then *Monitor*, and a host of late-night satire shows, chose Dimbleby as their symbol of the Corporation's complacency.

(Dimbleby 1975, p. 321)

By 1965 *Panorama's* lead in the ratings had shrunk to eight million against strong competition from ITV's *This Week* (seven-and-a-half million) and *World in Action* (six-and-a-half million). At the end of 1964 audience analysis showed that one in six Britons watched *Panorama* each week, one third of the 'middle class', one quarter of the 'lower-middle class', but only one seventh was 'working class'. Half of the audience was over fifty and only one in ten teenagers watched the programme (Rowland 2000, p.164). *Panorama's* supreme confidence at the start of the 1960s had slowly given way

to doubts about the programme and its presenter. After Dimbleby's death of cancer in 1965 arguments about *Panorama*'s structure and format became 'almost theological' in their complexity, according to Rowland (2000) who notes that the BBC archive 'smoulders with memos pulling this way and that' (p.165). One of the arguments centred around the move by new Editor Jeremy Isaacs to single-subject, 40 minute episodes, a move fiercely resisted by Robin Day amongst others (see Day 1989, p.150-151). In Isaacs words, 'he could not quite make it stick' (Isaacs 1989, p.4) and he returned to Associated-Rediffusion, but the single-subject programme would return in the seventies and remained a feature of *Panorama* thereafter.

Arguments about *Panorama*'s format and approach would continue through the sixties and subsequent decades fuelled by a perception that *Panorama* had become an important public institution that needed preserving and protecting from a range of ills – elitism, populism, tabloid values, irrelevance, senior management interference and government manipulation. In fact for the sixties, at least, there is little evidence of 'interference' or 'manipulation' from outside the programme. Grace Wyndham Goldie describes one attempt in February 1965 when Harold Wilson wanted to broadcast from Downing Street into a *Panorama* debate on the economy rather than appear in the studio alongside Conservative Shadow Minister for Trade Edward Heath and other guests. Wyndham Goldie telephoned in protest. She argued that, if Wilson wished to 'broadcast to the nation' he should do this outside of *Panorama*:

[...] if the distinction between BBC programmes and 'Ministerials' was blurred, the assurance of the independence of broadcasting from Government interference in regard to its programmes and day-to-day administration was worthless.

(Wyndham Goldie 1977, p.288)

Downing Street accepted the objection and sent the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Callaghan, to take part in the studio discussion. Furthermore, in 1968 Harold Wilson and Edward Heath were questioned live in the *Panorama* studio by three reporters after viewing a twenty minute film neither had seen before, which Rowland argues no Minister has ever done since (2000, p.170). While Wilson's relationship with the BBC was difficult, particularly after 1970, neither he nor Heath were antagonistic to *Panorama* as

later Prime Ministers could be⁴.

Panorama 'was rarely told what to do' in Rowland's view, although he notes that former Editor Jeremy Isaacs felt that the BBC hierarchy was sometimes affected by the 'political steers' of the Foreign Office and MI5 (Rowland 2000, p.169). Staff screening across the BBC was certainly subject to MI5 checks at this time (Hastings 2006) and *Panorama's* autonomy rested on the BBC's institutional arrangements at the time which devolved responsibility and authority, within a system of 'upwards reference' (see discussion in Chapter 4.3).

Criticism of *Panorama* in the sixties centres on two perceived failures. The first, which was not unique to *Panorama*, was the almost complete absence of reporting of the civil rights abuses and mounting tensions in Northern Ireland. This has been explained by the censorial effect of BBC's Controller's Office in Northern Ireland which, as part of the province's Protestant domination of governing institutions, had a history of stifling discussion of Catholic grievances (see Smith 1996, p.26-37).

The second criticism, eloquently articulated in 1968 by Derrick Amore, then the Assistant Head of Current Affairs (and formerly at *Tonight*), often remained an issue for *Panorama* in subsequent decades:

Too often, it seems to me, *Panorama* stories, though indisputably the work of civilised and literate men, tell the similarly literate and civilised nothing they didn't know before. The programme tends to be concerned with those issues which become explicit and can be covered through existing representative bodies... it is in this sense that *Panorama* may be damagingly identified as a 'political' or 'establishment' programme. The programme should take factual positions, as distinct from the acting as a high-powered vehicle for the often mutually exclusive positions of other authorities.

(cited Rowland 2000, p.166)

This criticism could be linked to *Panorama's* lack of attention to 'ordinary people', particularly as *Tonight* had shown that a popular, incisive current affairs programme

⁴ Rowland gives an interesting account of Edward Heath's visit to Lime Grove when it was closed in 1991 suggesting that relations between the former P.M. and journalists working there may have been too 'cosy'. And he adds: 'To some extent, it is inevitable that those 'in the know' will always take pleasure from their intimacy with power centres. The discreet sharing of knowledge – 'who knows what first' – is central to most political journalism.' (2000, p.170)

was possible that was sceptical towards institutions and those in authority (McLuskie 2008). In an echo of Amoores complaint, cultural critic Raymond Williams criticised *Panorama*'s attention to 'superficial high politics' and its habit of bringing to the screen 'men whom we know, because we have heard them so often' who 'say nothing, but say it purposively and with an official presence'. (Williams 1968, 1972)

Derrick Amoores criticism of *Panorama* extended to the quality of the programme's investigative journalism which he felt was often 'superficial' and tended to be 'a pull together of the generally known, rather than a revelation of the unknown but significant'. He argued for more long-term investigations, more 'probes' rather than 'coverage'. Inspired perhaps by a *World in Action* exposé 'Smith's Back Door' the previous year (see Goddard *et al* 2007) Amoores pointed to the fact that sanctions over Rhodesia were often discussed, but the fact that they were being regularly broken was not investigated. For Rowland, Amoores critique, and call 'to discover what is the case, rather than what is thought to be the case', was the voice of its times, 'challenging anything that might smack of received opinion' (Rowland 2000, p.166). Rowland also suggests that when Brian Wenham became Editor in 1969, he took the programme 'somewhere down this road', back into a single subject and more 'investigative' mode that Isaacs had tried.

Panorama began the sixties on a high, but ended it on a note of uncertainty with falling ratings, indifferent reviews, unresolved structural questions and no clear sense of direction. While the programme's status as the 'flagship of BBC Television's journalistic fleet' (Day 1990, p.144) seemed unequivocal in 1960, by 1979 *Panorama* had been reduced, according to the Director General of that time Sir Ian Trethowan, to 'just one of a number of regular factual programmes' (Trethowan 1984, p.198). Trethowan, who had worked on the programme in 1965 and 1966, is ungenerous to the *Panorama* of the late 1970s, arguably because of the 'flak' generated over Carrickmore and later controversies. Nevertheless, his observation is accurate to the extent that competition for the kind of factual stories that *Panorama* once had a near monopoly on grew enormously in the sixties and seventies. This growth threatened the survival of a magazine-style programme that, in its early days, could touch so many bases and forced *Panorama* to specialise in single-subject, in-depth current affairs which inevitable would have a smaller audience.

It appears that while *Panorama* made a number of important changes in the sixties, particularly after the death of presenter Richard Dimbleby, it did not change as quickly or as radically as the country had. Growing criticism of its 'elitist', 'establishment' perspectives were pertinent to the programme makers having to rethink *Panorama's* structure, format and approach to reporting, but this issue remained largely unresolved. As Robert Rowland notes, *Panorama* remained a 'fairly sober beast in the television jungle of the sixties' (Rowland 2000, p.180). This sobriety would remain a defining feature of *Panorama* until a radical overhaul of the programme under Editor Sandy Smith in 2007.

4.4.3 *Panorama* in the 1970s

Examples of how *Panorama* attempted to update and refresh its image in the 1970s include the extension of the programme to one hour (8-9pm) from September 1970, making more use of the debate-type programme after success with this format earlier in the year on the South African cricket tour and hanging. Robin Day as main presenter chaired live discussions, including panel debates amongst politicians, union leaders, journalists, historians, Ministers and Prime Ministers (see McQueen 2010 for a more detailed account of *Panorama* in the 1970s). While there were single subject programmes most continued to have two or three segments. Richard Lindley suggests that as news programmes had developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s they had begun to take the wind out of *Panorama's* sails, and that the programme had grown rather slow, old-fashioned, predictable and lacking in direction at a time of political and cultural upheaval:

The 1960s had come and gone, yet *Panorama* continued on its stately way as if the Beatles, Profumo and *That Was the Week that Was* had never been; its manners remained polite, its judgements cool; its attitude to those at the top rather as if one member of a gentleman's club -- the Garrick perhaps -- was talking to another.

(Lindley 2003, p.114-15)

It may be partly in response to this perception that David Dimbleby was appointed *Panorama* presenter in 1974 a position he held until 1977 and which he would return to

in the 1980s. David Dimbleby was a freelance reporter for *Panorama* in 1967 and was first offered 'Robin Day's vacated chair' in 1972. David had gained notoriety from 'Yesterday's Men' in 1971, a documentary which both mocked and enraged former Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Unlike 'Garrick Club' anchor Robin Day, the young Dimbleby could not easily be caricatured as 'establishment friendly' despite inheriting his father Richard's role, who had been 'virtually a living embodiment of the programme' (*The Times Diary* 1972, p.12).

In fact, despite being an effective presenter, David Dimbleby's interviews were merely 'persistently polite' compared to Robin Day's inquisitorial style and *Panorama* still lacked energy until the arrival of Peter Pagnamenta who became Editor in 1976. Pagnamenta reduced the role of 'star' reporters and injected more pace into the programme. According to Lindley, Pagnamenta forced *Panorama* to 'tell us something new', to focus on a single aspect, leading question, personality, institution or group. In effect *Panorama* now required a 'narrative device' of some kind rather than a mere 'survey', thereby avoiding superficial or predictable coverage. Lindley suggests that the price for this more vigorous style was that *Panorama* would sometimes shrink from 'tackling the underlying issues', but praises Peter Pagnamenta for shrewdly anticipating the next big story and boosting *Panorama's* reputation and audience.

'Dull' is an adjective used less frequently by commentators to describe *Panorama* in the late 1970s and early 1980s, despite the move towards more single subject programmes. Ruthless team rivalry was often encouraged and the programme gained notoriety over a number of stories, particularly in its coverage of Northern Ireland under Editor Roger Bolton (see Bolton 1990; McQueen 2010). *Panorama* did report extensively from Ireland in the 1970s but from 1971 a system of reference upwards operated in relation to interviews with the IRA. As Anthony Smith (1996) explains permission had always to be sought and therefore was requested less and less often - and when requested it was more and more frequently refused. Yet, until 1979 this did not appear to trouble *Panorama*:

[...] the apparatus of internal self-censorship did not interfere with the normal course of interviewing major political figures and *Panorama* staff for instance, did not to any great extent feel that their functions were becoming difficult to discharge. It was *World at One*, *World in Action* and *24 hours* which found the new situation cramping.

(Smith 1996, p.31)

While *Panorama* did, at the start of the decade, interview members of the Official IRA, who had effectively recognized partition, the BBC's position in relation to the more militant Provisional IRA had been made clear in 1971 when the then Chairman Lord Hill wrote to the Home Secretary: '[...] between the British Army and the gunmen, the BBC is not and cannot be impartial' (cited Carruthers 1996, p.119).

In September 1979, in the wake of the INLA controversy and the murder of Mountbatten, *Panorama* began planning a project on the Provisional IRA, examining its history, aims and tactics. Two ex-chiefs of staff of the Provisional IRA, David O'Connell and Sean MacStiofan, were to be among those interviewed and their names, along with the outline of the project, were cleared by the Director, News and Current Affairs (Clutterbuck 1981, p.115-116).

On the 17th October, following an interview with David O'Connell, a *Panorama* crew that included Jeremy Paxman filmed an IRA roadblock in the village of Carrickmore in Northern Ireland. While paramilitary roadblocks in the province were not unusual and had been filmed before, the *Panorama* team felt this show of force had been a 'stunt' put on for their benefit. The next day they informed the *Panorama* office in London and the Northern Ireland Office. The Northern Ireland Secretary was informed on that day and told the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, soon afterwards. The *Panorama* team also telephoned the BBC lawyers who told them if they could not recognize any of the men they were not obliged to inform the police. It is clear that the team believed they had 'referred up' as BBC directives instructed, but there was one problem:

The BBC's Head of Programmes and Head of News in Belfast was told by *Panorama* and Head of News in Belfast was also told by *Panorama* about the film but the BBC Controller Northern Ireland, James Hawthorne, was not informed and the first he heard of it was on 25 October, when he was asked about it at dinner by a senior Northern Ireland Office official.

(Clutterbuck 1981, p.115-116)

When news of the roadblock was leaked in Ireland, there was an outcry in the British press with the *Daily Express* claiming it was as if during the Second World War, a BBC

crew 'had gone to film Nazis occupying the Channel Islands'⁵. Supported by strong condemnation from the Labour Party, Mrs Thatcher called in Parliament for the BBC to 'put its house in order' (Walters 1989, p.381). Shortly afterwards the police seized a copy of the untransmitted film under section 11 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. As David Miller writes, this signalled:

[...] the willingness of the government to use the full force of the law against the broadcasters, a precedent for escalating further hostilities. And they indicate the relative success of the government in their battle to keep the voice of armed republicanism off the screen.

(1994, p.34-35)

Roger Bolton was sacked following an enquiry by the acting Director General Gerard Mansell for not ensuring that the BBC Controller Northern Ireland had been informed by Head of News Belfast about the incident and Head of Current Affairs John Gau got an official reprimand (Cotton 2001). As Bolton recalls his own role in the affair today he 'fell down the middle of a hole' because 'key people' at the top of the BBC were saying one thing to the Governors and another to the journalists and he naively believed untransmitted footage which 'we had not even decided would be in the programme' could cause such trouble (personal communication, October 23, 2008). Roger Bolton's dismissal as *Panorama* Editor caused real anger at the BBC and threats of industrial action eventually led to his reinstatement. On resuming his position he was advised by Gerard Mansell to 'raise his sights when dealing with such problems and to remember the wider interests of the BBC' (Lindley 2003a, p.233). Mansell's advice to weigh the 'interests of the BBC' in covering politically contentious issues would not prevent *Panorama* from becoming embroiled in further controversy over its coverage of the Falkland's War and the Conservative Party in the 1980s.

Panorama had shrugged off charges of complacency that had dogged it since the 1950s, but in the process had made itself and the BBC a target for politically motivated attacks that threatened the independence of the Corporation.

⁵ Daily Express – 9th November 1979.

4.4.4 *Panorama* in the 1980s

The 1980s mark a particularly troubled decade for the BBC in its relations with the Government. *Panorama* found itself at the centre of two major controversies involving alleged government pressure and interference in the 1980s: the first, in its coverage of the Falklands Conflict in ‘Can We Avoid War?’ [tx: 10.5.82] which was the subject of intense anger from Conservative MPs (see Chapter 5.1); the second looking at the influence of racist groups and individuals within the Conservative Party in ‘Maggie’s Militant Tendency’ [tx: 30.1.84] for which the BBC paid out of court damages, much to the dismay of the *Panorama* team responsible. However, Lindley’s account (2003) indicates a series of other controversies, of which only a small proportion involved direct Government pressure, some of which were not party-political matters at all, and many involving behind-the-scenes manoeuvres and interference that were not public knowledge at the time.

For example, Ian Trethowan is accused in Lindley’s book of putting serious obstacles in the path of reporter Tom Mangold, who was attempting to investigate aspects of the British intelligence services. These obstacles included forbidding the reporter from interviewing former members of MI5 and MI6 and demanding that some sequences be removed from the completed film. Trethowan apparently instructed Mangold not to tell either the press or Roger Bolton of the first meeting they had to discuss this issue, describing *Panorama*’s then Editor to Mangold as ‘a well-known little Marxist shit’ (Mangold 2004, p.1). In the year of his retirement Trethowan weathered the political storm around the BBC’s reporting of the Falkland’s conflict, which centred on particular reports in *Panorama* and its major in-house rival *Newsnight* (launched in 1980). However, under Alasdair Milne as Director General (1982-1987) the BBC’s relationship with Mrs Thatcher’s Government would worsen considerably.

As Editor between 1983 and 1985 Peter Ibbotson steered the programme through heightened political and industrial tensions culminating in the Miners’ Strike of 1984-85. It was also a time when reporting on the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland became very difficult, as David Miller makes clear:

The legacy of the Carrickmore affair, 1979 assassination of Airey Neave, and the 1984 Brighton bombing (in which Mrs Thatcher herself narrowly

escaped death), coupled with the major rows over the Falklands and the coverage of the miners strike in 1984/85, sets the context for government relations with the broadcasters. In the summer of 1985, the government was at a critical stage in Anglo-Irish negotiations and there had been much controversy about the way in which US television had covered the hijack of a TWA plane. The networks were accused of favouring the hijackers by interviewing them and televising their demands. Referring to the hijacking Mrs Thatcher suggested, in a speech in the US, that the media had supplied the 'terrorists' with the 'oxygen of publicity'.

(Miller 1994, p.35-36)

Against this backdrop, programmes such as Peter Taylor report on allegations of a 'shoot to kill' policy ['Justice Under Fire' tx: 12.11.1984] came under particularly hostile scrutiny and within a few years the Government would introduce a draconian bill to prevent organisations believed to be supporting terrorism from directly broadcasting on the airwaves (1988 'broadcast ban'). It is also around this time that Michael Cockerell's report on infiltration of the Conservative Party by racist elements in 'Maggie's Militant Tendency' is the subject of heated debate. The allegation had first been made by the Young Conservatives in a report presented in January 1984 and the programme made well-substantiated links between the Tory Party and far right groups such as the Focus Policy Group led by the Holocaust-denying historian David Irving. Born writes of how:

The broadcast led to a lengthy legal process when two Tory MPs issued writs for libel. The BBC eventually settled out of court and paid damages; the director-general, Alasdair Milne, who was inclined to allow the case to proceed, was ordered to settle by the acting chair of governors. The incident marked a serious rift between the director-general and the governors; for the BBC it amounted to a constitutional crisis.

(Born 2005, p.48)

The pressure to settle out of court mid-trial came from newly-appointed Chairman Marmaduke Hussey who had been advised by Conservative Chairman Norman Tebbit to see the legal advice the BBC had been given. Lindley describes the Corporation's unreserved apology and payout to the defendants as 'an extraordinary humiliation for *Panorama*, and a public vindication for the MPs' (p.255) and suggests the decision to back down was motivated by political, rather than legal considerations. He also argues that:

In retrospect 'Maggie's Militant Tendency' was the beginning of the end of *Panorama's* power – its power to do what its Editor wanted. Its pride was humbled by the court case and the verdict against it. Partly because of that

debacle, the Director General was soon to lose his job. A new Chairman had been appointed – told to get the BBC journalists under control. And shortly afterwards Birt arrived to do the business.

(Lindley 2003a, p.256)

The sacking of Alasdair Milne in Jan 1987, over a series of current affairs and documentary programmes that had upset the government⁶ (see Milne 1989; O'Malley 1994), and the arrival of John Birt as Deputy Director General is described as 'Year Zero' by Lindley who, only half-jokingly, compares Birt's tenure at the BBC to that of Pol Pot in Cambodia, with his assistants, many from LWT, characterised as 'black Armani suited revolutionaries' (Ibid p.261). Birt's new regime resulted in dramatic changes for News and Current Affairs, the closure of the Lime Grove studios that had been *Panorama*'s home and close scrutiny and control of the programme's output. *Panorama*'s Editor David Dickinson was replaced by Tim Gardam and Head of Current Affairs Peter Pagnamenta was replaced by Birt's deputy Samir Shah. A proposed programme by John Ware on Peter Wright and the revelations about plots against former Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson in *Spycatcher* ['Wright or Wrong?' tx: 13.10.1988] was initially blocked by Birt who insisted on seeing a detailed script before granting permission for Ware to even talk to Wright. In interview, Ware recalls that Birt 'wanted to make sure there wasn't going to be anything that would rebound on his watch and he was very mistrustful of the whole management system'. While generally defensive of Birt, Ware admits that the degree of control exercised over *Panorama* was 'suffocating to a degree' and that he seriously considered returning to *World in Action* where management was hugely supportive for such projects (personal communication, February 19, 2007).

Lindley gives many examples of interference by John Birt and the atmosphere of fear and caution it created at *Panorama*, including his own (effective) sacking for a critical film about the new Indian Prime Minister which had received complaints from the Indian High Commission⁷. Birt and Chairman Marmaduke Hussey's 'grovelling'

⁶ Particularly *Panorama*'s: Maggie's Militant Tendency and the documentary series *Real Lives* portrait of political leaders in Northern Ireland

⁷ 'Rajiv Gandhi: India's Pilot Prime Minister' tx: 18.1.1988.

apology for the film are seen by Lindley as wholly misplaced and aimed at pacifying the British Government who were angry that the dispute ‘could divert trade – notably a potential multimillion pound order for Aerospace Hawk trainers’ (*The Guardian* cited Lindley 2003, p.339). Further interference with, and delays to, programmes on an alleged SAS shoot-to-kill policy in Northern Ireland, corruption in Conservative-controlled Westminster City Council and Conservative Party funding at the end of the decade only fuelled the suspicion that ‘self-censorship’ had become a habitual response to politically sensitive issues at the BBC.

Interviews with a number of former *Panorama* programme-makers give weight to Lindley’s account of the effect of Birt’s management style on current affairs coverage. Roger Bolton couches his criticism in diplomatic language, but asserts that there was:

[...] no doubt that once or twice, because he was determined to secure the future of the BBC, he postponed or fudged programmes in difficult areas. And for a period, and it was the period when Mrs Thatcher was at her most powerful, there undoubtedly was an unwillingness for the BBC to go first shall we say. A belief that let other people establish what the row was about and then we might come in and try and do something authoritative. ‘We are not in the business of creating controversy around us.’ I know that to be his position.

(personal communication, October 23, 2008)

Former *Panorama* producer Eamonn Matthews describes witnessing a transformation at *Panorama* from the early eighties, when the programme had ‘tough’ journalists and reporters like Tom Bower, John Pennycate, Tom Mangold, Richard Lindley and David Dimbleby who were ‘big beasts who were perhaps rather like big columnists on a newspaper, that if you tangled with them you had better know what you were about’ to a situation in the early nineties when you had, ‘a very frightened programme with people being sacked and with *Weekend World* being held up as the sort of thing which *Panorama* ought to aspire to if it were clever enough’ (personal communication, June 27, 2007).

4.4.5 *Panorama* in the 1990s

The early nineties are regarded by Born (2004) as a period of growing political sensitivity for the BBC, given the lead-in to Charter renewal in 1996 and she identifies

evidence of intensifying ‘managerial caution’ and ‘political emasculation’ within news and current affairs. This is particularly evident in the blocking or delayed transmission of two *Panorama* investigations: the first into how Britain supplied Iraq with a massively powerful piece of armoury in the lead up to the 1991 Gulf War (‘Saddam’s Supergun’ [tx: 18.02.91]) and the second ‘Sliding Into Slump’ [tx: 04.05.92] ‘in which Britain’s economic problems were laid at the door of the former Conservative chancellor, Nigel Lawson’ (p.70).

Former Deputy Editor of *Weekend World* Glenwyn Benson, regarded as a ‘Birtist’ took over as Editor between 1992-1994 and, notoriously, was quoted as saying ‘It wouldn’t matter if only five people watched [*Panorama*], it’s a symbol to the country that the BBC considers the subject we’re covering is important’ (Lindley 2003, p.359). Contrary to expectations, however, Benson soon moved *Panorama* away from the kind of ponderous, analytical, high-brow style, encouraged under Birt’s ‘mission to explain’ doctrine, which had apparently eroded BBC1’s Monday night ratings. She also sometimes positioned the programme beyond the more predictable liberal concerns of investigative reporting, adopting, for instance, sceptical attitudes to people on welfare, as in the report ‘Babies on Benefit’ [tx: 13.9.1993]. This report filmed on an estate in Cardiff with high levels of unemployment received a record number of viewer complaints and one of which was upheld by the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC), which described aspects of the programme as ‘unfair and unjust’ (Ibid p.293-294). The approach of ‘Babies on Benefits’ could be described as in tune with a radical right-wing agenda, and was characteristic of a tendency sometimes described as ‘contrarian’ journalism embodied in the work of Andrew Neil, who would often focus negatively on some pressure groups such as Greenpeace or the Aids lobby (see Born 2005, p.384).

Perhaps the most famous *Panorama* episode, and certainly the most highly rated, was transmitted under Steve Hewlett’s Editorship (1994-1997). 22.8 million people watched Diana, Princess of Wales give a revealing interview to Martin Bashir on the 20th November 1995. In the interview Diana describes her marriage to Charles, the post-natal depression she suffered after giving birth to William and Harry, her three years of bulimia, the intense media pressure she experienced and her, and her husband’s, infidelities.

The huge interest in this episode, arguably, refocused attention on *Panorama*'s ratings and under Hewlitt the programme developed a more 'accessible' agenda with programmes on, for instance, 'Boozing for Britain' [tx: 08.01.96], 'Children Behaving Badly' [tx: 23.09.96], 'Violent Women' [tx: 11.11.96] and 'Myra Hindley' [tx 24.11.97] (BUFVC *Panorama* Project database). Classic investigations continued as in the report on a decade of official mistakes and cover ups into BSE in 'Mad Cows and Englishmen' [tx: 17.6.96] and 'The Drugs Olympics' [tx: 15.7.96] which the BBC came under heavy pressure from the International Olympic Committee to drop (Bell 2008). There was also emotional engagement in more complex stories such as 'Rwanda: Journey Into Darkness' [tx: 27.06.94] with Feargal Keane, and a report from Bosnia by John Simpson on the controversial mission of the UN protection force in Bosnia led by the British General Sir Michael Rose ('An Englishman in Sarajevo' [tx: 23.1.95]). More traditional political coverage continued, if at a somewhat reduced level. For example, in April 1997 David Dimpleby led a series of four separate pre-election interviews with the leaders of the three main political parties, as well as Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party. Similarly, 'The Devolution Debate' [tx:10.09.97], held the day before the referendum in Scotland and a week before the referendum in Wales on support for an assembly/parliament, signalled how *Panorama* still saw its role as an important venue for national debates of this kind, although on a much reduced basis compared to earlier decades.

Under the Editorship of Peter Horrocks (1997-2000) *Panorama* continued the mix of stories that Hewlitt had developed with a broad audience appeal. The Royal Family is the topic of two programmes ('The Diana Dividend' tx: 18.5.98 and 'Charles: a Life in Waiting' tx: 09.11.98), 'Viagra' [tx: 21.9.98], 'Porn Wars' [tx: 02.11.98] and 'The House Price Lottery' [tx: 28.6.99] indicate a continuing 'tabloid' ingredient, while Steve Bradshaw's report from Rwanda 'When Good Men Do Nothing' [tx: 07.12.98], Tom Mangold's interview with weapons inspector Scott Ritter⁸ 'Secrets, Spies and Videotape' [tx: 22.3.99] and 'The Killing of Kosovo' [tx: 28.4.99] are evidence of a continuing 'broadsheet' element to the programme. In 1999 *Panorama* became one of the first programmes to introduce a programme website and an email address, which

⁸ Ritter blamed the CIA for the collapse of the UN weapons inspection programme in Iraq and admitted to spying on the Iraqis for the Israeli secret service, amongst other allegations.

Horrocks describes as a 'turning point' from a history of somewhat 'patronising instruction' in news and current affairs to a new 'anti-elitist revolution' in which audience interactivity and feedback would play a major role (Horrocks 2006. p.3-4). Newspaper reports at the time suggest that *Panorama* suffered a 15% cut in budget between 1996-98 and a reduction in filming schedule from 14 to 11 days. There are also complaints about *Panorama*'s new scheduled slot of 10pm being too late, although it continued to hold a healthy 25% share and averaged around 4.4 million viewers.

4.4.6 *Panorama* post-2000

ITV's decision to axe the *10 O'clock News* is thought to have had a major impact on *Panorama* in October 2000 when it was moved from its traditional Monday night, to what many described as a Sunday night 'graveyard' slot of 10.15 under Editor Mike Robinson (2000-2006) and reduced the number of programmes per year from thirty-six to thirty. The move was to make way for a new 10 O'clock BBC News bulletin was strongly opposed by the *Panorama*'s journalists and production staff. In the first week *Panorama* lost a quarter of its viewers with a fall from 4.2 million for 'Who Bombed Omagh' [tx: 09.10.00] to 3.2 million for 'Gap and Nike: No Sweat?' [tx: 15.10.00], and never really recovered with average viewing figures falling from a 3.6 million average in 2000 to 2.6 million in 2005. Robinson oversaw the heavily criticised coverage of the 9-11 attacks (which Tom Mangold resigned over), as well as the invasions of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003). He also increased *Panorama*'s use of interactive technology, including the first live interactive forum⁹ in which 19,000 people voted during the course of the programme on whether war was 'inevitable' and 'Seroxat: Emails from the Edge' [tx: 11.05.03] a follow up to 'The Secrets of Seroxat' [tx: 13.10.02] which contained an interactive application containing film and other content not being used in the transmitted broadcast. Debate about moving *Panorama* back to a prime-time slot was a constant feature of Robinson's Editorship, but as Reeve points out, an internal BBC report rejected this idea on the grounds that other channels would then target the slot, audiences would fall to around the 1 million mark, talent would

⁹ '*Panorama* Interactive: Iraq Crisis' tx: 29.09.02

‘jump ship’ and the show would be axed.

A great deal of controversy and press coverage accompanied *Panorama*’s eventual move back to prime time and a shorter thirty minute (down from forty minute) slot in January 2007 under its new Editor Sandy Smith (formerly Editor of the consumer affairs programme *Watchdog*). Amidst allegations of ‘dumbing down’, *Panorama*’s new approach was described by BBC Head of Current Affairs George Entwistle as a significant ‘shift towards audience focus while retaining an agenda commitment to report the world as it unfolds that will never change’ (cited Brown and Wells 2006, p.2). The programme also had a new format: being introduced by Jeremy Vine, as it had been in previous years by the likes of Richard and David Dimbleby, and with a revamped title sequence and a new ‘edgier’ filming style. *Panorama*’s former longest-serving reporter Tom Mangold was one of many observers to prove disappointed in the re-launched programme, lamenting the use of ‘too many inconsequential stories’ and complaining that it ‘pratfalls noisily between two stools of silly tabloid guff and serious endeavour’ (Mangold 2007, p.1). Programmes such as ‘Should I fight Back?’ [tx: 08.2.07], ‘GBH on the NHS’ [tx: 26.2.07], ‘Stalkers: Murder in Slow Motion’ [tx: 15.3.07], ‘Dogfighting Undercover’ [tx: 30.8.07], ‘Married to the Mob’ [tx: 31.05.07], ‘Teenage Sex for Sale’ [tx: 27.3.08] and, most notoriously ‘Scientology and Me’ [tx: 14.5.07] in which John Sweeney exploded with rage whilst interviewing a Scientologist suggested that *Panorama* had lurched towards more ‘tabloid’ values. There were also concerns about programmes where there appeared to be a failure of investigative journalism, notably in the use of an apparently discredited scientist in ‘Wi-Fi: A Warning Signal’ [tx: 21.05.07] and the claim, subsequently withdrawn, that Pakistan’s cricket coach Bob Woolmer had been poisoned and then strangled in Jamaica in ‘Murder at the World Cup’ [tx: 01.5.07].

However, there remains some evidence of a recent, increasing commitment to what traditionalists have been calling for in the programme’s coverage of more ‘broadsheet’ and international stories such as Jane Corbin’s ‘Return to Gaza’ [tx: 20.8.07] and Jeremy Bowen’s ‘Gaza; Out of the Ruins’ [tx: 17.2.09]; Hilary Andersson’s ‘Is American Ready for a Black President?’ [tx: 15.10.07] and ‘What Now, Mr President?’ [tx: 27.1.09], Jane Corbin’s reports from Iraq and Afghanistan ‘Basra: The Legacy’ [tx 10.12.07] and ‘Britain’s Terror Heartlands’ [tx 19.12.08]; and Paul Kenyon’s reports on

economic and political migrants and ‘Europe or Die Trying’ [tx: 14.9.09] and ‘Migrants go Home’ [tx: 11.10.09]. In interview, Kenyon confirms that *Panorama*’s strategy is to ‘hammock’ the more ‘demanding’ programmes and international stories between more ‘accessible’, domestic topics: ‘two popular programmes and then in between one which they think that the audience will dip on’ (personal communication, April 27, 2007).

Gaber’s (2008b) study of the relaunched *Panorama* shows some evidence of ‘high-quality revelatory investigations’, although it also points to shortcomings such as a stress on production values at the expense of editorial content and worries that:

[...] the majority of its programmes are neither investigative, but nor are they seeking to do what *Panorama* once did so well – in the words of Tom Mangold, ‘to spend time, energy, money and true reporting talent to cover, in depth, the big strategic, vital issues of the day, whatever the [audience] figures’

(p.254)

It may, however, be too early to say if *Panorama* has, in fact, abandoned this tradition. *Panorama*’s ability to reinvent itself has been an enduring feature of its six decades of reporting current affairs. It may be that this willingness to adapt, innovate and yet remain true to a mainstream tradition of broadcast journalism will help it survive the increasingly competitive age of digital broadcasting.

This thesis now turns to the debates around news and current affairs war coverage and specifically coverage of the two wars against Iraq of 1991 and 2003. Did British current affairs and specifically *Panorama* manage to break away from ‘official narratives’ that many critics allege dominated news coverage of both wars? Was the range of issues pertaining to the historical background to the wars, or the range of ethical questions involved, largely ignored as Kellner (1992) argues they were in US current affairs? To what extent was the BBC’s *legal* obligation to provide ‘balanced’ and ‘impartial’ coverage, as shown in this chapter, compromised as its critics suggested (see Philo and McLaughlin 1993; Cromwell and Edwards 2006, 2009)? And finally, did the very different levels of political consensus for the first and second Gulf Wars make any difference to the type of coverage which British current affairs programmes, and specifically *Panorama*, offered?

5.1 Coverage of Conflict

5.1.1 Introduction

While numerous definitions of ‘war’ have been explored, if not agreed, across a various disciplines, ‘conflict’, as Cottle notes, can be defined more straightforwardly as a struggle ‘between opposing interests and outlooks’ (Cottle 2006, p.4). Thereafter, Cottle suggests, the picture is less simple although the term ‘major armed conflict’ is generally preferred to the more problematic ‘war’ in academic literature. Both terms are used in this study to mean:

[...] prolonged combat between the military forces of two or more governments, or of one government and at least one organised armed group, involving the use of weapons and incurring at least 1000 battle related deaths.

(Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, cited Allen 1999, pg.19-20).

The literature exploring British and US media coverage of major armed conflicts is enormous and has grown significantly in recent years, particularly in the aftermath of the controversial invasion of Iraq in 2003. Existing literature on media coverage of the 1992 and 2003 wars against Iraq (the specific focus of this study on *Panorama’s* conflict coverage) include journalists’ memoirs, collected interviews with media workers, and commemorative illustrated ‘histories’ recounting or celebrating a particular individual journalist, photographer or media organisation’s efforts to report from the front line (see Brown and Shukman 1991; Adie 2003; Beck and Downing eds 2003; Omar 2004; Simpson 2004; Ayres 2005; Abdul-Ahad *et al.* 2006; Bowen 2006; Hoyt and Palattela 2007). In addition to outlining the major events of the war and the deeds of our armed forces, these accounts often report on bureaucratic obstacles to reporting, including the various overt and covert efforts of governments or the military

(on both sides of the battlelines) to censor, shape or control the news being reported. In this respect, these works can provide first-hand evidence of journalistic practices, practical and institutional constraints and editorial or political pressures at times of war.

Other studies include accounts which adopt a less reflective, more 'pragmatic', military perspective emphasising what the authors regard as the largely benign effects and practical necessity of media management (Hudson and Stanier 1997; Taverner 2005; Laity 2005) against more critical accounts, including non-academic, journalistic and/or polemic attacks on the media's 'supine' or 'complicit' role and conduct in a given war (Moore 2005; Borjesson 2004; Mackay 2006; Dudge 2006; Schechter 2006). As Halliday notes in relation to the Gulf War of 1992, judgements on the media's coverage of a particular war tend to correlate with the author's views of the war itself, with 'those regarding the war as legitimate tending to endorse news coverage, those opposed to it regarding coverage as suspect' (Halliday 1999, p.128).

Study of the news media's war coverage includes surveys of the production process, the organisational contexts, professional practices, political constraints and changing dynamics of state-media-military relations. Significantly, many of these studies overlap in their focus on British and US war coverage suggesting a degree of interdependence or convergence in Anglo-American media-state relations, particularly in wars where both states fought side-by-side. Parallel developments are frequently located in historical narratives that show how British and US governments and/or military's handling of the media and its perceived performance in one war can have direct consequences on the 'media management' of subsequent wars. Knightley's (updated) *The First Casualty* (2003) is widely regarded as the definitive account of war journalism from the Crimean War to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, but there are numerous detailed studies that take a similar war-by-war approach (Stewart and Carruthers 1996; Hudson and Stanier 1997; McLaughlin 2002; Connelly and Welch 2005; Andersen 2006).

5.1.2 State-media-military relations: a brief history of media management

Taylor (1998) argues, somewhat provocatively, that state, military, media and academic discourse in Britain shies away from use of the term 'propaganda' with its negative connotations. For Taylor, the term propaganda has become discredited by its association with totalitarian regimes and, consequently, the British have adopted more polite euphemisms such as 'political education', 'publicity', 'public relations' and more recently, 'media management' for persuasive processes and techniques that, in his view, constitute 'propaganda' as properly understood (see Jowett and O'Donnell 1999 for a useful definition and discussion of this term). The use of such 'propaganda', 'media management' or efforts by the state to censor, direct and control the flow of news at times of war has been the subject of a great deal of attention (see Mowlana *et al.* 1992; Schlesinger 1992; Miller 1993, 1994, 2002, 2004; Eldridge 1993; Herman and Chomsky 2008; Ewen 1996; Pratkanis and Aronson 1997; Curtis 1998; Allen and Seaton 1999; Nohrstedt *et al.* 2000; Thusu and Freedman 2003; Borjesson 2004; Kamalipour and Snow 2004; Zaharna 2004; Connelly and Welch 2005; Altheide and Grimes 2005; Kumar 2006; Lewis *et al.* 2006, etc.).

The BBC's sometimes problematic relationship with the British government, especially at times of war, has also been the subject of extensive commentary and critique (see Ward 1989; Walters 1989; Miller 1994; Barnett and Gaber 2001; Curran and Seaton 2003; Dyke 2004; Wring 2005). Seaton (2003) articulates the view that the notion of the BBC's 'independence' emerged around its establishment as a Corporation under Royal Charter on the 1st January 1927 and was less as a matter of principle, but rather as a politically expedient compromise between a government 'anxious to avoid responsibility for trivia' (p.117) and a pioneering Director General averse to interference. While not state controlled, Seaton argues that the BBC remained 'vulnerable to bullying' in the 1930s and was 'forced to pass off government intervention as its own decision' (p.119-120), an observation echoed in contemporary commentary (see Audit 1937). It is suggested that Reith had, partly under pressure from

newspaper owners and partly to avoid vulnerability to ‘public rows’ (Briggs 1979b, p.191), somewhat limited the growth of news at the Corporation where it was felt ‘political controversy was most likely to flare’ (Kumar 1975, p.71). To some extent, Reith’s resignation in 1938 and the outbreak of war in 1939 ushered in a new era for the BBC. The Corporation’s record of generally credible and, occasionally, groundbreaking reporting of the Second World War was, several accounts suggest, a significant advance on previous practice (see Briggs 1970).

Several accounts maintain that the Corporation’s reputation for reporting Britain’s military defeats as well as its military victories in the Second World War lent the organisation a degree of credibility amongst its international audience in the post-war era (see Walters 1989). Crisell (1997) argues a common position amongst broadcast historians that: ‘Perhaps the BBC’s greatest wartime success was to honour its original wise decision to tell the truth as far as it could, rather than create propaganda.’ (p.60). The war is also shown by several studies to radically expand and transform the BBC and earn both domestic and international affection (see Ward 1989), winning ‘an honoured place in the hearts and minds of millions, who would long afterwards trust the reputation of the Corporation’ (Street 2005, p.82). While Crisell (1997) admits the BBC suppressed certain facts in the interests of national security, it ‘consciously eschewed lies and distortions’ and thereby gained an advantage over the stations of the enemy, whilst increasing public esteem for the Corporation (p.61).

Seaton (2003) adds a more sceptical note, observing that while contemporary judgements of the BBC’s performance in the Second World War were enthusiastic: ‘A belief in its independence is little more than a self-adulatory part of the British myth’ (p.145). There is general agreement, however, that the BBC’s news coverage returned to a more undistinguished and timid form between the re-launch of television broadcasting in 1946 and 1955 when the Corporation’s monopoly was broken by ITV and its news provider ITN (Seaton 2003; Day 1989). Jonathan Dimpleby’s account of his father Richard’s work at the BBC suggests that the advances in reporting established in the Second World War were ‘squandered’ once the unique political circumstances of the latter war years had passed, after which the Corporation ‘lacked the courage to test its

independence' (Dimbleby 1975, p.270). Crisell (1997) describes the BBC's TV news output as 'backward' with 'no television news as such' until 1954 (p.92) being bound, as Wyver (1989) notes, to a radio format with 'an invisible announcer reading a bulletin over a caption card on screen' (p.165).

There is a degree of uniformity in the numerous descriptions by academics and BBC 'insiders' of the Corporation's television news service under the control of Tahu Hole between 1953 and 1958 that underline the BBC's reputation at that time for paralysing caution in reporting the news (Dimbleby 1975; Schlesinger 1987; Miall 1994; Crisell 1997; Simpson 1999; Attenborough 2002). Walters (1989) argues that, for the first thirty years of BBC history, broadcasters, 'accepted that self-censorship was the price of independence', although he nuances this observation by elaborating that within the 'limits of political tolerance' space was created for a degree of editorial independence from which a less constrained tradition would emerge in the late fifties and sixties (Walters 1989, p.389).

The Suez Crisis (1956) marks the first major test of the Corporation's independence in reporting armed conflict in the post-war period. Lindley (2002a) describes how the '14 day rule' (forbidding discussion on television of anything due for debate in Parliament in the next fortnight) was used to prevent broadcasters giving any reaction from the British public to news of the military action in Egypt. *Panorama's* reporting of the crisis reflected the effect of this restriction:

[...] Richard Dimbleby had opened the programme by saying 'We can't tonight discuss the rights and wrongs of the situation' and when the crisis came no hint of the controversy that the intervention had caused could enter the studio.

(Lindley 2002a, p.45)

Wyndham Goldie (1977) describes 'threats of a take over of the BBC' (p.184) by Eden's Government and efforts by the BBC to resist intimidation (see also Rawnsley 1996). However, Shaw (1995) challenges the common view (see Ward 1989) that the

Corporation successfully fought for its independence in a test of strength against Anthony Eden's 'propaganda policy' and covert intimidation of the BBC (p.320). He argues that while the news bulletins were, 'on the whole admirably straight and impartial', its current affairs programmes 'showed unmistakable signs of a pro-government bias' (p.325). Shaw describes the degree to which both the BBC and ITV were willing to censor themselves and 'sanitize' military operations by complying with highly restrictive 'pooling arrangements', D-notices and other 'top-level guidance' (p. 338-343), and how: '[...] the conspicuous air of silence surrounding many of the most contentious issues, most notably about the political storm on the home front, contrived to lend the government's actions an ill-deserved respectability' (Shaw 1995, p. 339).

Rawnsley's (1996) account supports this view describing a variety of 'unnecessary' pressures from the government that were exercised to gain some semblance of management over the Corporation's output and in which 'the BBC was a convenient scapegoat at the mercy of a government which refused to question its own policies' (Rawnsley 1996, p.12). Following the fall of the Eden government the 14 day rule was regarded as an indefensible restriction on free speech, and was permanently suspended in 1957 (Lindley 2002a)¹.

According to several histories, poor coverage of the Korean War (1950-53) was, in part, due to censorship and media compliance with McCarthy-era Cold War ideology. This contributed, as Hudson and Stanier (1997) suggest, to Korea being the so-called 'Forgotten War', or a 'blank spot rarely retrieved from the American mind' (Andersen 2006, p.40). Eldridge (1993) cites examples of how the British media self-censored material that detailed 'the brutal treatment given by the South Koreans to political prisoners' and explains how journalist Rene Cutforth became disillusioned when his account of the effects of American napalm bombing of the population was not broadcast by the BBC (p.7).

¹ An account of this controversy and *Panorama's* coverage of Suez can be found in Chapter 4.4.

If the reporting of the Korean War was hampered by strict military controls, the lifting of official censorship contributed to the Vietnam War (1959-75) being one of the most written about and photographed conflicts in recent history. While the prolonged war in Indo-China did not actively involve troops from the United Kingdom, developments in reporting from the region would have profound consequences for British media coverage of subsequent conflicts.

The Vietnam War is often described as the first ‘television war’ (see Mercer *et al.* 1987). Army Chief of Staff William Westmoreland, who led American forces in Vietnam from 1965 to 1968, noted in his memoirs how television was ‘for the first time bringing war into living rooms and with no press censorship, the relationship of the military command in South Vietnam and the news media was of unusual importance’ (cited Perlmutter 1999, p.179). Certainly, Marshall McLuhan’s observation that, ‘the war in Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of the nation’ became accepted at face value within key sectors of the American military (see Hammond 1988; Hooper 1982; Thussu and Freedman 2003; Wheen 1985) and this ‘comforting nostrum [...] affects its media and public relations policies to this day’ (Perlmutter 1999, p.179).

In fact, the US media’s coverage of the Vietnam War is the subject of a number of studies that challenge this widely held view (see Williams 1993; Culbert 2003; Patterson 1995; Alterman 2004 and notably, Hallin 1989). Hallin examines the assumption that the US media undermined the war effort and domestic morale through its critical reporting and by bringing bloody images of the conflict into the American home. His study shows how the media was generally supportive of the war effort due partly to its dependence on official sources coupled with an unquestioning commitment to Cold War ideology. Television reports were delivered in what amounted to an analytical vacuum - showing brave American soldiers at war against North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front ‘terrorists’ and with disturbing images of the conflict (particularly of Vietnamese casualties) self-censored by the networks at least until splits became apparent in the US political establishment, and arguably, with a few exceptions, for the duration of the war (see Herr 1978).

These political divisions emerged more publicly following the Tet Offensive of 1968 when the progress and cost of the war became a topic of open discussion amongst Washington's elite. The Tet Offensive dramatically undermined official assertions of 'advances' on the battlefield and further opened the 'credibility gap' between what senior military sources were saying and journalists' experiences of the battle zones (see also Mercer *et al.* 1987; Williams 1993; Zaller and Chiu 1996). In the later years of the war the media entered a highly elite-critical phase of coverage taking a more independent and sceptical view of the military, becoming openly scornful of inflated accounts of success, particularly as reported at the daily military press briefings in Saigon, or 'five o'clock follies' as they became known (see Time 1973; Hertsgaard, 1991).

Although Hallin's broad conclusions have been challenged by some (see Porch 2002; Taverner 2005; McNair 2006), *The Uncensored War* has been highly influential on other studies of conflict. This influence is felt most keenly where - as happened over Vietnam in America, in reporting 'the Troubles' in Northern Ireland or the invasion of Iraq in the UK - fault lines in consensus opinion appeared. For Hallin, the predominant tendency to report within the 'spheres of consensus' or 'legitimate controversy' emerged following the development of 'professionalism' and 'objectivity' in US journalism, which was accompanied by a changing relationship to the state, and especially the President. As the press grew less openly partisan, journalists were granted greater access to political authorities whilst accepting for the most part, 'the language, agenda, and perspectives of the political "establishment"' (Hallin 1989, p.8). The effect is to leave the media 'autonomous but deeply enmeshed in government' with a commitment to what Hallin terms the 'national security consensus' that plays a hegemonic role in framing political issues (cited Schlesinger 1992, p.297).

In a later comparative study of Vietnam and the Gulf War of 1992 Hallin notes significant continuities in media-state relations, reiterating the relative and, to an extent, compromised autonomy of the media: 'Journalism gives the world political meaning, and it stands [...] in a close if not always comfortable relation to the institutions of state power'(Hallin 1994a, p.1).

Hallin's study of the media's performance in Vietnam is echoed by Herman and Chomsky (1994) who argue that:

Insofar as there is debate among dominant elites, it will be reflected within the media, which in this narrow sense may adopt an "adversarial stance" with regard to those holding office, reflecting elite dissatisfaction with current policy. Otherwise the media will depart from elite consensus only rarely and in limited ways.

(p.171)

Herman and Chomsky's 'propaganda model' explains that while the tactics of the anti-war movement might be discussed in the media the actual opinions of those who viewed the US and not North Vietnam as the aggressor were 'unthinkable', outside the 'doctrinal system', and so far from Washington perspectives as to be largely ignored: 'While dissent and domestic controversy became a focus of media coverage from 1965, the actual views of dissidents and resisters were virtually excluded' (1994, p.172). This notion of a 'bounded' discussion in which ideological alternatives are deemed 'unacceptable' can be seen as a more categorical version of Hallin's view that the anti war movement stood at the bottom of the media's 'hierarchy' of legitimate political actors.

Despite critical media analysis of this kind, the belief that the media, particularly television, were responsible for US government failures in Indochina remains widespread (see Williams 1993) – a belief characterised by Tumber and Palmer as the 'myth of Vietnam' (2004, p. 2). From the US and UK government's perspective, the 'lessons of Vietnam' included the need to manage the media more carefully at times of war. Maintaining domestic support and restricting or controlling the media's access to the battlefield became critical goals in the planning and execution of conflicts (see LaMay *et al.* 1991; Andersen 2006; McLaughlin 2002).

It should be noted here that the ‘Vietnam syndrome’ (the belief that television could bring defeat on the domestic front without securing victory on the battlefield) played a major role in the structuring of the relationship between the military and the media in the First Gulf War, particularly in the US and British military devising ‘a very restrictive set of rules for war coverage’ (Jowett and O’Donnell 1999, p.317). This view is supported by Lewis *et al.* (2006) who argue that the Vietnam ‘myth’ [...] ‘has fulfilled a useful function for the military in United States and in Britain: it legitimised increasing control over the media’ (p.4).

According to several accounts it was in the Falklands/Malvinas War (1982) that many of the ‘lessons of Vietnam’ were first put into action by British military planners to ensure continued domestic support (see Andersen 2006; Knightley 2003). Logistical constraints ensured that only a small, ‘handpicked’ group of journalists could be sent with the British taskforce and ‘reporting restrictions’ were tightly enforced, particularly as all satellite communications from the taskforce and the islands were controlled by the Ministry of Defence (see GUMG 1985; Morrison and Tumber 1988). In fact, only British media organisations were represented (with the exception of one Reuters journalist) (Lewis *et al.* 2006, p.11).

The BBC’s output (especially episodes of *Newsnight* and *Panorama*) became the focus of intense political scrutiny and disapproval by senior figures in the ruling Conservative Government (see Cotton 2001; Bolton 1990; Lindley 2002a; Morrison and Tumber 1988; Milne 1989; Walters 1989). On the 3rd of May, Conservative MP John Page, complained about the previous evening’s edition of *Newsnight* on BBC2, which he described as ‘unacceptably even-handed’. According to Morrison and Tumber, Peter Snow’s observations about the credibility of Argentinean and British claims had ‘provoked fury’ amongst Conservative backbenchers and ministers, despite Snow’s conclusion in the programme that British accounts had been shown to be more accurate: ‘Until the British are demonstrated either to be deceiving us or to be concealing losses, we can only tend to give a lot more credence to the British version of events.’ (BBC TV *Newsnight* 2nd May 1982, cited Morrison and Palmer 1988, p.228). Significantly, the 2nd of May *Newsnight* programme was transmitted on the same day as the controversial

sinking of the Argentine ship, General Belgrano, in which over 350 sailors died and at a time when the 'conduct and development of the campaign were being increasingly questioned' (Ibid).

Eldridge (1993) describes the political repercussions of a *Panorama* episode on the Falklands conflict transmitted eight days later 'Can We Avoid War?' [tx: 10.5.82] which aired some Labour opposition, but mainly examined dissenting, 'minority' views within the Conservative Party to the government's policy over the crisis followed by a discussion with Cecil Parkinson, a member of the war cabinet. Conservative MPs protested, along with sections of the press, against what was termed the Corporation's 'loftily neutral' stance and it was argued that 'some programmes on the BBC appeared to give the impression of being pro-Argentinean and anti-British' (cited Eldridge 1993, p.9). A more detailed account of the controversy can be found in Morrison and Tumber's (1988) study which sets out the context for the controversy and shows wider events to be important. According to the authors, on the 6th of May an early evening news bulletin on BBC2 had reported the funeral of Argentine seamen killed in British attacks. Subsequently, conservative MP Robert Adley condemned the use of film of the funeral and also of an Argentine-Bulgarian World Cup football match where there was 'a great show of national fervour', accusing the BBC of becoming 'Galtieri's fifth column' (1988, p.230). Concern about the use of filmed material from Argentina had, according to the authors, grown into a wider concern in Government circles that 'Argentine propaganda was being inadequately countered' (Ibid, p.231) amidst the loss of the HMS Sheffield on the 4th May and the loss of more Harrier jets on the 6th of May (p.244). It is against this background that *Panorama*'s broadcast on May 10th 'provoked the mightiest storm' (p.231). As Morrison and Tumber observe:

As soon as *Panorama* ended, outraged comments poured in from the public and from Conservative MPs. Geoffrey Rippon, a former Conservative minister, called it '...one of the most despicable programmes it has ever been my misfortune to witness'. Kenneth Warren, Conservative MP for Hastings, declared that, 'It is time the BBC came back to earth and remembered its responsibilities'. [...] The attacks continued on the next day, 11 May. A letter in *The Times* from John Page asserted that: 'It is the superior tone of superneutrality which so many of us find to be

objectionable and unacceptable when our forces are in action – we expected the BBC to be on our side!’

(Morrison and Tumber 1988, p.231-232)

Cockrell, Hennessy and Walker (1984) write how the day following transmission of the *Panorama*, Sally Oppenheimer, a senior figure in the Conservative Party referred to the programme in Prime Minister’s Question Time as ‘an odious, subversive travesty in which Michael Cockrell and other BBC reporters dishonoured the right to freedom of speech in this country’ (cited Eldridge 1993, p.9). Mrs Thatcher’s reply indicates that the BBC Chairman had made efforts to placate the government over its coverage:

I know how strongly many people feel that the case for our country is not being put with sufficient vigour on certain – I do not say all – BBC programmes. The Chairman of the BBC has assured us, and has said in vigorous terms, that the BBC is not neutral on this point, and I hope his words will be heeded by the many who have responsibilities for standing up for our task force, our boys, our people and the cause of democracy.

(cited Eldridge 1993, p.9)

Panorama was denounced as ‘Traitorama’, by *The Sun* for ‘daring to explore the arguments against the British campaign’ (Davies 2009, p. 144), despite most of these views being expressed by Conservative Party MPs. Mary Whitehouse, of the National Viewers’ and Listeners’ Association denounced the style and tone of the programme, declaring that:

Panorama was arrogant and disloyal. It prostituted the power their profession gives broadcasters. To spread alarm and despondency was a treasonable offence in the last war. One wonders what succour this sort of broadcasting gives the people in Argentina.

(cited Morrison and Tumber 1988, p.233-234)

In fact, as Morrison and Tumber point out, few critics detailed the grounds for their objections. Subsequently, the programme was criticised for giving too much time to

‘irrelevant interviews with Members of Parliament, particularly Conservatives’ who were regarded as a handful of ‘cranks’ and ‘egomaniacs’ (p.233) by some MPs. The *Panorama* Editor George Carey defended the choice of four interviewees by claiming they had deliberately avoided interviews with ‘predictable critics’ of the Government (cf. chapters 5.4, 6.2), seeking instead people who were not really public figures of great standing. Their views were described in the introduction as representing a minority view but one reflecting uncertainty both inside and outside the House:

According to Carey, *Panorama* had talked to between thirty and fifty Members whom they believed to have doubts about the progress of events. ‘These,’ Carey maintained, ‘were saying one of two things: either “I am against this show”, or “I’m very worried about this show but you are not going to get me on film saying so” or “My chums are worried about it, everybody’s worried, but obviously we have got to back Maggie now”.’ *Panorama* had several times plainly stated that it was examining a minority view and, to balance it, Carey emphasised, ‘we not only included parts of the fifty-minute interview with Mrs Thatcher shown in the previous edition but also an interview with the Party Chairman, Mr Parkinson. He had ample opportunity to put the majority view across’.

(Morrison and Tumber 1988, p. 234)

According to several accounts the presenter of the offending *Panorama*, Robert Kee, had expressed strong reservations about the programme in a pre-screening the night before transmission. The subsequent discussion of the rough cut had led to thirty-eight changes to the film being requested by Editor George Carey. Nevertheless, with attacks on the programme from so many fronts, Kee distanced himself from the programme in an open letter to *The Times* on the 14th May, which effectively disowned the ‘poor objective journalism’ of his colleagues (see Lindley 2000, p. 161-162). While Kee acknowledged that it was ‘wholly appropriate to examine that minority view’, he argued that it should either have occupied a shorter part of the programme or there should have been other voices to question it (Morrison and Tumber 1988, p. 235).

While the BBC was subject to frequent, forceful criticism from the media and politicians, the IBA also came under pressure from the Government, especially after Thames Television’s *TV Eye* ran a scoop interview with General Galtieri on the 13th of

May following five weeks of reports from Buenos Aires (Holland 2006, p.187). Margaret Thatcher's reaction to this further example of 'unpatriotic' reporting was conveyed to the IBA's Director General by the Home Secretary William Whitelaw and programme chiefs at Thames were called to IBA's headquarter for 'discussions' before the IBA 'approved most if it for transmission' (Morrison and Tumber 1988, p. 238).

Nevertheless, the literature appears to indicate that the most stinging Government and press criticism was reserved for the BBC with three issues dominating: the use of film shot in Argentina, the use of retired military officers for commentary and the use of language. Exploring each of these issues, Morrison and Tumber conclude that 'in no case has it been proved that military speculation helped the Argentines' (p.242). On the third ground of complaint that the language used was 'loaded', Alasdair Milne remarked, in answer to repeated complaints on the subject, that they had referred to BBC-style books from the Second World War and Suez and found that the BBC had always spoken of 'the British' rather than 'our troops':

[...] one reason is that if you start talking about 'our troops' and 'our ships' then it is natural to speak of 'our policy' when you mean the present Government's policy, and then our objectivity would no longer be credible. There would be a risk of our credibility collapsing in our external overseas broadcasting. Credibility is a very tender thing. So 'us' is out.

(cited Morrison and Tumber 1988, p.242)

In fact, close attention to the *Panorama* episode that caused most anger amongst Conservative MPs and Ministers makes it clear that the BBC departed on many occasions from the policy outlined by Milne. The programme begins with a sequence of rapidly edited shots of the task force over the programme's dramatic signature tune and then moves to outlining the issues with Robert Kee's introduction, in studio, to camera:

Good evening, the government, the country, perhaps the world itself sits precariously balanced this evening between what Mr Haig has called terrible fighting and a peaceful solution to the Falklands Crisis. And this evening's report of more naval bombardment of military targets around Port Stanley

seems to suggest that things may be becoming more precarious by the hour. So far attempts at a diplomatic solution, which our task force was sent to the South Atlantic to support, have failed through no fault of our own. Both Mr Haig's plan and the Peruvian plan bringing in the UN, which we accepted, have been turned down by Argentina. It looks as if Mrs Thatcher's options have become increasingly restricted to military options and I will be talking later to Cecil Parkinson - a Minister of Mrs Thatcher's, member of her War Cabinet and Chairman of her party. However, further attempts at the United Nations to arrive at a peaceful solution which is still Britain's top priority still do continue in New York so first over to New York and to Peter Taylor...

(*Panorama* 'Can We Avoid War' - tx: 10.5.82)

As Milne indicated, the danger that the Corporation's claims to objectivity loses credibility when referring to 'our troops', or in this case, '*our* task force' are very clear, particularly in the close identification the commentary makes between the viewer, the *Panorama* programme makers and Government policy in the observation that: 'So far attempts at a diplomatic solution, which *our* task force was sent to the South Atlantic to support, have failed *through no fault of our own*' or that 'Mr Haig's plan and the Peruvian plan bringing in the UN, which *we* accepted, have been turned down by Argentina' [my emphasis].

While the programme goes on to hear arguments from 'Senior [sic] Jorge Herrera Vegas', the Argentinean Minister to the UN Mission and critics of government policy, there is never the same explicit identification between the views expressed and those of the government, *Panorama* and 'the nation' as there is in the introduction. In fact the criticism Robert Kee levelled at the episode that it 'identified in a confusing way *Panorama's* own view of the Falklands crisis with that of the minority view it was claiming to look at objectively.' (see Lindley 2000, p. 159) would seem totally misplaced in this case. Here, as Glasgow University Media Group commented generally about the coverage of the Falkland's Crisis, it seems the broadcaster's 'idea of 'national consensus' can lead to a blindness to social conflict – leaving the coverage open to the government's use of the concepts of 'national unity' and the 'national interest' (1985, p.126).

There is not the space to deal in any greater detail with the *Panorama* episode that caused such controversy, but it is worth noting that following the outcry over ‘Can we Avoid War’, in the following week’s *Panorama* episode there was a report from the constituency of David Crouch, one of the dissenting MPs, using interviews at his Conservative Club which showed he did not represent local views, as well as interviews with Yarrow shipyard workers in Glasgow who supported the Task Force (GUMG 1985, p. 128)

Morrison and Tumber suggest the ‘flak’ experienced by the BBC in the first weeks of May 1982 which was directed largely at current affairs programmes was because the Government’s mood had changed from one of quiet confidence in April to ‘nervous expectation’ and uncertainty as hostilities commenced and casualties mounted in May:

The Government and its supporters were nervous but sure that the conflict must be sustained to the end; criticism of the BBC was forced, unripe, to the surface. If current affairs programmes led the public to believe that policy was awry, the news – any news – might be misinterpreted. It was indeed, current affairs programming, not news, which attracted the complaints.

(Morrison and Tumber 1988, p. 244)

Yet John Simpson’s account of his experience as a BBC news presenter somewhat contradicts this view. In another example apparently showing the pressures exerted on the Corporation, Simpson, who fronted the evening news with John Humphries at the time, writes of the consequences of a news ‘background report’ he prepared on the context for the invasion during a ‘quiet’ day in May. This report suggested that British foreign policy had unwittingly encouraged the invasion:

There was nothing particularly startling in my report, and a government enquiry later made all the points I did, plus plenty of others. [...] But Downing Street, already nervous about the fate of the naval task force which had now reached the Falklands, was furious that we should have focused attention on the government’s own failings at this key moment. There were angry phone calls of complaint to the BBC at various levels.

While Simpson makes it clear he has no proof his immediate sacking from the position of newsreader was a result of political pressure, he was told he wouldn't be allowed to resign to save face, or even to stay in the country: 'If I said anything about all this to the newspapers, I would be sacked' (Simpson 1999, p.260).

As several studies show, with the commencement of hostilities in the South Atlantic pressure on the BBC became much more overt and public, and was not only directed at current affairs programmes. Questions about the origin or conduct of the war were regarded by 'a deeply ideological Prime Minister' as 'intrinsically unpatriotic' (Morgan 1991, p. 534). Mrs Thatcher was, in her own words, 'very unhappy at the attempted 'even-handedness' of some of the comment, and the chilling use of the third-person – talk of 'the British' and 'the Argentineans' on our news programmes' (Thatcher 1995, p.181).

Leapman (1986), Milne (1989), Lindley (2002a) and Snoddy (2006) describe the anger and vitriol unleashed against the Chairman of the BBC Governors George Howard and Designate Director General Alasdair Milne who were used 'for bayonet practice' by a Conservative backbench media committee (see Lindley 2000, p. 160). Lindley describes how George Howard spoke about the BBC's role in reporting World War II before Winston Churchill, grandson of the wartime leader retorted furiously that the BBC had not then 'seen fit to give equal time to Goebbels propaganda machine' (Ibid, p.161). The meeting left both Howard and Milne visibly shaken and was later described by David Holmes, Chief Assistant to the Director General as 'an exercise in intimidation' (cited GUMG 1985, p.14). Walters (1989) also details how backbenchers put down a Commons motion calling upon the BBC to desist in unpatriotic reporting: 'if it cannot speak up for Britain, at least not to speak against it', and writes of how Mrs Thatcher strongly identified herself with such view in the House:

I understand that there are times when it seems that we and the Argentines are being treated almost as equals and almost on a neutral basis ... I can only say if this is so, it gives great offence and causes great emotion among many people.

(cited Walters 1989, p.382),

Whether such pressure was effective in shaping BBC coverage cannot be easily judged but Born (2004) provides one of several studies that record examples of self-censorship during the Falklands campaign, such as a ban on interviewing bereaved relatives (revealed in an interview with former *Panorama* Editor Steve Hewlett p.383-384). In fact, research by Glasgow University Media Group shows that Government concerns about the effect on morale of such interviews emerge in News and Current Affairs minutes the day after the *Panorama* storm. The Director General encouraged editors: 'To be extremely self-critical with regard to items such as interviews with the bereaved, and invitations to Argentine diplomats to contribute to programmes in one-to-one interviews' (NCA, 11.5.82 cited GUMG 1985, p.15).

Glasgow University Media Group's detailed study of news and current affairs coverage in the war reveals that the pressures against interviewing the bereaved at the BBC hardened into an absolute ruling within three weeks, with the exception of a *Nationwide* interview with a widow who worked for a naval wives' self-help organisation, saying 'I certainly don't feel bitter' which had been given the go-ahead by senior management as giving 'no concern on any score' (GUMG 1985, p.97-98).

Surveying the restrictions, controls, censorship and attacks against dissidents and management of news organisations in the reporting of the Falklands, Knightley (2003) argues that it 'provided a model of how to make certain that government policy is not undermined by the way a war is reported' (p.482). Indeed, the media's reporting of the Falklands campaign and the long running 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland are the subject of many detailed studies showing the extent of British government efforts to shape the news agenda; the persistent over-reliance by the broadcast media on official sources and of the difficult, if not stormy, relationship between the BBC and the Thatcher

government in particular (see GUMG 1985; Walters 1989; Barnett and Curry 1994; Bolton 1990; Curran and Seaton 2003; Curtis and Jempson 1993; Curtis 1998; Kiberd 2002; Lindley 2002a; Miller 1993, 1994; O'Malley 1994, 2001). It is frequently argued that this tense relationship and the government appointment of more conservative Governors, such as Marmaduke Hussey, resulted in the sacking of Director General Alasdair Milne in 1987, the first in the corporation's history (Leapman 1986; Milne 1989; Walters 1989), although this version of events has not remained unchallenged (see Hussey 2001). For further details of this event and its consequences see chapter 4.2.

Shaw and Carr-Hill (1992), Schlesinger (1992), Tumber (2004) and Knightley (2003) are amongst many studies suggesting that Pentagon officials learnt the value of the British government's efforts to control the news from the Falkland's War in 1982, in order to restrict media coverage of future American wars. This strategy came into force in the 1983 invasion of Grenada when the Pentagon did not permit correspondents to join US forces until six days after the initial invasion, 'because of concerns for their safety' (Andersen 2006, p.124) and it said, their presence would jeopardize security and create logistical problems. Then in 1989, the Pentagon selected a dozen reporters to cover the invasion of Panama but subsequently restricted them to a warehouse in Panama until nearly all the fighting had ended (Knightley 2003; Kumar 2006).

In between these two invasions, the 1986 American bombing of Libya from airbases in Britain brought further pressure to bear on the BBC, with Party Chairman Norman Tebbit presenting a study conducted by Conservative Central Office into BBC Kate Adie's reports from Tripoli which claimed evidence of Anti-American bias (Leapman 1986; Walters 1989; Holland 1997; Adie 2003). While this particular attack was successfully resisted (see Simpson 1993, 1999; Snoddy 2006), it was viewed by many as part of a wider campaign of Government pressure on, and intimidation of, the BBC. Disputes such as this and controversy over reporting on the Security Services (the Zircon affair) and Northern Ireland (especially *Real Lives*) (see Cotton 2001; Milne 1989) provided a backdrop to the changes in management and news and current affairs 'culture' introduced by the newly appointed Director General Michael Checkland and

his deputy John Birt following the sacking of Alasdair Milne in 1987 (see Born 2004; Cotton 2001; Lindley 2002a).

Reviewing the literature on war reporting in the twentieth century - and the more specific material on the BBC's television coverage of conflicts - reveals attention to a number of continuities, developments and concerns. These include evidence that successive British and American governments and the military have systematically attempted to shape and control the media agenda at times of armed conflict (Kellner 1992; Boyd-Barrett 2004, Tumber 2004; Schechter 2004, 2006); that the media have often failed to play their perceived adversarial role with officialdom (Mowlana 1992; O'Heffernan 1994; Snow and Taylor 2006); that news 'frames' (see Reese *et al.* 2001) and explanatory discussion of particular conflicts are often narrow and overdetermined by elite and official sources (Bennett 2005; Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2008); that competition, 'rolling news' and 'patriotic reporting' have degraded the ability to report in depth (Knightley 2002; Alan and Zelizer 2004; Alterman 2004; Bell 2008) and that military restrictions, misinformation, censorship and self-censorship in various forms have prevented the public from gaining a real understanding of the nature of a particular war (Curtis and Jempson 1993; Knightley 2004; Cottle 2006; Kumar 2006). It is against this context that we examine media coverage and particularly the BBC's reporting of the two Gulf Wars of 1992 and 2003.

5.2. The Gulf Wars

5.2.1 State-media-military relations and media management

Dealing separately with the two ‘Gulf Wars’ is, in some ways, missing the point made by historians such as Hagan and Bickerton (2007) that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was ‘an extension of – or the completion of – The First Gulf War’ of 1991 (p.166). As Roy (2003) notes, between the two conflicts Iraq was subject to the ‘longest sustained air attack on a country since the Vietnam War’ (p.65) which, combined with punitive Oil-for-Food sanctions and damage to the infrastructure had devastating consequences for the Iraqi population (Ali 2002; Soloman and Erlich 2003; Curtis 2003, p.30).

The term ‘First Gulf War’ also ignores the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 that had raged for many years at the cost of a million lives and which is considered a major contributory factor in the events leading to the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on the 2nd August 1990 (Hashem 2004). For Corcoran (1992), the links between the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War and the economic motives underlying the latter war were ‘invisible aspects’ of the conflict, barely reported in the mainstream media:

[...] the day after the Iran-Iraq ceasefire, Kuwait increased its oil output in violation of an OPEC agreement and increased extraction from the disputed border wells of Rumalah. These moves marked the beginning of the countdown to the Gulf crisis of 1990-1991.

(Salinger cited Corcoran 1992, p.110)

Nevertheless, despite the various continuities and links, ‘Gulf I’ and ‘Gulf II’ as they are sometimes called (with a nod to the sequel-like character of the conflicts) are separated by more than a decade and are distinct from each other in important ways. For this thesis a key difference is the degree of unanimity in British parliamentary support for both wars. For the First Gulf War support in the House of Commons in a vote on the

21st January 1991 was high with 563 votes in favour of Britain's contribution to the UN-backed military action and only 34 against (Hansard 1991). This compares to a much lower level of consensus for military action against Iraq in 2003, this time without a UN mandate. Following a crucial debate on the 18th March, the vote in the Commons was 396 to 217 in favour of such an intervention, with only a narrow majority of Labour MPs in support of their own Government's position (Hansard 2003). The revolt by 121 Labour MPs against the Whip has been described as 'the largest parliamentary revolt since the passing of Corn Law reform' (cited Ingle 2004, p 239).

Significantly, British Parliamentary support for the two Gulf Wars was almost the reverse of the situation in the US where support in Congress for the 2003 war was far higher (77 Senate votes to 23) (see Ricks 2006), compared to a far narrower vote of support (the 52 Senate votes to 47 in favour) for the 1991 war (see Entman and Page 1991; Zaller 1994). How this split profile of elite national support for the two wars may have affected *Panorama's* coverage is the subject of further enquiry (see chapters 5.4, 6.2, 7.1).

A comparative analysis of US and British media coverage of the two conflicts reveals similar patterns of sourcing, reporting and explanatory structures deployed in discussion of the origins and conduct of the wars against Iraq. However, the analysis also reveals differences, including adjustment to the military constraints imposed on the media, particularly on broadcasters. This thesis will look for evidence to support the hypothesis of 'frame indexing' (see Groshek 2008) in British media coverage of both wars which would, given the much lower levels of elite consensus for the 2003 invasion in Britain, imply more substantively framed coverage of that war compared to 'Gulf I' in 1991. While commentary on British coverage is the main focus, this cannot be divorced from scholarly study of US media performance, particularly as Anglo-American news organisations shared material and dominated the flow of international news to the detriment of alternative sources. This development, Taylor (1998) notes, was 'further underlined by the coalition's media arrangements, with their Anglo-American emphasis' (p.266).

A review of the literature on of the 'First' Gulf War (chapter 5.3) is followed by close textual discussion and content analysis of *Panorama's* coverage of the war (chapter 5.4) drawing on several issues raised in the scholarly debates pertinent to the focus of this thesis. The literature review (chapter 6.1) and examination of *Panorama's* coverage of the 'Second' Gulf War (chapter 6.2) follows a similar patterns, picking up on continuities and differences from the first war. This approach allows for a fully contextualised reading of *Panorama's* coverage of the wars against Iraq and situates discussion of particular programmes within a rich tradition of critical research examining the broadcast media's performance in these wars.

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5.3. The First Gulf War of 1991

5.3.1 Introduction

In the First Gulf War, as Taylor (1998) notes, there is general academic consensus that media coverage of the war 'differed vastly from its realities' (p.xvi). The gap between reality and representation has been put down to a number of factors - particularly state-military efforts to control and subordinate, or at least manage, the media - and perceived compliance by large sections of the media to such efforts (see McLaughlin 2002). While government and military 'perception management' (see Brown 2003, Awad 2004) and media strategies were, in many cases, a well-documented reality (see Young and Jesser 1997); the extent to which the British broadcast media was able to resist and challenge these strategies has been disputed.

For Philo and McLaughlin (1993) the British media acted, on the whole, as cheerleaders for war. Their analysis of media coverage assumes strong effects by pointing, for instance, to the shifting attitudes of the British public in the lead up to war as evidence of successful opinion management by ruling elites and a complicit media that largely excluded anti-war opinion. Philo and McLaughlin identify four main elements to that campaign including the portrayal of a war against Iraq as a war against its leader Saddam Hussein who was 'shown as a monster similar to Adolph Hitler' (1993, p.1). While they note that there was 'an element of truth' (Ibid, p.2) to such a claim they suggest the threat was in no way equal to the threat that Hitler had posed in 1939.

For these authors the demonisation of Saddam Hussein enabled a second element - the 'inevitability' of war to be emphasised in the media, whilst calls for a negotiated settlement were marginalised or dismissed as 'appeasement'. The third element was the portrayal of the conflict as a 'clean and easy war' (p.4) with emphasis on, and military supplied images of, hi-tech weaponry and surgical strikes largely supplanting questions about civilian casualties. The fourth element was the post-war doubts and questions raised by the media: especially the slaughter of an Iraqi army largely composed of oppressed ethnic and religious groups such as Kurds and Shi'a, but also a realisation by some British broadcasters, particularly, that 'the media had been manipulated for crude political purposes' (p.11).

Despite such doubts, the authors maintain that it is not correct to see British media workers as being simply forced along by politicians, particularly in the early stages of the war. ‘Many of them, especially the popular press, were willing participants in the mood of patriotism and near euphoria’ (p.13). They also quote an International Press Institute statement from April 1991 condemning reporting restrictions during the Gulf War which had:

[...] prevented a balanced picture of events, including the full extent of human suffering”. Even in the aftermath of the war, when strict media management was no longer in effect, current affairs and documentary output on British television tended to focus on what was happening outside Iraq. A picture of “the full extent of human suffering” was still missing.

(Ibid, p.13)

However, it is not only in critical accounts (see Chomsky 2002) that evidence of the successful management and co-option of the media in Gulf I is found. Military accounts and descriptions within Conflict Studies provide evidence for many of the media management techniques and ‘information operations’ that critical scholars have complained of (see Hudson and Stanier 1997; Taverner 2005; Young and Jesser 1997). Furthermore, there were measures of that success in official statements after the war, such as when the US Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams celebrated the Gulf War coverage as “the best yet” (Boot, cited McLaughlin 2002). Incidentally, Miller (2004) observes similar satisfaction in the British military with media performance in the Second Gulf War. This study will return to overt censorship and control strategies employed after considering issues around framing, use of sources, the range of views accessed and allegations of ‘self-censorship’ in the First Gulf War.

5.3.2 Framing

Framing is a key concept in this study and one which has become increasingly popular in media research in recent years (see Reese 2001). There are numerous definitions for the concept, but perhaps the most popular is that proposed by Entman (1993):

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. (p.52)

Framing suggests not only that an issue is defined through selection and emphasis of 'relevant' material, but also through 'playing down' or excluding what is deemed 'irrelevant' or of marginal interest. Gitlin views frames as persistent over time, enabling journalists to assign information to 'cognitive categories'. Seen in this way frames are active and 'information generating, as well as screening devices' (cited Reese 2001, p.11). There are a number of studies of the media's broadcast coverage of the First Gulf War which have attempted to identify what was included and emphasised, as well as what was omitted or marginalised. By reading these studies side by side a clear pattern of framing emerges.

Firstly to the absences. Before the conflict began media coverage of Iraq was 'sporadic' and rarely headline news - even the gassing of Kurds at Halabja in March 1988 was not the lead item on US networks or, in Britain, on BBC 1 or ITV (it did lead on Channel 4 News) (see Aburish 2001). Furthermore, news coverage of Iraq, when it happened at all, was largely muted on the topic of American, British and European support for Saddam Hussein's regime (see Lang and Lang 1994; Dorman and Livingston 1994; Ali 2002). In the run up to the war following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait (2nd August 1990 – 16th January 1991) there is widespread critical agreement on the lack of attention to the historical and economic context for the conflict (Morrison 1992; Kellner 1992; Corcoran 1992, Taylor 1998); limited coverage for organised opposition and expert opinion against the proposed military action (Frank 1992; Morrison 1992; Reese 2004); a lack of consistency in upholding international law with respect to recent US and Israeli occupations (Said 1994a, 1994b); and, to a lesser extent, evidence that sanctions had worked and that diplomatic solutions were within reach (Iyengar and Simon 1994; Aburish 2001).

Morgan *et al.* (1992) suggest that the lack of attention to historical context and broader questions about the looming conflict in US media coverage led to a cyclical process in which support for the war, lower levels of knowledge, and greater media exposure interacted and reproduced one another in dynamic and systemic ways. This situation

grew worse with the onset of war as media indexing of elite opinion produced more univocal coverage:

Once the war began, the political establishment in the United States closed ranks on the issue. The media coverage reflected this narrowing of opinion, which in turn influenced public opinion. The media were therefore able to justify their partiality with the notion that they were simply reflecting public opinion - allowing public opinion to further solidify on the issue. Raising the broader issues could have encouraged contingent, rather than moral, positions, thereby avoiding the simplistic misconceptions that characterised public opinion during the Gulf War.

(Morgan *et al.* 1992, p. 230-231)

Studies show how the framing of the conflict shrank further away from questions about the necessity or morality of war in the period of fighting (17th January – 28th February 1991), narrowing to a considerable degree around military and strategic questions, expressed in many cases through ‘militarized’ language and jargon (see Kellner 1992). Nevertheless, despite this focus studies have shown how the media generally avoided reporting on allied carpet bombing, use of anti-personnel devices, cluster bombs and depleted uranium; the still unknown but probably enormous number of Iraqi troop casualties (Eldridge 1993, Halliday 1999) and, to a lesser extent ‘distressing’ images of the civilian and (much lower) coalition casualties (Morrison 1992; Hoskins 2004; Andersen 2006).

The end of hostilities sees media management by the military and British and US governments greatly reduced and there is some evidence of more substantively framed coverage. Nevertheless, in the post-war period there are concerns about under-reporting of the following developments: the persistence of autocratic rule in the Gulf region, including Kuwait (Jowett and O’Donnell); the ‘near apocalyptic results’ of damage to the economic, electrical and water infrastructure in the immediate post-war period (UN 1991, p.5); the ruthless crushing of the uprising in the north and south of the country and allegations of Allied indifference to this (Said 1994a; Aburish 2001; Simpson 2004); the strengthening of Saddam Hussein’s grip on power (Gerbner 1992; Paletz 1994); medical concerns on the legacy of cluster bombs and depleted uranium (Bodi 2004; Pilger 1998); the medical side-effects or so-called ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ amongst

many army veterans (Eddington 1997; Yetiv 1997); and the ‘horrifying’ effects of years of sanctions on the Iraqi civilian population (Denis Halliday 1999, p. 1).

5.3.3 British political context: John Major’s Premiership

To some extent the BBC came under far less political pressure in covering the First Gulf War than it did covering the Falklands/Malvinas Conflict, the ‘Troubles’ in Northern Ireland or even, twelve years later, the 2003 invasion of Iraq. John Major, who had become Prime Minister during the crisis in November 1990, was a less confrontational figure than Margaret Thatcher and his leadership signalled a shift in relations between the government and the BBC. Furthermore, Taylor (1998) argues that efforts were made to ensure the British governments relations with media were in tune with those of its closest ally the United States in order to avoid the kind of acrimonious exchanges that had occurred between the government and the media in 1982. A Cabinet Media Committee was established to coordinate the British government's handling of the war coverage which met daily after the War Cabinet had concluded its business. Significantly, one of its first acts was to ask the backbench Conservatives to tone down their criticisms of the BBC. Taylor writes that:

[...] on the very first day of the Gulf War, Tory backbencher Patrick Nicholls used Prime Minister's Question Time to criticise the BBC for referring to 'British' rather than 'Our' troops. But John Major did not rise to the bait as his predecessor might be expected to have done. Instead he commended the BBC for its impartiality and its 'remarkable reporting'.
(Taylor 1998, p.34)

That may have been interpreted by some as meaning the government was generally satisfied with the media coverage because it could see that its restrictions were being observed, resulting as Taylor continues ‘in the desired kind of interpretation and perspective being taken’ (p.34). Certainly, as Halliday (1999) has observed the same British government that banned interviews with Sinn Fein spokesman Gerry Adams saw no need to do the same to Saddam Hussein. Yet there was almost no coverage of fighting, carnage and loss of life, partly as a result of restrictions and censorship of various kinds that require explanation in order to understand the full reporting context of the First Gulf War.

5.3.4 'Media Management'

Writing on media coverage of the Gulf War revolves around familiar questions of 'media management', the breadth of opinion allowed, the extent to which the media simply echoed official sources and, very often, on the associated question of how far military control, restrictions and censorship affected reporting. Journalists who remained in Iraq to report were unevenly supervised by the Iraqi authorities (Simpson 1999, 2004) restricting movement and access and censoring most reports, except when reporting heavy civilian casualties as in the bombing of the Amiriya shelter. Gurevitch (1997) suggests that reporters broadcasting from Iraq during the Gulf War were aware that they were being 'used' by their Iraqi hosts 'to present a view of the hostilities as seen through Iraqi eyes, yet were criticized by television viewers in the west for spreading Iraqi 'propaganda'.'(p.217). With regard to Allied controls, military academics Hudson and Stanier (1997) argue there were no serious restrictions claiming that unlike Panama and Grenada: 'there was no question of limiting media access to the scene; indeed, the war which followed proved to be arguably the greatest media event in history' (p. 209). Taylor (1998) offers some support for this claim, suggesting that 'censorship of *news* was confined largely to matters of operational security' and that 'censorship of *views* was comparatively rare, being confined largely to religious matters'. However, Taylor qualifies this by noting that, 'given that most of the media supported the conflict, there was very little need to censor views' (p.269).

A slightly different viewpoint is provided by Young and Jesser (1997) who explain that controls were regarded by the military as a practical necessary in the early 1990s given the speed at which sensitive information could be passed on using new technologies. Consequently, the military, 'has moved into a closer alliance with government in the development of new and increasingly sophisticated media management systems' designed to control the media at times of 'limited war' (p.292). Shaw and Carr-Hill (1992) support this view, arguing that the control of the media in Britain during the Gulf War was 'overdetermined' by the efficient US-organised coalition control of information, by the lack of domestic political legitimation for criticism of coalition policy, and by the desire of both the media and government to learn from their disagreements during the Falklands/Malvinas War and produce a way of working that would 'preserve a degree of journalistic autonomy within a framework of military-

political control' (p.146). This agreement became known as the 'Green Booklet' or, to give it its full title, the 'Proposed Working Arrangements with the Media in Time of Tension and War'.

Thomson (1992) gives very detailed evidence of the way this agreement, which seemed quite reasonable to journalists at first sight, was interpreted unevenly and, on occasion, with draconian consequences for the freedom to report on the realities of war. He interviews many journalists whose descriptions of battle casualties, or even preparation by the British Army for casualties, were excised from the copy by censors at the Forward Transmission Units (FTUs). Guidelines issued by the BBC, for instance, indicate that broadcasts should normally say 'if reports are censored or monitored or if we withhold information, and explain, wherever possible, the rules under which we are operating' (BBC 2005a, p.106). But, Thomson adds, 'being Britain' everyone, from senior broadcasters to the Ministry of Defence, have a 'mortal terror of using the 'C' word: censorship', preferring the terms 'restrictions' and 'guidance' which, in the author's view, is a 'nonsense' [...] 'that does nobody in Whitehall or the media any credit'(Thomson 1992, p.14).

Taylor (1998) agrees, pointing out the language of BBC guidelines which state that programmes should 'make it known in general terms that some information will be held back for military reasons' while reports out of Baghdad are 'rigorously censored'. This suggests to Taylor, 'that 'they' conducted censorship whereas 'our' military issued reports subject to guidelines of operational security. This in itself was 'excellent propaganda' (p.25).

For Thomson, however, the most egregious acts of censorship were those exercised over virtually the entire ground offensive. Under pool restrictions reporters at the front were obliged to wear full uniforms and were under the command of the unit officers. They lived in the 'dirt and dust of the desert' for weeks in preparation for 'G Day' (the launch of the ground offensive) digging trenches, eating the same food and preparing for possible chemical, biological and nuclear attack. Then on the morning of the 23rd with the ground offensive already underway reporters were told by army censors of a total '48-hour news blackout' that had come from higher up in the American command. Thomson reports that the British went even further than the US, banning any live

interviews with London for a period beyond the forty-eight-hour American blackout, leading to a near collapse in the relationship between the censors John King and Chris Sexton and the reporters at the FTU (see Thomson 1992, p.32-33).

5.3.5 Conclusion

In an echo of Atheide and Grimes's (1995) 'war programming' Young and Jesser (1997) describe a pattern of media management that winds down quickly following the end of hostilities, with the military moving to distance themselves from any further comment on the operation. From this point the media may begin to operate more freely and critically although any claims of mismanagement, unlawful acts, or proven exaggerations will continue to be disclaimed by military sources. Debates on the rights and wrongs of the war, the authors argue will be largely left for 'intellectual circles' and with the public largely caught up 'in a carefully orchestrated sense of nationalistic pride' such debates are unlikely 'to be an issue for the popular media or to grab the attention of the voting public for long' (p.297).

Amongst the various accounts of the First Gulf War surveyed here a number of conclusions have been drawn. For Hudson and Stanier (1997) the Gulf War received more media coverage than any other military event in history up to that time. Most of this coverage, they believe, gave strong support to the coalition in the conduct of an apparently just war, despite anxieties about the length and cost of the conflict. The media's preoccupation with casualties and bloodshed proved, on the Allied side, to be unwarranted, although its 'dismissal of concern about Iraqis' suffering (except for that of civilians) showed a surprising insensitivity' (p. 242).

For Taylor (1998) The Gulf War was one of the most clear-cut and one-sided military victories in the history of warfare with an Iraqi death toll of between 40,000 and 200,000 compared with fewer than 150 soldiers from the entire coalition. The absence of cameras in Kuwait or at the Iraqi front-line meant that neither the main reason for the war, nor the battlefields where it was mainly won and lost, were being seen. It was in the interest of neither side for this unseen war to be shown. Taylor concludes that the success of allied 'propaganda' and the apparently crushing defeat of the Iraqi army, meant that:

Although the Gulf War will undoubtedly be remembered as CNN's war or television's war, it was no such thing. The conflict belonged to the coalition's armed forces, and to the victors went the spoils of the information war.

(Taylor 1998, p.277-278)

Morgan *et al.* (1992) challenge the US media to re-examine the way they cover foreign policy events such as the Gulf War, pointing to the findings of their study which found too much reliance on opinion and unsupported 'official' interpretations and not enough on historical facts. For Mowlana, critical concern about the 'lack of coverage' or 'failure to cover' the war misrecognises long established historical trends and international relations:

[...] the media did not "fail" in reporting on the Persian Gulf War. In fact, they succeeded in their continuing support of the international status quo. The media's reporting of the Persian Gulf War in support of the existing regional system was no different from that of other wars.

(Mowlana 1992, p.31)

For Mowlana, US and European media's performance in the Gulf conformed to the pattern of coverage shown in previous studies. As mentioned earlier, these studies (see Hallin 1989) show how the mainstream media have consistently supported their country's foreign policy decisions - at least in the initial stages when the defeat of a particular foreign policy was not yet on the horizon - without seriously challenging their basic assumptions. Mowlana's conclusions are in line with more critical studies that claim the Gulf War coverage was largely in uncritical alignment with elite opinion and provided evidence of the success of 'information and opinion management' (Schiller 1992, p.22).

Finally, perhaps most damning of all is Morgan *et al.*'s (1992) US-based research which, anticipating Philo and Berry's (2004) British study a decade later, indicated a highly selective understanding of contemporary history and events in the Middle East amongst the general public. Television - the information source most American people depended on - apparently amplified this ignorance, because despite all the coverage, people in the United States knew remarkably little about many critical aspects of the background and context of the war. Disturbingly:

The more people knew, the less likely they were to support the war; the less they knew, the more strongly they supported the war. People who generally watched a lot of television showed dramatically lower levels of knowledge and were substantially more likely to strongly support the use of military force against Iraq.

(Morgan *et al.* 1992, p. 222)

Morgan *et al.*'s conclusion is scathing and lends some weight to the radical critiques presented by Philo and McLaughlin (1993) and Chomsky (2002), although it is posed here as a failure to report, rather than a 'spectacular achievement of propaganda':

We cannot blame the Pentagon and the Bush administration for only presenting those facts that lent support for their case - it was not their job, after all, to provide the public with a balanced view. Culpability for this rests clearly on the shoulders of the media, particularly television, which has a duty to present the public with the relevant facts. Our study suggests that they failed dismally in performing this duty.

(Ibid p. 222)

Halliday sees current affairs as the place for 'breaking out' from the tendency to produce compliant and highly constrained news coverage of the war, but claims that this did not happen. Unfortunately, Halliday made this claim without reference to any actual current affairs coverage:

The failure to 'break out' in current affairs had nothing to do with state controls, or restrictions on the ground in Saudi Arabia, but with the lack of initiative, and timidity, of editors back in the broadcasting countries, and with acceptance, common to critics and conformers alike, of the priority of 'news'. Thus a range of issues pertaining to the historical background to the war, or the range of ethical issues involved, which could, and arguably should, have been discussed at the time, were not [...]

(Halliday 1999, p.137)

This thesis now moves to look at *Panorama*'s reporting on the First Gulf War to ascertain if Halliday's criticism bears analysis and to ascertain if many of the same issues and concerns raised here in studies of Anglo-American news coverage also apply to the BBC's flagship current affairs programme.

5.4 *Panorama's* coverage of Gulf 1

5.4.1 Introduction

On the 2nd of August 1990 140,000 Iraqi troops and 1,800 tanks invaded and overran the small Gulf kingdom of Kuwait, an action swiftly condemned by the international community (Hagan and Bickerton 2007). Between August and November a US led UN coalition built up its forces in the area to around 700,000, mainly in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, and on 29th of November UN Security Council Resolution 678 was passed which authorized the coalition 'to use all necessary means' if Iraq had not withdrawn from Kuwait by 15 January 1991 (Ibid, p.167). Operation Desert Storm commenced on 16th January and was halted on the 28th of February 1991 with President Bush's declaration of a ceasefire and the liberation of Kuwait. This would mark the end of major hostilities between Iraq and the coalition forces, but not of violence in the region and the aftermath of the war would continue to be a focus of sustained interest for British news and current affairs programme makers for several months.

Panorama's coverage of the conflict covers seventeen episodes starting on the 3rd September 1990 (after *Panorama's* traditional summer break) and concluding almost exactly one year later on the 2nd September 1991 (see Appendix 1.1). Later *Panorama* episodes would deal with Iraq, especially the ongoing issue of weapons inspections, but these seventeen episodes are the focus of this study as they deal directly with the build up to and execution of the military campaign as well as the direct aftermath. These programmes form a corpus of material with which to compare *Panorama's* coverage of the 2003 war (see chapter 6.2). As previously discussed (chapter 5.3), Britain's contribution to the UN action received cross party support in the House of Commons with only 34 MPs voting against the use of military force, compared to 563 votes in support (Hansard 1991). By contrast, in the United States the Senate voted narrowly in favour of authorizing force by 52 votes to 47 and by 250 to 183 in the House of Representatives (Hagan and Bickerton 2007, p. 167).

As shown in the previous chapter, much of the available literature suggests that British and US television news and current affairs coverage of the war was largely uncritical

and over-reliant on ‘official’ sources and narratives. Concerns about a culture of political ‘caution’ and micro-management at the BBC under Director General John Birt combined with longer running debates about the Corporation’s relationship with the government and, more broadly, with dominant political and economic elites, form the backdrop to the discussion of *Panorama*’s reporting of the conflict in this chapter.

Is there evidence that *Panorama* privileged ‘elite’ opinion and marginalised dissenting viewpoints? To what extent was the apparent ‘parliamentary consensus’ supporting military action echoed in the seventeen programmes dealing with the war? Did splits amongst the US political elite have any bearing on the programme’s presentation of opinions? Was there an over-reliance on official or ‘institutionally endowed’ sources, such as military spokespersons, government officials and other members of the political establishment? Was *Panorama*’s framing of the conflict in line with the parameters of parliamentary debate and criticism circulating in official circles?

5.4.2 Hypotheses for all phases of conflict

Answering these questions requires the formulation of four hypotheses (see discussion in Chapter 1) which can be examined in relation to *Panorama* episodes that deal with the conflict. These are articulated as follows:

H1. Frames of debate in *Panorama*’s coverage of the war are indexed to the degree and level of ‘parliamentary consensus’.

Following from this a second hypothesis suggests itself:

H2. There is less substantively framed coverage¹ in *Panorama*’s coverage of the First Gulf War of 1991 when parliamentary consensus was greater [563 M.P.s in support of military action, 34 against] compared to the 2003 Gulf War where consensus was considered low [396 to 217 without UN mandate] (cf. chapters 5.2; 5.3; 6.1).

¹ Substantively (as opposed to narrowly) framed coverage examines a range of policy options: ‘specifically whether war or sanctions should be preferred and the costs and justifiability of the policy’ (Entman and Page, cited Groshek 2008, p.319)

A third deals with the issue of (over)reliance on official sources:

H3. Official UK/US sources ('primary definers') predominate in all *Panorama* coverage (cf. chapter 6.1).

A logical corollary of the first three hypotheses is a fourth hypothesis:

H4. Dissenting opinion on the morality, motives and historical context for the war² (rather than timing, strategy or conditions) have a marginal presence in *Panorama*. Arguments against the war are usually advanced only when they emerge within powerful institutions, such as Parliament, the US Congress or the military establishment and echo divergent views discussed within the 'Sphere of Legitimate Controversy' (cf. chapter 5.3).

Following Altheide and Grimes (2005), *Panorama*'s coverage is divided into three major periods in order to test hypotheses that take account of their 'War Programming' model, whilst retaining attention to the interrelated issues of framing, sourcing and indexing. This predictive model, as explained (see chapter 6.1), describes a pattern of war reporting that includes the demonising of certain individual leaders, such as Slobodan Milosevic or Saddam Hussein, in the pre-war phase; a focus on the battlefield during the war; and a post-war shift to more critical coverage on the conduct of, and questions regarding the necessity for, the war. It is hoped that this study will go some way to further developing and illustrating the 'War Programming' model, a model which the pilot study appeared to support (McQueen 2008).

5.4.3 Method

Content analysis of the seventeen episodes of *Panorama* dealing with the war covering the period from September 1990 to September 1991 was conducted to test the hypotheses. Two quantitative measures of the programmes were undertaken and were then repeated, with some variations, in relation to *Panorama*'s coverage of the Second

² For example, previous western support for Saddam Hussein's regime.

Gulf War (cf. chapter 6.2). The first was a simple count and basic identification of any persons interviewed for the programmes (see Appendix 2.1, 2.5). Interviews were defined as sequences in which a person was interviewed for any length of time and which was included within the transmitted *Panorama* episodes. Brief, so called ‘vox pops’, questions from the public, library and news footage and reporter or interviewer comment (unless answering questions as ‘experts’) were excluded. Categories for identifying the interviewees have been kept as simple as possible whilst indicating the spectrum of sources and source institutions used. The category ‘British armed forces’, for example, was considered too broad and was subdivided into senior (Captain and above), regular (sergeant and below), serving or retired and ‘family of’ (for parents, wives etc.) to gain a richer insight into the different types of ‘military’ interviewees found in *Panorama*’s coverage of both Gulf Wars. Only interviews conducted by the *Panorama* team (and marked as such within the Infax records) were included. These were counted only once per person, per episode. Hence, five interview clips of one interviewee in a programme amounting to four minutes count the same as once brief interview segment with another person lasting only twenty seconds. This count was undertaken primarily to indicate the *range* and *type* of voices accessed by the programme makers and to judge if they might be regarded as predominantly official or ‘establishment’ sources. It should be stressed that the length of the interviews was not included in this count and so while, for instance, in the category Arabic ‘public’ there are sixteen ‘interviews’ in total, many of these exchanges were very brief compared to the two, much longer, interviews with former British civil servants or five interviews with former US intelligence officers (see Appendix 2.1). The Infax records appear to distinguish between pre-recorded speeches, overheard exchanges, fragmentary comments, questions and ‘interviews’ [marked ‘INTV’] and this research adopted the Infax database definition of ‘interview’ when given.

The second quantitative measure was more extensive and complex, looking at the full range of spoken material within each episode which was coded according to a set of criteria designed to establish degrees of support, criticism of, or opposition to, the war (see Appendix 2.2). These codes (1-7) were designed to establish if arguments were within the ‘sphere of consensus’, ‘sphere of legitimate controversy’ or ‘sphere of dissent’ (see chapter 5.3; Hallin 1989, 1994b). The unit of measurement was the single word within a transcribed script in order to allow different coding where shifts of emphasis and tone occur and for ease of measurement (sentences were coded using the

coloured highlight function in Microsoft Word, separated according to code (1-7) and then counted using the word count function). The unit of analysis was the sentence, so any one sentence could only be coded a single value according to the coding mechanism. These values were then imported into a database to calculate percentage values per programme for each of seven categories of coded material, before total values were calculated for each category for the three phases of the war (see Appendix 2.3). It should be noted that the same speaker might present a mixture of views or evidence coded as (1) 'support' (for the war), (2) 'partial support' (3) 'neutral', (4) 'partial opposition', (5) 'opposition' (6) 'official Iraqi view' in a single programme depending on the range of positions presented. Speech by reporters and presenters was coded as (7) and set aside from the measure of positions presented due to the problematic nature of coding all their statements (see Chapter 6.2 for further discussion and reporter/presenter coding exercise in relation to pre-war coverage of 2003 conflict). The coding exercise presented a number of significant challenges, not least to do with the fundamental and, arguably, intractable problem of 'objectively' assessing complex and sometimes uncategorizable meaning potentials within any utterance (cf. discussion on 'objectivity' in chapter 4.3). As Fairclough remarks, 'the relationship of words to meanings is many-to-one rather than one-to-one' and the 'potential for ambivalence' in any speech act is enormous (2006, p.185, 188). I have foregrounded several of these issues in the discussion and conclusion (5.4, 6.2, 7.1).

Concurrent with the quantitative analysis and partly to highlight the issues raised, close textual analysis was employed to focus, in a more nuanced and sensitive manner, on the different arguments and evidence presented within the complex audio-visual narrative. Particular attention was paid to the various frames of understanding and discourse strategies employed by *Panorama* reporters and presenters to tease out possible 'readings' (cf. Hall *et al.* 1981) and to assess the validity of criticisms made within the scholarly material in relation to the BBC's news and current affairs output at times of war.

Findings

5.4.4 Findings: Pre-War Phase (-16/01/91)

The range of interviewees found in the seventeen programmes ranged from senior British and American politicians to members of the public, including eyewitnesses to events in Kuwait and the Kurdish speaking areas of Iraq and Turkey. It is interesting to note that neither the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher (at the start of the crisis), John Major (for the war and its conclusion), or the leader of the Opposition, Neil Kinnock were interviewed (in contrast to *Panorama*'s coverage of the Falklands, Northern Ireland and Suez conflicts). However, seven Conservative and five Labour MPs including Ministers and Shadow Ministers were interviewed, two of whom (Ted Heath and Denis Healey) were resolutely opposed to the use of military force before sanctions had been given an opportunity to work (see discussion below). In fact, some of the more critical commentary on the west's previous relations with the Iraqi regime or on the 'rush to war' and the long-term potential outcome of military confrontation comes from some British and American politicians.

The first *Panorama* programme to deal with the Gulf crisis following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 is 'Saddam's Secret Arm's Ring' [tx: 03/09/90] which is a critical account of how the Iraqi regime was sold equipment by western firms, often with western government backing, to develop advanced weapons technology, including nuclear and chemical capability. The programme looks at several British-based companies with links to Iraq who were able to provide or purchase western equipment and expertise that was used to help boost Iraq's WMD (weapons of mass destruction) programme. Evidence presented in the programme shows that the British government either encouraged or turned a blind eye to much of the trade. Furthermore, it is clear that western governments failed to respond significantly to Iraq's repeated use of chemical weapons both in the Iran-Iraq War, or against its own people. Over library footage showing a grief-stricken man walking amongst the bloated corpses of men, women and young children lying in the Kurdish town of Halabja, Corbin's voiceover notes the 'muted' response in Washington and Europe at the time:

CORBIN: Even when Saddam used chemical weapons on his own people, Washington did not reverse its policy on Iraq. In the town of Halabja an estimated 5,000 Kurdish men, women and children were gassed in 1988. But the response in Washington and in Europe was muted and a few congressmen in America who advocated sanctions found their proposals blocked by the administration.

US Congress Foreign Relations Committee member Howard Berman, filmed conventionally in medium close up (MCU) against a shelf of books and a US flag, then provides highly critical testimony to support this view:

HOWARD BERMAN: We didn't react to the use of chemical gasses on his own people. We didn't react to the smuggling of nuclear weapons technology out of the United States and Great Britain. We did not react to the fact that he gave sanctuary to known terrorists. I think he thought we would, er .. he was always going to have a favourite spot in our eye and that he could do anything.

This contribution is coded 5 (oppositional) because the tone and tenor of the comment is in line with arguments made by anti-war protestors who argued that Saddam was a 'favourite' of the west until his occupation of Kuwait and that the British and US governments effectively gave him a green light to develop and even employ outlawed weapons against his own citizens. Hansard (1988, 1989) records only two Parliamentary questions on the Halabja attack between 1988-89 (one by Labour's Jeremy Corbyn another by the Liberal Democrat Sir Russell Johnston) which includes criticism of the then Conservative government's (of Margaret Thatcher) decision to grant export credits to Iraq two weeks after the attack. However, the call to freeze export credits (by Jeremy Corbyn) was not given front bench Opposition support at that time, suggesting a degree of cross party consensus for the 'muted' response to which Corbin alludes.

Further support for the charge that Saddam's regime was able to buy the technology it needed without great difficulty is given by Dr. Seth Carus of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. Dr. Carus, filmed against a map of the Middle East, alleges that most western governments turned a blind eye, or even encouraged arms supplies to Iraq:

DR SETH CARUS: The real question is not who supplied them but rather who did not supply them, because basically they were going over the entire

world and buying weapons and military industrial capabilities from whoever would sell it to them – if they had something that the Iraqis wanted.

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, according to the database Spinprofiles, was established in 1985 ‘to expand the Israel Lobby’s influence over policy’ and is described as a ‘highly effective think tank devoted to maintaining and strengthening the US-Israel alliance through advocacy in the media and lobbying the executive branch’ (Spinprofiles 2009a, p.1). Israeli perspectives are an important element in *Panorama*’s coverage of the war. In addition to the use of Israeli video clips dramatising the threat posed to the State of Israel by Iraqi missile technology, an interview with the Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens reinforces the view that western governments had ignored repeated warnings about Iraq’s various weapons programmes and hostile intentions in the region. In total (and excluding US-based think tanks) eleven Israeli spokespersons are interviewed over the seventeen episodes dealing with the war compared, for example, to forty-four British spokespersons.

Further evidence potentially embarrassing to the British government is revealed in forensic detail in the forty-one minute programme. Jane Corbin reminds viewers that *Panorama* had provided evidence for Iraq’s secret weapons programmes four years earlier [‘The Secrets of Samarra’ tx: 02.02.87], replaying images of aerial photographs taken of a secret weapons production complex in Samarra. Using internal company documents and the testimony of former employees such as Dr Chris Cowley whose testimony is central to this and to the controversial ‘Saddam’s Supergun’ [tx: 18.02.91] episode, the programme makes several damaging claims about the Department of Trade and Industry’s oversight of exports to Iraq. Dr Cowley, who is filmed jogging in a park and then interviewed in his home in jacket and tie, provides some of the most sharpest criticism:

DR CHRIS COWLEY: This was a very, very large cake that had to be cut up. We were talking about not millions or hundreds of millions, we were talking about billions of pounds. And every European Government wanted their share of that cake and Britain made certain they got their share.

Gordon Brown, then Labour’s Trade and Industry spokesman, lends some support to these accusations and demands that the Iraqi front company TDG, charged with breaching the arms embargo, be immediately closed down. Three clips of the interview which takes place in what appears to be a simple office with a single row of books

behind him are interspersed with the other evidence, mainly presented by British technicians and experts previously employed by Matrix Churchill and other companies in Iraq. Most of the interviews for *Panorama* around the First Gulf War employ a simple, fairly high-key lighting set up which lacks the crafted and dramatic quality that characterises many of the interviews for the Second Gulf War (see Chapter 6.2). Gordon Brown says a total of 318 words (approximately 12% of total interview time) and is given the last word before Jane Corbin's conclusion:

BROWN: It would be tragic if weapons that had been procured by Iraq from Britain in the 1980s and indeed in 1990, are now being targeted on British soldiers and the British forces near Iraq and around Iraq and the lessons that we have got to learn are that the tightening of an arms embargo has got to be effective .. that we must look at the methods that have been used by powers to acquire arms and we must certainly not allow companies like TDG to be based in Britain procuring arms throughout the world from a base in London and even now I think the Government ought to act immediately to ban the company from operating in Britain.

CORBIN: Last week the defence secretary inspected British forces in the Gulf and readied them for possible conflict. But, if the British and other Governments had taken a tougher stance on Saddam Hussein and his arms build up, those Western forces might not now be preparing for war.

While the evidence presented is, in many respects, highly critical of both the British and US governments' record in relation to Iraq, most of it has been coded 4 (partly oppositional). This is because the evidence largely points to lax oversight of an existing arms embargo rather than active or cynical attempts to ignore sanctions. It is also revealed in the programme that TDG, which had previously bought the machine tools manufacturer Matrix Churchill, was being monitored by intelligence agencies worldwide and was subject to a US legal investigation. Hence, the company could be seen as the subject of 'legitimate controversy' and a matter of concern for elements of the British (and US) State:

CORBIN: [...] But if the Government hasn't stopped Matrix Churchill's trade with Iraq, what has been the attitude to the parent company – TDG? Intelligence agencies world-wide have been monitoring TDG's activities for more than a year now. The Foreign Office signalled their interest when last October they blocked a TDG attempt to buy the Lear Fan factory in Belfast. That would have given Iraq access to carbon composite technology for missile work. But TDG is still operating unhindered out of London. However, in America TDG's activities are part of a major legal investigation.

Certainly the controversy over the company and export licence supervision appears to be the focus of Gordon Brown's complaints, rather than the wider issue of western arms supplies to dictators around the world or the sudden change in heart by the British government to an erstwhile ally. Nevertheless, *Panorama*'s first programme in response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is in many respects a hard-hitting investigative programme devoted to predominantly critical viewpoints with 61% of interview material drawing attention to Western governments' tacit support for the export of materials that could be used to develop WMD. Interviews that gave partial or implicit support for the military action by providing evidence of the regime's duplicity and aggressive intentions in the region accounted for 32% of the total transcripts. Here, as in all *Panorama*'s coverage, it was often difficult to assign codes to speeches that could be critical of the west's record while acknowledging Saddam Hussein's atrocious record of war crimes and aggression. Such problematic issues with the coding of the transcripts are discussed in detail later in this thesis. Many of the issues raised in the programme would be revisited in a second programme dealing with the export of military technology 'Saddam's Supergun' [tx: 18.02.91] an episode that would result in controversy due to scheduling delays and managerial interference by Director General John Birt. 'Saddam's Supergun' is dealt with later in this chapter (see below).

The second *Panorama* programme dealing with the impending war 'Saddam's Fifth Column' looks at Palestinian support for Saddam and rising tensions within the State of Israel and the occupied territories. Reporter Robin Denselow interviews a wide range of Israelis and Palestinians including an IDF Brigadier, right-wing settlers, Likud and Labour leaders Benjamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon (then Housing Minister) and Shimon Peres, the liberal Mayor of Jerusalem Teddy Kollek, Palestinian farmers and journalists, PLO executive committee member Mohammed Milhem and various young Palestinian activists and militants, including some recently drawn to Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Sharply divergent views of the root of the problems facing both Jews and Palestinians are voiced and Denselow skilfully negotiates and weaves together these different perspectives to produce a complex picture of the precarious state of relations in the region and an understanding of the roots of the continuing Intifada. It becomes clear that peaceful coexistence has been put in grave peril by a combination of factors including 'the most Right-wing government of Israel's forty-two year history' pushing through continued land confiscation and settlement building and failing to commence

negotiations with the PLO, the arrival of thousands of new Jewish immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and popular Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein.

Despite the somewhat lurid title 'Saddam's Fifth Column', Palestinian frustration and support for Saddam Hussein is contextualised and made coherent, as is a range of Israeli views, including right-wing extremists who turn to mob violence in response to the murder of two young Jews. The balance of views can be seen in the following extract which is typical of the way the programme sets the experiences of one community or political faction against another. Over shots of Palestinian men queuing to join the Iraqi army, Denselow's voiceover attempts to make rational sense of their motives for enlisting and their apparently self-destructive enthusiasm for the Iraqi leader:

DENSELOW: Pan-Arab enthusiasm for Iraq already exists in Jordan where Palestinians queue to join Saddam's army. For them, the Gulf crisis and Palestine are linked but they argue that the West's action over UN resolutions on the Gulf should be compared with the lack of action on UN resolutions on the Occupied Territories.

S. NUSSEIEH: Now this is what the Palestinians see when they look at the Gulf. They do not see Saddam invading Kuwait they see the Americans and the Western governments behind them applying a double standard, being hypocritical. Basically, apparently, valuing oil and the interests of their own, you know, their own economies more highly than Palestinian human blood. I mean, this is how we look at it and how the Palestinians look at it.

NETANYAHU: What possible relations does the Palestinian problem have to the plunder and conquest of Kuwait by Iraq? None. And Saddam Hussein would like to link the two precisely in order to fray the alliance and to divert the attention and the issue. I don't think serious countries should fall into that trap.

Palestinian activist Sari Nusseieh's contribution, filmed in what appears to be his garden, is coded 5 (oppositional) because he articulates a position common amongst anti-war protestors that the west was applying double standards in its hasty response to Kuwait's invasion compared to Israel's two-decades-old illegal occupation of land including Gaza and the West Bank. Benjamin Netanyahu's reply, filmed in front of a large map of the Middle East unmarked apart from Hebrew script over the state of Israel, is coded as (1) fully supportive of the war. Netanyahu rejects the link between the occupation of Kuwait and the occupation of East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West

Bank and claims the PLO's support for Saddam Hussein is not born out of 'frustration', as the *Panorama* programme appears to suggest, but from shared aims – namely 'the destruction of Israel'.

Coding of 'Saddam's Fifth Column' shows slightly more airtime given to voices in favour of Saddam Hussein (coded 6) 24% (of contributors) than to those giving very strong support for a war against Iraq (coded 1) 18.2% and yet both viewpoints are somewhat critically framed as 'extremist' positions that have grown in strength since the occupation of Kuwait. In fact, the programme's 'sympathies' are hard to pin down and the larger part of the transcript has been coded (3) as neutral because it deals exclusively with Israeli-Palestinian relations rather than the issue of the coming war. Denselow narration, comprising 56% of all spoken words, attempts to give a broad, 'even-handed' view of events that is historically grounded. He appears attentive and respectful of all views and interviews ordinary Jews and Palestinians in a variety of locations as well as senior figures on both sides. At forty minutes, the programme is a well-balanced introduction to the realities and complexities of Middle Eastern politics. It shows a degree of compassion both for the plight of the Palestinians and for the newly arrived Soviet Jews, who are filmed in one scene arriving at Jerusalem airport with a mournful piano solo which we later see is being played by a former Russian concert pianist in her new home. This is a rare, but effective use of music in what is otherwise a very soberly-constructed film. There is none of the faux hand-held camera work, moody lighting, fast cuts and intrusive use of music that characterises the worst of more recent current affairs practice (cf. chapter 6.2). It could be countered that this earlier *Panorama* style of filmmaking is somewhat 'dry' and 'dull', a 'turnoff' for many viewers. In its defence, I would argue that 'Saddam's Fifth Column' shows evidence of a serious commitment to understand a complex situation and give space to a genuinely wide range of views. In this sense Denselow's film could be regarded as exemplary of Birt's much publicised 'mission to explain' (cf. chapter 4.3) although, on closer inspection, it also fits into a longer *Panorama* tradition of filmed reports from foreign nations and may well have been criticised for being lacking in a clear 'analytical line' (see Dyke's criticism of how *Panorama* 'squirted film at everybody' in Chapter 4.2).

The film ends following further interviews with a range of figures including Benjamin Netanyahu who states: 'So, from our point of view, Palestinians yes, the PLO no; negotiations yes, suicide no' against PLO executive committee member Mohammed

Milhem who calls for the Palestinian issue to be confronted seriously: ‘solve the Palestine problem and then you extinguish all the fires all over the Middle East’. Denselow’s conclusion, delivered over shots of cheering Palestinians in the street, showing their support for Saddam Hussein, seems prescient when replayed two decades later:

DENSELOW: Support for Saddam is the latest, most desperate attempt to break the deadlock but if there are no moves towards a settlement in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, the festering problem of the Palestinians will endanger the Middle East long after Saddam is gone.

The third *Panorama* episode ‘In Our Defences’ [tx: 17.09.90] is structured in a way that was quite common in current affairs programmes in the 1970s and 80s (notably in *Weekend World* and *Panorama*), but has mostly fallen out of favour today: a filmed report followed by studio discussion or interview. The thirty minute report, by Fred Emery, is on the state of British armed forces in light of their expected role in the Gulf. It focuses on several detailed questions including how suitable the forces are that are being sent to the Gulf and whether Britain could be dragged into a conflict through military rather than political considerations. These themes are then taken up in a ten minute studio interview of Defence Secretary Tom King conducted by David Dimbleby.

There is a fairly technical discussion of the battle-readiness of the British Challenger and Chieftan tanks and whether sending an entire brigade, necessary in the army’s view for logistical reasons, might be viewed as a hostile escalation by other nations. The interviewees are drawn from the ranks of the Conservative Government and Labour Opposition as well as former and serving armed services personnel. There is also an interview with Colonel Michael Dewar, a spokesman for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, a think tank which describes itself as ‘the world’s leading authority on political-military conflict’ and which is described as having ‘strong establishment links, with former US and British government officials amongst its members’ (Spinprofiles 2009b, p.1). Only 6.8% of the interview material for ‘In Our Defences’ takes a critical line (coded 4), and this comes entirely from three clips of an interview with MP Denis Healey who sees the deployment of a brigade as making premature military action more likely. He accuses Mrs Thatcher of attempting to ‘curry favour’ with the American

President, a more polite variation of the ‘Bush’s poodle’ label given to Tony Blair by various sceptics in the Second Gulf War:

DENIS HEALEY, MP: There’s no doubt the reason is that she wants to curry favour with President Bush. We were told by Tom King some weeks ago that the air-naval thing was what we needed and not troops on the ground in Saudi Arabia. It is a big change because everything we’ve sent so far has been strictly relevant to enforcing the blockade. This, of course, as Mr Waldegrave made clear a few days ago, is intended to add to our strength if we attack Iraq.

There is other criticism in the programme, but it is confined to questions of strategy, rather than fundamental questions of policy. Coding finds that interviewees, other than Healey, were only ‘critical’ of equipment or tactics, rather than of the need to go to war at all, with 43.6% giving full support and 49.7 giving qualified support. However, the comment by the think tank expert shows that this ‘procedural’ criticism could be harsh and potentially embarrassing to the government:

COLONEL MICHAEL DEWAR: First of all at least fifty per cent of our tank fleet is, if I may use jargon, so clapped out that really it cannot – a repair job just cannot be done on it.

Similar criticism of battle readiness and long-term military strategy is found in the programme and is implicit in many of the questions posed by Dimbleby in the studio discussion:

DIMBLEBY: Can we come back briefly to the Challenger tank – the equipment that’s being sent with this brigade. We heard complaints about the former tank – the Chieftain – that had only started fifteen percent of the time. There had been reports that the Challenger a couple of years ago was only fifty-five percent effective. At its current rate of effective use, how does it compare with the German tank, for instance – that they were indicating they would rather have than the Challenger?

Dimbleby’s questions, echoing some of the concerns of the armed forces and military experts, do not stray beyond the ‘sphere of legitimate controversy’ but do occasionally put Tom King on the spot and require convincing answers in a live transmission. While ‘In Our Defences’ raises some rather arcane and specialised points it could be argued that these were also important questions. Nevertheless, the narrow range of discussion

and selection of interviewees meant that no firmly anti-war perspectives could be presented. This situation was repeated in other *Panorama* episodes that focused on military questions such as ‘The Gathering Storm’ [tx: 29.01.91] transmitted during the air campaign, but before the launch of the land campaign and also presented by Fred Emery. The post-war autopsy of military and strategic success ‘The Allies in the Eye of the Storm’ [tx: 02.09.91] presented by Steve Bradshaw was also confined to splits amongst the military and political establishment on strategic questions (see discussion below).

‘Behind the Desert Shield’ [tx: 07.01.91], presented by David Lomax, is closer to the foreign, ‘reporter-on-the-ground’ style investigation found in ‘Saddam’s Fifth Column’ and shares many of its strengths, including a willingness to seek out a range of views and ask awkward questions of senior foreign leaders. Lomax quizzes a member of the Saudi Royal family with pertinent and challenging directness, casting doubt on the official narrative of ‘a war to defend democracy’:

LOMAX: Your Royal Highness, why should the West defend a country which has no democracy?

PRINCE KHALID: Why should every country have a democracy?

LOMAX: But here there is a country without any opposition, with no elections, with no free press. Why should the West be interested in helping to defend that country?

PRINCE KHALID: We have our own system and that is the Islamic system.

‘Behind the Desert Shield’ touches on Saudi Arabia’s human rights record, its use of public executions, and gender apartheid amongst other issues and David Lomax is quick to dismiss complacent answers when he comes across them:

PRINCE KHALID: We don’t have political prisoners in Saudi Arabia.

LOMAX: Amnesty International has alleged that there are sixty – I think it’s more than sixty names.

As well as including remarkable footage of a (car) protest by Saudi women at their lack of freedom even to drive, the report points to the potential long-term ‘blow back’ of

western military involvement in the region. In a passage that seems grimly far-sighted today, Lomax points to stirrings of anti-western fundamentalism against the presence of western troops:

LOMAX: But some Saudis believe that the Western military presence may have another effect – that of encouraging those who want to see fundamental social change. Recently there have been indications that political debate in Saudi Arabia has started to move outside its traditional boundaries. There's no doubt that since the arrival of foreign troops there's a new atmosphere. We understand that groups of younger Princes are organising what amount to regular political meetings. They've held private debates to talk about possible changes in the way the country's run. Those who've attended these meetings are naturally reluctant to talk about them in public, but they say that before the Gulf crisis such a challenge to the authorities would have been unthinkable.

DR AL JABBAR: Well because it could .. you see the – I will tell you there is a difference. There are the official religious men, those who are appointed by the government and there are those fanatics – and my fear is that the fanatics and the zealots – and the number have increased over the years – and my fear is the backlash of those fanatics.

Here, in embryonic form, is a description of the small group of wealthy Saudi militants (that we now know included Osama Bin Laden) whose opposition to western presence in their country would ultimately lead to the events of 9-11, the subsequent 'War on Terror' and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The coding strategy employed indicates a small majority of voices in support of war - 14% (coded 1 and 2) to 8% partly opposed (coded 4) in this programme. Yet the 77% 'neutral' interviewees (coded 6) or 60% (of all speech) reporter's narration and to-camera talk (coded 7) fails to indicate the overall tone of programme, which quietly undermines various official narratives, particularly claims about the war being about democracy, rather than oil. It is, therefore, significant that David Lomax reveals how the programme was carefully scrutinised by senior management in the editing process in London, including by what he believes was the Saudi Minister of Information, and may have narrowly avoided further cuts at the Saudi government's request (personal communication, November 14, 2007).

'Is War Inevitable?' [tx: 14.01.91] was the last *Panorama* to be transmitted before the start of hostilities which began on the 16th of January. In an extended hour-long episode a report by Tom Mangold in Washington and another by John Ware in Salisbury are linked by David Dimbleby, who is televised on a rooftop in Washington with the

Whitehouse behind him in the gloom of a cold, mid-winter afternoon. Dimbleby's brief introduction before the title sequence poses three questions that the programme hopes to answer and the sense of 'time running out' in the first sentence gives these questions an urgency that is aimed at hooking an audience's interest:

DAVID DIMBLEBY: As the deadline approaches for Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait, *Panorama* reports on the prospect of war: is President Bush committed to use force? Have the arguments all been thought through? Is war inevitable?

Structured in a similar way to 'In Our Defences', 'Is War Inevitable?' consists of two twenty-minute filmed reports, followed by a twenty-minute studio interview conducted by Dimbleby with US Defence Secretary Richard Cheney. After a brief introduction Tom Mangold's report begins with atmospheric establishing shots of Washington and the Whitehouse at night and cuts to a close up of several windows and glimpses of activity in the brightly-lit, high-ceiling rooms. The various images are flattened by the use of a telephoto lenses and composed and lit in such a way to produce a sequence that would not be out of place in a Hollywood thriller. Mangold's voiceover is typically dramatic:

TOM MANGOLD: The lights are burning through the night in George Bush's White House as the clock counts down to the end of the United Nation's deadline. Tomorrow could be 'High Noon' for the man who is leading the international effort. The President has almost single-handedly managed the alliance end of the Gulf crisis, seizing what he believes is his moment to leave his mark in history. As the crisis reaches its climax, Bush contemplates the biggest engagement of American troops since the Second World War. By midnight tomorrow, January 15th, all else failing, and all else is failing, George Bush will have to make the most momentous decision of his life: whether or not to unleash the huge forces sent to the Persian Gulf. The decision will be taken alone because he alone chose full responsibility.

The sequence could be regarded as an example of what Corner has termed the 'illustrative mode' in which images are filmed to match a script: 'The lights are burning through the night in George Bush's White House [...]'. Of course, Mangold's script may also have been written around the 'pro-filmic' footage but this is unlikely given John Birt's strenuous efforts to prioritise 'script before film' and the careful monitoring of this policy documented in Lindley's (2003) history of *Panorama* and discussed in the

interviews with Tom Mangold and John Ware. Mangold's script emphasises the urgency of the task facing the Whitehouse, but also personalises the conflict by comparing George Bush's dilemma to that of Will Kane (Gary Cooper) in 'High Noon' (1952). The choice of metaphor is highly resonant given that Fred Zinnemann's film has been interpreted as 'a pragmatic endorsement of the United States return to armed conflict in Korea' (Buscombe 1991, p.269). 'High Noon' pits a lone sheriff against his old enemy Frank Miller and his gang. Comparing Bush to the lonely hero Kane, who has been abandoned by his Quaker (pacifist) bride and cowardly or indifferent townsfolk seems an odd choice, in some respects, given the overwhelming size of US (and Allied) forces ranged against Iraq. Nevertheless, Bush's decision to oppose Saddam Hussein's invasion with force is cast as a bold and courageous one, made by the President alone:

PETER TEELEY: He is the command centre, there's no question about that at all. This is the situation: George Bush did not call his advisers together and say 'Gentlemen, what should we do?', he called his people together and said 'Gentlemen, this is what we are going to do.'

Mangold now poses the 'dilemma' faced by the President and the world:

MANGOLD: But has the man in charge of the control centre already made up his mind? Is the military strategy, selected by the President from the outset, one that has prematurely closed off his diplomatic options? And if that is the case, has President Bush no alternative but to go to war with all its horrific and unpredictable consequences?

The report then goes on to give expression to some of the doubts widely expressed within the American political establishment, particularly through interviews with three figures: Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton; former Director of the Defence Intelligence Agency Lt. General Leonard Perroots; and Professor Jerrold Post, a psychologist and 'US government advisor'. Perroots goes beyond the question of timing, which is a central concern for the speakers to the likely consequences of the war, here coded as (4) 'partial opposition':

PERROOTS: If we do go to war and we kill a lot of Arabs and Iraqis in a dirty war, which is going to happen, there are those that say that the consequences, both cultural and political consequences of that are that we will be stigmatised for years. One needs to weigh these consequences and make some judgments as to what we can do to damage-limit and I think there are some things we can do.

MANGOLD: But have they been discussed? Are they being discussed now?

PERROOTS: I don't hear enough debate either in the Pentagon or in the Congress.

MANGOLD: There is a sense of the calm before the storm in Washington, a sense of inevitability as the last diplomatic moves end in stalemate and the lights burn on in the offices of those who, having wished for peace, are now girding for war.

Perroots is calling for restraint rather than a complete halt on the advance to war, but his concerns are long-term and put the conflict in a broader context. Only former Bush Press Secretary Peter Teeley is on hand to provide reassurance that the President is making the right decision and reaffirms the emerging official view that sanctions will not shift Iraq from Kuwait. Mangold's conclusion offers a pessimistic, if realistic assessment of the chances for peace. There is: 'a sense of inevitability' and US leaders are 'girding for war'. In interview, Mangold notes that he had a senior BBC 'minder' with him in Washington during his reporting on the Gulf War to make sure he 'behaved' himself. This lends support to Lindley's complaint that managerial interference was a persistent and damaging feature of John Birt's period in office at the BBC:

John Birt had just come in and he sent a very high-powered executive out with me to Washington to make sure that I behaved myself. Because that was at the time when John Birt had absolutely no understanding of how *Panorama* reporters worked and he assumed that all our scripts would be written by the Editor in London and we'd simply go out and mouth their scripts and do their pieces to camera, and ask the questions that they wrote for us in London. That was a bizarre period.

(personal communication, September 4, 2009)

Following the Mangold report, John Ware reports from the UK where he looks at some areas of British public and parliamentary opinion which show that not everyone is in favour of war. He follows the parents of a young man who had been sent to the Gulf two weeks before, as they light candles at a special church service and replay an 8mm film they have of him at home. Ware then joins them briefly on an anti-war demonstration in London, the first we have seen of the mass protests:

WARE: On Saturday, peace rallies were held in four major cities. About fifty thousand gathered in London, larger than some marches in the Sixties against the Americans in Vietnam and among them were the Easthams from Salisbury, whose son was sent to the Gulf two weeks ago. The marchers urged that sanctions should be given a chance.

What would your son think?

SUE EASTHAM: If he could see us now? Well, he's known that we have always been of a mind for peaceful negotiations out of any ghastly situation so it would be no surprise for him.

As in *Panorama's* coverage of the 2003 march in London against the Iraq it is the 'unlikely' (son-in-army), middle-class supporters of the demonstration that are selected for interview. The thirty-three words spoken here represent the entire coverage of anti-war protestor opinion in *Panorama's* coverage of Gulf 1, including those politicians such as Tony Benn who spoke at the demonstrations. Other than the family of soldiers, all other interviewees in the hour-long programme are drawn from the British and American political establishment, lending support to criticism that the BBC has traditionally avoided the 'expressive politics of the street' (Seaton cited Born 2004, p.32).

Ted Heath and Denis Healey (who both appear in several *Panorama* programmes on the war) are interviewed by Ware:

Ted Heath: At this stage, I think it would be madness to go to war. We've only had sanctions for some four months, they are beginning to have an effect. Nobody thought they would be effective in four months. I don't think the Generals are as impatient, one General said the other day, 'Well, if it's a question of death or sitting in the sun a bit longer, I prefer to sit in the sun' and he's quite right.

Heath's argument, like Healey's is a critical one, expressed in forthright language. It is also, as the programme makes clear, out of step with the broad thrust of Parliamentary opinion as expressed in the public vote. Reporter John Ware describes Heath and Healey's 'dissident views' as 'voices in the wilderness'. Nevertheless, these views are coded here as (4) partial opposition because Heath employs the 'not yet' argument in calling for time for sanctions to work and, as expressed by two senior and respected politicians from both sides of the House can be seen as within the 'sphere of legitimate controversy', although perhaps at the margins of that 'legitimate debate'. Heath and

Healey's service in the Second World War is stressed in the programme, as is their elder statesmen status. The fact that they were coming to the end of their distinguished political careers in 1991 perhaps enabled them to express 'disquiet' felt by other MPs. Ware indicates that, despite the apparent parliamentary consensus indicated in the public debate, such disquiet was real:

WARE: In fact, only a handful of politicians have raised any questions about the potentially catastrophic consequences of a war. Indeed, with Labour and the Liberal Democrats agreeing with the government line almost entirely, there has been very little public argument about Britain's vast military commitment in the Gulf. But that doesn't mean to say there aren't real underlying doubts. One of Mrs Thatcher's ex-Cabinet Ministers told us that although he thought war would be folly, he wouldn't dare say that in public now.

Footage of Heath addressing the US Congress on his doubts underline the impression that public dissent amongst senior politicians was far more common in America than in Britain. It may be for this reason that, remarkably, there are more *Panorama* interviews with US persons (52) than British ones (44). As the breakdown shows, a large majority of these interviews are with figures from the US political, military and intelligence establishment, the same sectors that make up the bulk of British interviews (see Appendix 2.1). Other than the thirty-three words spoken by Sue Eastham, speaking in her role as a mother of a soldier, there are *no* interviews with any US, British or European protestors, activists, peace groups or demonstrators. These findings provide powerful evidence for hypotheses H1, H3 and H4.

Nevertheless, on the brink of war 44% of views presented offer at least partial opposition (coded 4) to the war. One exchange with another soldier's mother is coded as (5) fully oppositional because her opposition to the war is total and unqualified:

JAN STEWART: It should be the Arab nations that sort it out. I mean, we weren't very quick to jump in with the Iran/Iraq war, but now we jump in for this. Yes, I would be very .. I would be desolate if I lost my sons over something which I think is really nothing to do with us.

'Balance' to the various doubters and sceptics is provided in the last third of the programme when Dimpleby interviews Richard Cheney, who coolly answers the twenty-one questions put to him that deal with some of the issues raised in the two reports. It is interesting that no US politician of similar rank appeared on the *Panorama*

episodes dealing with the Second Gulf War and, in fact, lengthy detailed interviews of this kind (cf. Tom King interview for 'In Our Defences') are not a feature of any of the post-2000 *Panorama* programmes reviewed for this study. This shift away from lengthy, detailed interviews which give an opportunity to understand and scrutinise government thinking lends some weight to the argument that *Panorama* is less 'heavy-hitting' than in the past (cf. chapter 4.4). A flavour of the interview, which is twenty minutes (3,700 words) long, suggests Cheney's command of the facts. He is completely unruffled by any of the questions put to him, speaking quietly and deliberately, knocking each point or objection away with understated ease:

DIMBLEBY: Are you still looking for a political solution?

CHENEY: It is difficult to be optimistic about one with the failure of the UN Secretary General's mission to generate anything, Saddam Hussein reiterating that he will keep Kuwait, his convening of his puppet parliament, claiming that now they have endorsed keeping Kuwait. It's difficult to see where the opening might be for his compliance with those Resolutions.

DIMBLEBY: But are you encouraging people who are still trying, like the French, to find a diplomatic way out?

CHENEY: I think it would be fair to say we haven't discouraged anyone. But, on the other hand, we have also insisted, as have our British allies and others, that the only acceptable grounds for a solution is compliance with the UN Resolutions. That is the bottom line. He has to get out of Kuwait. Without complete and total withdrawal from Kuwait, there is no basis upon which you can talk.

Cheney's interview is coded (1) full support and so while the first forty minutes has lent towards more sceptical or cautious interviews, the programme now gives fairly uninterrupted attention to the official line (comprising 50.7% of all interview material).

Coding for all five pre-war episodes shows that pro- and partially pro-war voices made up 49.8% of all interviews. 'Oppositional', 'partially oppositional' and 'pro-Saddam' voices made up 33.4%. Just under 2% of contributions were coded 'fully oppositional' and no anti-war leaders or protestors were given airspace providing some support for the central question of this thesis that '*Panorama's* coverage of conflict reflects the Westminster consensus' (see Appendix 2:3, 2.4). *Panorama's* framing of pre-war debate and discussion is dominated by official US/UK sources as hypothesised (H3) as clearly demonstrated by the breakdown of interviewees (Appendix 2.1). The second

hypothesis (H2) that *Panorama's* coverage of Gulf 1 would be (relative to Gulf 2) narrowly framed around matters of 'legitimate controversy' is only partly upheld. While much of *Panorama's* coverage of the historical context for the war is framed to emphasise Saddam Hussein's dangerous character and ruthless rule, rather than the west's political, economic and military support for his regime until the invasion of Kuwait, Jane Corbin's investigation 'Saddam's Secret Arms Ring' reveals a history of western support for the dictator, up to the invasion of Kuwait. Much of the evidence pointed to bureaucratic incompetence or indifference amongst government agencies charged with enforcing the arms embargo, but there was also evidence of a longer history of the government encouraging trade in technology, such as specialist furnaces, despite warnings from the US government that they would enhance Iraq's nuclear or missile capabilities. There was also brief acknowledgement of Britain's 'muted' response to Iraq's use of chemical weapons on Kurdish civilians in Halabja, an incident that would be recalled in the lead up to the 2003 war by some of the same Conservative and Labour politicians who resisted calls for an export credit freeze and UN sanctions against Iraq in 1988 (Hansard 1988; Pilger 2003).

While dissenting opinion as expressed outside Parliament was largely absent, explanations for the conflict which foregrounded energy resources, previous western help for the regime and the effects of the war on the Iraqis and the region do begin to emerge in the five programmes studied. The question of oil is not central to any of the studio discussions, but the point is made several times by Palestinian critics in 'Saddam's Fifth Column' and is a strong theme in 'Behind Desert Shield'. Worries about the devastating effects of the war on the Iraqi population and on the likely impact of a 'dirty war' on soldiers on both sides are sometimes expressed. Concerns about the long-term consequences of the war are brought up in three of the five programmes and western 'double standards' on UN sanctions (the Occupied Territories compared to Kuwait – a major concern for anti-war groups) is explored in some depth in 'Saddam's Fifth Column'. Only the episode 'Gulf: In Our Defences' could be said to fully support all four hypotheses. Despite quite low levels of Parliamentary dissent alternatives to military action, such as continued UN sanctions are presented, in some episodes, as a serious alternative to war, although these discussions are usually brief, rather than substantive.

5.4.5 Findings: Invasion Phase (17/01/91-28/02/91)

Six *Panorama* episodes deal with the six weeks of military action that began with an air campaign and ended with a one-hundred hour ground assault and ceasefire at the end of February. The first programme 'Desert Storm: after five days' (tx: 21.1.91) is an extended one hour programme that includes a twenty minute report by Gavin Hewitt on the progress of the air campaign and the likelihood of continuing public support both in Britain and the United States followed by a forty minute studio discussion led by David Dimbleby with British, French, American, Israeli and Syrian diplomats or former diplomats and politicians on the range of options for building a viable peace after the war.

Whether it was right or wrong to go to war is now regarded as a settled matter and discussion tends to be framed around the progress of the war and the prospects for long-term peace in the region. There is a brief reference to continuing anti-war rallies, but as before (and after the war), no one from any of the demonstrating movements are given air time. Over images of demonstrations in Britain, Germany and the United States, Hewitt's voiceover suggests that public support for the war remains strong. However, the interview with Richard Murphy, US Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs that follows indicates that this situation could easily change if (Allied) casualties rise:

HEWITT: Since hostilities began, opposition to the war has not grown in the West. Support for the conflict has even strengthened. Only in West Germany do protests seem to be mounting. In the United States anti-war rallies have continued, but the public mood is solidly behind the President.

RICHARD MURPHY: If there are major casualties, public opinion here, which is already demonstrating in several of our cities against the war, against any war, then the intensity of those demonstrations will rise and it will have its effect in the Congress.

Murphy, who had earlier argued that the administration was hoping for 'short, decisive war' but recognised that that 'may not be possible', is one of several voices calling for patience. SDP leader David Owen makes a similar point and cautions that the casualties of a long land campaign could threaten the coalition:

OWEN, MP: [...] I think there is an advantage of this measured strategy of using the Air Force first. The problem will come once land battle is

engaged. If the land battle goes on for a long time, there will be very substantial casualties and I think, at that time, the coalition will come under much greater danger.

Most of the other interviewees also support this 'measured strategy'. As with programmes in the pre-war period, the majority of the interviewees for the programme are drawn from the British and US political establishment or from the senior ranks of the military. These include Air Chief Marshall Sir Michael Armitage and Major General Julian Thompson who discuss the progress of the war, although there is one brief comment from the 'lower ranks':

UNNAMED SOLDIER 1: We're going to take some casualties but we're going to come out alright. There are times when you feel – like 'Why are we here?' I really don't care about oil. I don't care about material things, I am here so my little brothers won't be in ten years.

The studio discussion which follows Hewitt's report includes four speakers linked by satellite and two speakers in the studio. The composition of the interviewees is typical of *Panorama's* coverage generally leaning towards serving or former political and diplomatic figures. They include Henry Kissinger from New York; Jean-Pierre Cot (Leader of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament) from Strasbourg, Sir Crispin Tinkell (former British Ambassador to the UN) from Oxford and Dan Meridor (an Israeli Cabinet Minister) from Jerusalem. The studio guests are Zuhair Diab (a former Syrian diplomat) and Hosery Khashaba (an Egyptian journalist). Discussion centres on three major issues: whether Saddam Hussein should be allowed to remain in power, the danger of regional nuclear proliferation and the Palestinian question. More hawkish views on the need to remove Saddam Hussein are offered by Kissinger, Tinkell, Meridor and Diab; Cot and Khashaba, by contrast, warn of dangers to the stability of the region if the Allies go beyond the UN mandate of removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Coding these discussions is problematic but as all the guests subscribe to the coalition objectives and are allied, directly or indirectly, to governments that had contributed to the Allied military action, the discussion is, as might be expected, predominantly supportive, or partly supportive, of the war. However, some of the discussion by Cot and Khashaba has a critical edge and is coded as partly oppositional (4). Coding the former British Ambassador Tinkell's contribution presents an interesting challenge. It varies from a hawkish line on Saddam's future (coded 1) to a critical line on Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands (coded 4) as in the following extract:

TICKELL: [...] And that brings us straight on to the question of Israel, and Israel, in spite of what we all say, and we're right in saying that Saddam Hussein was wrong to link the two problems, the fact is that the Israeli problem looms larger and larger, the closer we get to the end of this particular war over Kuwait.

DIMBLEBY: But you wouldn't have .. I mean, you didn't 'get' Saddam Hussein because of Israel? They didn't invade Kuwait because of Israel?

TICKELL: No. But the Israeli problem has been lingering on year after year, and the way in which the West reacted to an invasion of Kuwait, obviously made a lot of people think – and not only Arabs, that why should the Israelis be left in possession of territories they didn't own either? And so, the weakest part of the whole western case is the position of Israel. And I have no doubt at all that when we've got the first phase, which is the relative disarming of Iraq, the second phase, which is the attempt to produce some arms control regime for the area as a whole, our minds will turn, very fast, towards the question of the Occupied Territories, and the future place of Israel in the area.

Dimbleby's question, posed with something of an air of surprise, indicates that this view sails close to the 'dissenting' opinion of many Arab nations and indeed of the anti-war movement. In total, 'Desert Storm: after five days' had 83% either supportive or partly supportive interviewees and 17% partly oppositional, with no fully oppositional views offered. This sets the pattern for coverage of the six week period of the war, which saw a total of only approximately 2% fully oppositional voices compared to 33% partly oppositional, 4% neutral, 28% partly supportive and 33% fully supportive (see Appendix 2:3, 2.4).

Other *Panorama* episodes during the war show very little footage of front line action, of casualties or any of the more disturbing effects of the war. There is a great deal of discussion of military strategy (cf. 'The Gathering Storm' tx: 28.01.91) and long term political options ('After the Desert Storm' tx: 04.02.91), some of it sympathetic to the plight of Palestinians, but almost nothing on the experience of war either for Allied soldiers or for Iraqi civilians. 'The Mind of Saddam' (tx: 11.02.91) transmitted half-way through the war and with Iraqi casualties mounting is a precursor to 'The Mind of Milosovic' (tx: 29.03.99) and 'Saddam: a Warning from History' (tx: 03.11.02) for which several clips were recycled (see chapter 6.2). It is a psychological portrait and history of the dictator which draws parallels not with Hitler, as George Bush had done,

but with Stalin. Saddam Hussein is shown as a cold, ruthless and brutal political survivor who murders current and potential rivals and uses fear to rule Iraq:

WARE: Even the psychiatrist who advises US Presidents says that Saddam is not insane.

POST: Saddam is not crazy, he has the most dangerous personality configuration, what we call malignant narcissism. Such extreme self-absorption – he has no concern for the pain or suffering of others. A paranoid outlook, no constraint of conscience and will use whatever aggression is necessary in pursuit of his own Messianic drives.

The term ‘malignant narcissism’ is a phrase former CIA advisor Jerrold Post uses again when interviewed eleven years later in 2002 for the making of ‘Saddam: a Warning from History’ (see chapter 6.2). The framing of the Iraqi leader as a murderous despot (no doubt an accurate account) allies the programme with those elements of the British and American elite who were calling for the overthrow of the regime (cf. ‘Desert Storm: After Five Days’). It concludes, somewhat presciently, with a pessimistic prediction for Iraq’s future:

POST: This man is the quintessential survivor, we must remember that, and I think it is quite possible for him to be highly creative and innovative in his struggle to survive and survive with honour. It isn’t just a matter of surviving and breathing, he needs more than vital signs, he needs to survive with his reputation, not only intact, but magnified.

WARE: Saddam surviving a war after the West’s rhetoric and ammunition are spent has been described as the nightmare scenario. Kuwait may be liberated and much of Iraq destroyed, but if Saddam survives all that, he may actually gain more of the only thing that’s every really mattered to him, power for its own sake.

‘The Mind of Saddam’ is coded as containing 99.3% partially supportive (2) and 0.7% fully supportive (1) interview material. As the interviews draw mainly on the account of Iraqi exiles and a US psychologist and government advisor, Dr Jerrold Post, this is unsurprising. In contrast to ‘Saddam’s Fifth Column’ which included some support for the Iraqi leader from Palestinian militants (expressed with reservations about his record against the Kurds), this programme offers no such ‘balancing’ opinion. This approach underestimated the small but significant proportion of Sunni Iraqis (and other Arabs) who supported Saddam Hussein, not simply out of fear, but for a complex variety of

other reasons – including material self interest, national and Arab pride and defiance of Israel and the west. Furthermore, the programme only makes two brief mentions of oil, no mention of the well-documented CIA support for the Ba’ath Party coups of 1963 and 1968 (see Aburish 2000) or of western support for Saddam Hussein for much of his rule (see Simpson 2003). The programme could therefore be seen as giving an ‘incomplete’ picture of the dictator and avoided a full rational debate as to his role in the region’s long history of conflict. Taken in isolation, ‘The Mind of Saddam’ and its 2002 variant ‘Saddam: a Warning from History’, provide strong evidence in support of hypotheses H1, H3 and H4.

The next *Panorama* programme ‘Saddam’s Supergun’ (tx: 18.02.91) does not fit the pattern set by previous *Panorama* programmes transmitted during the armed conflict. It is, rather, a companion piece to ‘Saddam’s Secret Arm’s Ring’ transmitted five months previously and uses two of the same interviewees: Dr. Chris Cowley and Shadow Trade & Industry Secretary Gordon Brown. These contributions are complemented by military experts or technicians and ‘whistleblowers’ from within the companies charged with helping Iraq build a huge gun that could be used to fire shells at Israel. Corbin’s introduction indicates the line of argument that is carefully supported in the fifty-minute programme that follows

JANE CORBIN: *Panorama* tonight reveals the existence of an Iraqi supergun. In this secret mountain site, the gun is hidden. It’s pointing at Israel. We investigate how Saddam Hussein obtained this deadly technology, the ease with which he got Western scientists and British companies to help him and why, despite strong warnings, the British government failed to stop Saddam’s Supergun.

As in ‘Saddam’s Secret Arm’s Ring’ several of the interviewees reveal how keen the government was to promote trade with Iraq before the invasion of Kuwait:

MARK HIGSON: Right up until what I refer to as the “Rape of Kuwait”, British policy towards Iraq was one of – “We must have a positive economic, trade, and, as far as is possible, political relationship”. Iraq was seen, coming out of the conflict with Iran, as potentially the big prize in the Middle East. It has the second largest known oil reserves, a skilled workforce and, further to that, as far as Britain is concerned – excellent relations with Britain in the past.

The interviews in ‘Saddam’s Supergun’ are, for the most part, critical of government policy (90.4% coded 4 – partly oppositional). The contributions might also have been coded (5) fully oppositional, except the issue of the Supergun and other arms and technology exports had become a parliamentary issue with Gordon Brown, amongst other Opposition MPs, making political capital from the Conservative Government’s embarrassment at these revelations. Despite the fact that this was a matter taken up in Parliament the programme had been blocked by John Birt (it was originally scheduled for 7th January – a week before the UN Security Council deadline expired) and was only finally transmitted (six weeks later) once Dr. Chris Cowley – impatient at the delays, had gone to ITV and helped make a programme with *Panorama*’s rival *This Week* (see Lindley 2003, p.345-348). The blocking of Supergun is often cited as evidence of the political caution and micromanagement that many accuse Birt of (see chapter 4.3).

The final *Panorama* in the period of armed action is the more conventional ‘Peace Diary’ which examined diplomatic moves by the Soviet Union. The programme, like many others in the crisis, is composed of a filmed report (by Steve Bradshaw) followed by a live link to a BBC reporter, Daniel Brittan-Caitlin, at the UN for an update on the Security Council meeting (in progress) called by the Soviets. David Dimbleby then leads another studio discussion, this time with Republican Senator Orrin Hatch who accuses the Soviets of aiding the Iraqis; Professor Vitaly Naumkin (a Foreign Affairs Advisor to Supreme Soviet) who denies the charge and puts the case for a diplomatic solution; and former British Ambassador to the UN Sir Crispin Tickell (who had previously appeared in ‘Desert Storm: after five days’) who, like Hatch, is opposed to the Soviet peace plan.

Soviet diplomacy is often framed in Steve Bradshaw’s report and in the studio debate as an attempt to secure influence in the region, or as a symptom of deeper tensions within the Soviet Union. The following exchange illustrates this second tendency:

DIMBLEBY: [...] why did the President say that he appreciated the Soviet help if he believes, as you do apparently, that Soviet advisors are still helping the Iraqi Army and indeed supplying them? It would be odd to say they appreciated what the Soviet Union was doing in those circumstances wouldn’t it?

HATCH: Well, there’s even more than that. We have good information that indicates that the Soviets were telling the Iraqis when our satellites were

coming over, so that they could hide their Scud launchers, which is kind of bad. But all of that said, the President still has a great personal relationship with President Gorbachev, who we know has a lot of pressure from the hardliners over there, the military hardliners, and he still appreciated the efforts that were made to try and get the Iraqis to wake up and realise that this problem is for real.

The alleged tensions between Gorbachev and hardliners within his government and the military command are explored in more detail in other *Panorama* episodes at this time (cf. Gorbachev – A Tarnished Leader tx: 4.3.1991). ‘Peace Diary’ gives the greatest proportion of coverage to interviewees supportive of the war (34.8%), then to partial supporters (30.3%), with just 23.6% of interviewees offering partial opposition (mostly from the Soviet interviewees). As with previous *Panoramas* only a small fraction of the interview statements could be coded as ‘oppositional’ (2.2%) lending weight to hypotheses H1, H3 and H4 (see above).

5.4.6 Findings: Post-War Phase (29/02/91-)

There are six *Panorama* episodes in the post-war period: two dealing with the aftermath of the occupation of Kuwait; one with the Kurdish area in northern Iraq; one looking behind the scenes at the work of the US intelligence agencies in the war; and the last two considering the survival of Saddam Hussein and debates within the United States about the ‘missed opportunity’ to remove him from power. The first of these programmes, ‘Kuwait: out of the ashes’ (tx: 11.03.91), is a report by Jane Corbin filmed in the first two weeks after the Iraqis pulled out of Kuwait and before the Kuwaiti government had returned from exile. The opening minutes of the film capture live fire fights between Palestinians and the Kuwaiti resistance on the day of the ceasefire as Kuwait City slowly comes under Allied control. In a city still darkened by the black smoke of burning oil fields Corbin, apparently working independently of any press pools or army units, interviews victims of Iraqi torture and witnesses arrests and scenes of revenge against Kuwaiti and Palestinian collaborators. She also finds many of the Kuwaitis who endured the months of Iraqi occupation calling for ‘radical change’ and unhappy about the prospective return of the ‘old order’:

CORBIN: [...] in these first days of freedom, it’s becoming clear that many of those who actually lived through the Iraqi occupation will accept nothing less than radical change. For them, the experiences of the past seven months have made a return to the old order impossible.

Having organised supplies of food and water and resistance to the occupying Iraqis, the Kuwaitis Corbin interviews want a return to Kuwait's old form of democracy enshrined in the 1962 constitution. Anger at the Al-Sabah government for failing to respond to the threat posed by Iraqi forces before the invasion is expressed by Opposition politicians and ordinary citizens. As with 'Saddam's Fifth Column' and 'Behind the Desert Shield' there is a sense of a reporter on the ground attempting to give a full picture of events and talking to a wide range of subjects, not just senior politicians, diplomats or military figures. There is also a cautiously-expressed, but sustained critique of the Al-Sabah regime as it attempts to reassert power in the traumatised Kingdom. The issue of women's rights in the Gulf, addressed briefly in 'Behind the Desert Shield', is a focus of Corbin's investigation:

CORBIN: The resistance poses another problem for the returning government. Its mobilisation of civilians like Dr Fawzia has provoked demands for social changes too. She is treating a victim of the current violence, a member of the resistance herself, she risked her life and now believes that women can no longer be denied the vote and equal rights.

DR FAWZIA ALOMAIR: Women today, Kuwaiti women today, have changed from women yesterday, so I think they have the right to vote, at least to have their opinion as loud as the men.

The exchange is particularly significant given the overwhelming majority of male interviewees that dominate *Panorama's* coverage of the Gulf War. Corbin's report is unsparing in its revelations of Iraqi brutality during the occupation, detailing repressive tactics, kidnapping for ransom and various torture methods used against many Kuwaitis. It also looks candidly at mistreatment of Palestinians by angry Kuwaitis; the use of violence by individuals allied with the ruling regime against Opposition forces; distrust and cynicism about the ruling family; and how US corporations are quick to exploit opportunities presented by the war. The grinning AT&T employee's exchange is difficult to code because it can be read both as evidence of Kuwaiti gratitude for American intervention, and as US corporate self-interest:

CORBIN: AT&T have provided the Kuwaiti government with a hundred and twenty international lines at a bargain price. The phone calls are free anywhere in the world. Now it's personal calls, soon business lines will be

added and later on AT&T's generosity may be remembered when the government is tendering the contract to rebuild Kuwait's phone system.

GARY GEARHEART: Well I've worked here in the Middle East for almost five years and during that five year period under no circumstances have I ever had an Arab lady speak to me, even if you happen to bump into one accidentally walking down the street. But here, several times, the Kuwaiti women would be on the phones crying, and they'd put the phone down and ask if I was American. I'd respond 'Yes,' and they'd answer back with something like 'God bless America' or 'God bless AT&T'.

Gearheart's contribution was coded (2) 'partially supportive' as the final line suggests that the war has been blessed by those liberated in Kuwait, a claim convincingly supported by the film. Corbin's framing however, casts the remark in a broader context. The US stands to gain both in terms of influence in the region and in terms of economic advantage – a fact Jane Corbin is not afraid of underlining. This, again, shows the limitations of any coding exercise which assumes a simple, binary relationship between isolated spoken utterances and 'objective' meaning. It also highlights the key role reporters play in framing the contributions of any interviewees. Coding Corbin's narrative as (7) 'reporter comment', excludes it from any empirical measure of 'bias' or point of view, yet this isolated example shows that, on closer examination, an assumption of 'neutrality' is difficult to maintain. In fact, a moment's attention reveals that every 'reporter comment' has some point of view or 'slant', no matter how strenuous the effort to suppress it, either by the institution or individual. Reporter comment has been effectively excluded in this content analysis because it presents an even greater challenge to code than other interviewee material, but that should not rule it out from questions of framing, agenda setting or 'bias' (see Chapter 6.2 coding exercise and discussion).

Coding of 'Kuwait: out of the ashes' suggests that partially supportive voices (2) dominated: 62.7%, against 34.9% partly oppositional (4), with no wholly oppositional or wholly supportive voices included. Yet, while Corbin's report strongly underlines the appalling nature of the Iraqi occupation, it is a critical programme in many ways. It offers an unexpected perspective – that of the Kuwaiti 'resistance' and ordinary citizens who had endured occupation but did not look forward to the return of the ruling family. As with 'Saddam's Fifth Column' and 'Behind the Desert Shield' it illustrates the strengths of having good investigative reporters on the ground in a crisis, recording the

views of a wide diversity of ‘stakeholders’ and actors, rather than simply inquiring into the various perspectives of a narrow political class. Unlike most *Panorama* programmes, no British, US or Israeli government, military or intelligence spokespersons (serving or retired) were interviewed. Only Kuwaitis and Palestinians drawn from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds as well as one Kuwaiti royal and one representative of the police, Colonel Adel Mohammed Al-Sabbagh, were interviewed. The broader class composition is characteristic of *Panorama* reports ‘on the ground’ both in the First and Second Gulf Wars (see ‘The Price of Victory’ tx: 28.09.03).

Corbin’s second report from Kuwait, ‘The Victims of Victory’ (tx: 05.08.91) is something of an update to ‘Kuwait: Out of the Ashes’, that focuses on the plight of Bedouin and Palestinians in Kuwait. Many of these had been resident for three decades, or longer, yet were quickly tarred with the same brush as those who had collaborated with the invading forces, whatever their record during the war. As in Corbin’s earlier report which included footage of the miles of wreckage on Mutla Ridge, including some still burning vehicles, the devastation of the retreating Iraqi army sets the scene for a different story – that of the apparent ‘collective punishment’ of the Palestinian community:

CORBIN: The last people to flee along the Mutla Ridge, were the retreating Iraqi Army. Now it’s the Palestinians turn. So far the numbers openly and forcibly deported, total a couple of thousand. But now it appears the Government wants the whole Palestinian population out of Kuwait.

As Corbin’s report shows, many Palestinians and Bedouin had been forced to join the Iraqi army or were threatened in various ways if they did not continue working in their usual jobs. Retribution by the Kuwaiti government was harsh: a headteacher, for example, who had kept her school open during the occupation was given a life sentence. Seven months after Iraqi forces had left Kuwait, many citizens from these ethnic groups had been expelled from the country. This in-depth, background report of a news story that was usually only briefly dealt with, if at all, shows some of the strength of current affairs – the ability to ‘serve witness’ to, and provide a context for, and some degree of understanding of, a complex series of events. Coding of ‘The Victims of Victory’ shows no ‘supportive’ interviews, 57% partly oppositional and 43% ‘neutral’, although this category ‘neither for nor against military action’ fails to account for the many subtle

inflections contained within each statement and is ultimately difficult to justify as a category for the purpose of serious, detailed analysis.

'The Dream of Kurdistan' (tx: 17.06.91) is a report by Robin Denselow from the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq and southern Turkey and also from the training camps of the People's Liberation Army of Kurdistan (PKK) in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, close to the Syrian border. The PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan is interviewed and justifies the group's use of violence in terms of its effect on the Turkish government:

DENSELOW: The Turks say the PKK caused a thousand deaths in the past four years but lost over eight hundred guerrillas. The PKK claim they killed four thousand Turkish troops last year alone and that their campaign has changed President Ozal's policy.

OCALAN (interpreted): Turkey's policy is to annihilate the Kurds. This has been the policy for centuries. Now Ozal has admitted there are Kurds in Turkey. This is because of our struggle. If they had had their way, they would have got rid of the Kurds once and for all. Now, thanks to our struggle, they've repented, but there's still danger. If we relaxed, they'd return to their old ways.

Critics such as Noam Chomsky (2008) have long complained that brutal Turkish repression of the Kurds, including the repression of their language and culture, the destruction of 3,500 villages and the displacement of 1.5 million people, has continued without significant protest by western governments. Curtis (2003), for instance, notes that the peak period of British arms supplies to Turkey (1994-96) (three years after this film) coincided with the worst period of abuses against the Kurds (p.39). 'The Dream of Kurdistan' is a rare example of British media attention to the issue and Denselow's report gives clear examples of both Iraqi and Turkish human rights violations in the area. It shows that the 'taste of freedom' given by the removal of Iraqis in free Kurdistan has fuelled an intensification of the guerrilla war between Kurds and Turks. While many of the contributions are supportive of the Allied war against Iraq, other contributions are highly critical of Turkey's record. As Turkey is a NATO member, trade partner and 'friend' of the British government these exchanges are coded as (4) partly oppositional, as in this example:

DENSELOW: [...] It's one of the measures that worry Hatip Dicle, who's been jailed for his work in monitoring the Turkish response to the PKK

attacks. Today, he's briefed on news of new detentions and forced evacuations.

HATIP DICLE (interpreted): The emptying and burning of villages is similar to what's happened in Iraq, but Turkey is more expert, more subtle. They conduct their policies behind a smokescreen. If you ask the regional governor about villages being emptied, he'll deny it. If you ask him about the high pasture ban, he'll say it's for the nomad's safety. He'll never admit the real reason for the ban is to make the people leave the area. The Turkish authorities even try to hide behind a façade of human rights, so they're more expert than Saddam, more hypocritical and, therefore, more dangerous.

'The Dream of Kurdistan' is an example of a *Panorama* episode apparently out of step with the 'Westminster consensus' as a search of the Hansard records between 1991-92 reveals only a handful of comments by MPs on either side of the house, on Turkey's treatment of the Kurds (notably by Jeremy Corbyn and Denis Healey). Coding of 'The Dream of Kurdistan' shows 10.3% partly supportive, 48.8% 'neutral' (off-topic) and 40.8% partly oppositional. As in Denselow's previous report 'Saddam's Fifth Column' there are no senior British or American politicians interviewed, only Turkish, Iraqi and Kurdish interviewees drawn from a cross section of society, including a local Turkish politician, a deserting Iraqi soldier and Kurdish farmers.

Three remaining *Panorama* episodes that deal with the war against Iraq share a common focus: that Saddam Hussein had survived the war and that senior voices in the US political establishment believe the war did not go far enough. The first, 'America's Secret War' (tx: 25.03.91) looks candidly at some of the failures of US intelligence. At one point Tom Mangold describes relations between the US and Iraq up to the invasion of Kuwait, before we hear supporting evidence from former National Security Council analyst Howard Teicher:

MANGOLD: In fact, the Gulf crisis began with an American intelligence disaster: the CIA failed to predict Saddam Hussein's intention of invading Kuwait, not least because, for years, the CIA had been involved in America's policy of friendship and co-operation with Saddam. That policy had sprung up during the Iran/Iraq War, when American fears of Iranian Fundamentalism led it to support the Iraqi leader. In 1983, the Iraqi dictator was being honoured by a visit from US Envoy, Donald Rumsfeld. America's intelligence analysts came under Saddam's spell as well.

HOWARD TEICHER: The analysts at the lower level undoubtedly knew the facts, they knew what Saddam was doing, there were no illusions on anyone's part. However, there was clearly a climate here where the policy

said “Let’s try to change Saddam by working with him, not working against him.” And, as long as that was the policy, people wanted that to work and they would deny the reality of what he was doing because it ran counter to the policy.

The exchange continues with a revealing passage about the much disputed meeting between Ambassador April Glasby and the Iraqis that some critics of US policy claimed gave the ‘green light’ to Iraqi aggression:

MANGOLD: Shortly before the invasion, the American Ambassador met Saddam Hussein. She assured him the Americans had no interest in his border dispute. Saddam, in turn, told the envoy he would not invade Kuwait. These mixed signals further confused the CIA.

TEICHER: I’d say that Ambassador Glasby’s meeting was perhaps the ultimate crystallisation of the tendency of American Middle East experts to deny reality, even as it stares them in the face.

Apart from this contribution, most of the programme consists of recounting the work of US intelligence during the war (who take some of the credit for the small number of Allied casualties) and gives an opportunity for a defence, or explanation of the controversial attack of the Amariya shelter (see chapter 5.3) by a former Defence Intelligence Agency analyst:

PERROOTS: It certainly wasn’t a run-of-the-mill air raid shelter. The fact remains that civilians were there, whether those civilians were placed there within the last twenty-four/forty-eight hours, we don’t know, but I’m convinced that, in the effort to not only identify appropriate military targets, but identify targets in the immediate Baghdad area, so that we could not only hit military targets but send an overt message, probably led us to hit a target like that bunker without the most current information. In most cases, if I had the evidence before me, I probably would target it again.

Perroots later argues, if indirectly, that the war did not go far enough and that Saddam Hussein could have been removed from power with a ‘couple more turn of the noose’:

PERROOTS: There were some, including myself, that would have liked to have seen the war prolonged perhaps a day or two more, to tighten the noose even further around Saddam Hussein, actually, to bring him down. That was a political call and not a military call and we stand with that call, but certainly there were some people in the intelligence community and outside intelligence communities that thought that a couple more turns of the noose would have been probably a good thing.

‘America’s Secret War’ acknowledges Allied military successes, achieved with the sophisticated technological assistance offered by the intelligence agency, but asks if the ‘job’ was finished. This view is coded ‘partly supportive’ and constitutes 58.8% of the contributions compared to 25.4% supportive and 11.5% offering partial opposition. As with five out of six post-war episodes there was no contribution coded as (5) full opposition.

‘Saddam the Survivor’ (tx: 12.08.91), a report by John Simpson from Iraq, does include contributions coded as (5) full opposition, such as this one by a former Iraqi National Assembly member commenting on the failed uprising:

AL-SHBECHA: The Americans betrayed the rebels. This is something I want to get across to the world. I’m not suggesting they - Americans were the sole cause of the failure of the uprising, but they did help to foil it by disarming some of the rebels. They took their weapons off them, and stopped them reaching ammunition dumps in the areas they controlled. Then, when Saddam’s helicopter gunships came and bombed the rebels, American planes flew above and formed a protective cover above and below.

Simpson’s voiceover is also critical claiming that ‘the West stood aside and did nothing to help’ the uprising in Najaf that had been encouraged by President Bush’s statements about the need for Iraqi people to get rid of their leader. However, again, coding is shown to be too blunt a tool to reveal the variety of framing and positioning strategies within *Panorama*. The highly critical material about the west’s abandonment of Shiites who rebelled also gives implicit support to more hawkish voices who argue that the war did not go far enough. While not the official line, this was emerging as an influential view, both in Washington and London, (as *Panorama* shows through its interviews) and ultimately became an important element in the ‘neo-conservative’ agenda that informed the 2003 invasion of Iraq. A more radical analysis would be that the war and the west’s continuing support for dictatorships throughout the Middle East has had unforeseen and, for the most part, disastrous consequences (Chomsky 1992, 2002, 2007). The following exchange with a former National Security Council advisor (who also appeared in ‘America’s Secret War’) hints at this perspective and is coded (4) partly oppositional, despite the speaker’s view (expressed elsewhere) that the war did not go far enough:

HOWARD TEICHER: From my reading of the situation at the time, and discussions with people then in power, though it was clear that as much as the US government sought to promote that sort of political change as we move toward a new world order following the end of the Cold War, there was equal, if not greater, concern about the possibility for injecting democracy, leading to instability in other states in the region, notably Saudi Arabia.

SIMPSON: Do you mean that the Saudis weren't enthusiastic about the whole idea?

TEICHER: I think it would not be an understatement to say the Saudis were unenthusiastic about the idea of democratic reform in Iraq.

Steve Bradshaw's report 'In the Eye of the Storm', the last programme to deal with the war in 1991, gives further airtime to the new consensus emerging amongst hawkish neo-conservatives that the war didn't go far enough. There is also a strong sense of how the war boosted US confidence in its military, a confidence that was clearly lacking in the pre-war period. Bradshaw begins his report from the desert set of a feature film 'Heroes of the Storm' (1991) about the Gulf War and a conversation with the movie's producer who sums up the new, more confident mood in the country:

BRADSHAW: The producers know this is one war America wants to celebrate, not just for the bravery of individuals, but for what their leaders achieved for the nation.

DON OHLMEYER: I think it was a tremendously cathartic experience for the country. The Vietnam syndrome was really a reality so I think, when America looks back on this war, they'll look back on it with a pride at the way we conducted ourselves and what we were able to accomplish and that the casualties were very light, as opposed to Vietnam, which people look back on with very mixed emotions.

Bradshaw's report reveals that the British had been somewhat unhappy at the speed with which the ceasefire was called. Sir Charles Powell (Downing St Foreign Affairs Adviser 1984-91) makes the point and recalls the phrase 'unaccustomed chivalry' being used at the time:

BRADSHAW: As the Foreign Secretary reached the White House, we have been told that British officials in London telephoned the President's office to stress their misgivings. But at midnight a ceasefire was declared.

POWELL: I think perhaps it did come as a surprise, certainly to me and I think perhaps to quite a lot of people in London that there had been an outbreak of what I remember someone described as “unaccustomed chivalry” on the Western side. Which perhaps, with all the benefits of hindsight, if we’d gone on twelve more hours, greater military damage would have been caused.

It is instructive to compare this description with accounts of the destruction on Mutla Ridge and the possible contribution of television pictures to the decision taken by George Bush to announce a ceasefire (see chapter 5.3).

Bradshaw’s report consists, almost entirely, of a narrative stitched together from the accounts of senior members of the British and US political and military establishment (see Appendix 2.1). More hawkish critics of the campaign are shown to have been, in some cases, converted from pre-war scepticism and caution to more aggressive militarism by the success of the campaign. Democratic Congressman Larry Smith’s contribution is coded (2) partial support and is representative of the dominant point of view in the programme:

LARRY SMITH: It’s hard to even criticise the President for stopping then. But I will say, having been one of those opposed, that once, having done what we did and going in there and engaging in military activity, we all supported the President. I did too, because the troops then were engaged. And if I was asked ‘Should we go further?’, I would have said ‘Yes’. To me, removing that cancer, which still remains there, was our primary objective ultimately.

Senator John McCain, filmed in his office, makes a similar point with the prophetic observation that: ‘the American people believe that this book will not be closed, and it’s a very heroic book in American history, until Saddam Hussein is removed from power’. As in previous *Panoramas* dealing with the war we see that the majority of interviews are not with representatives of the British Parliament, but rather with figures within, or at the edge of, Washington’s political and intelligence establishment. Dick Cheney is interviewed, in medium close up and then close up against an office bookshelf and house plant, to explain the President’s decision to call a cease fire and pour scorn on those who switched from being opposed to military action before the war to critical it did not go far enough:

CHENEY [...] I think the President made a very sound decision when he decided to stop military operations when he did. We did not want to get involved in a quagmire inside Iraq. We avoided that. I think we would be under much greater criticism today if we had, in fact, gone all the way to Baghdad, if we had, in fact, taken on the responsibility of trying to govern Iraq.

Bradshaw's conclusion, voiced over images of the crew at work on 'Heroes of the Storm', expresses something of the range of views sampled in the post war period, that are either 'supportive', 'partly supportive' or critical because the war did not go far enough:

BRADSHAW: Like Hollywood, the Administration knows America wanted a victory in the desert, not another Vietnam. If the allies had become bogged down in Iraq, Hollywood would not be making films like "Heroes of the Storm". But while Saddam survives, the mood of self-congratulation will be tempered by doubts that the commanders stopped too soon.

As already mentioned, this episode gives an early indication of 'neo-conservative' views (here coded 2 and comprising 41%) that would become very influential in George W. Bush's Presidency (ironically, under their influential champion Dick Cheney) and which would be reported again, but far more critically in Steve Bradshaw's report after the Second Gulf War ('The War Party' – see chapter 6.2). In total, *Panorama's* post-war coverage sees the majority of interviewees giving a partly supportive view (44%), with 19.1% fully supportive, 19.3% partly opposed and only 1.7% fully opposed. None of this opposition came from members of anti-war groups, but was expressed by Iraqis angry at the west's complicity (as they saw it) in massacres perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's forces during the uprisings in the south of Iraq. A more radical view expressed by the peace movement, a number of prominent dissident intellectuals, academics and journalists and a very small number of voices in the British Parliament, such as Denis Healey, Tony Benn and Tam Dalyell that the war had been premature, violent and potentially counter-productive exercise in the long run (Chomsky 1991; Hansard 1991; Pilger 1992) was given little or no space.

6.1. The ‘Second Gulf War’

6.1.1 Introduction

The invasion of Iraq that began on March 19th, 2003 remains one of the most controversial conflicts of recent times. It followed more than a decade of crippling UN sanctions, air attacks and several months of extraordinary diplomatic debate and public protest (see Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005). The invasion was part of a wider military response by the US and its allies to the 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon. This response became known as the ‘War on Terror’ and included the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in October and November 2001. The military action in Afghanistan quickly led to the removal of the Taliban government, which was accused of offering a safe haven for Osama Bin Laden and the Al Qaeda training camps, although its leader Mullah Omar and Bin Laden himself escaped capture (O’Hanlon 2002). Iraq was subsequently identified by President George W. Bush in his January 29th 2002 State of the Union address as part of an ‘axis of evil’ that included Iran and North Korea and was targeted for ‘regime change’ because of its supposed possession of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and its alleged links with ‘terrorist organisations’, including Al Qaeda (see Ricks 2006; Beck and Downing 2003; Stauber and Rampton 2003; Kellner 2005; Snow and Taylor 2006; Bennett *et al.* 2007).

Hence the 2003 invasion took place against a backdrop of tumultuous and fast-moving international developments, mobilisation and mass protest (particularly in Europe) and within what Mythen and Walklate (2006) describe as a ‘culture of fear’ and ‘prevailing discourse of insecurity’ (p.127)¹. In Britain, public opposition to the war against Iraq remained high until the onset of war, with only 30 percent in favour of unilateral action in January 2003 (Couldry and Downey 2004, p.267) rising to 53 percent backing for the

¹ See also Zelizer and Allan 2002 for a discussion of the post 9-11 ‘new era of reporting’.

action on the commencement of hostilities (Ingle 2004, p.237). This compares, as Snow and Taylor (2006) point out, to levels of between 70 and 80 percent enjoyed by most post-Second World War warring British governments (p.391). A nation still divided about the justification for war, a bloody conflict, post-war chaos and the subsequent lack of evidence of any WMD in Iraq all contributed towards pressure on the Blair government and helped create the conditions for a political storm involving the BBC in what it described as one of the Corporation's 'biggest editorial crises, the Gilligan-Kelly affair' (BBC 2005a, p.1).

Some of the literature relating to this conflict is usefully reviewed by Robinson *et al.* (2005) who look at four publications² that share a concern with 'government media management strategies and ideological factors' (p.957). The review finds value in each of the titles although it is critical of a general failure to distinguish between 'procedural criticism, for example, relating to the likelihood of military success, and substantive criticism concerning the legitimacy of the war in question' (p.955). Based on these findings the authors suggest further research directions, including the need for a more comprehensive framing analysis, empirical support and methodological clarity in future studies. McQuail (2006) surveys nine titles rather more swiftly, and picks out similar common themes, such as the concern about media-state relations. In fact, the academic literature on the media's coverage of the invasion is far more extensive than this, consisting of many books, collected essays and journal articles alongside a great deal of material produced by journalists, media commentators and a vast amount of Web-based criticism and analysis. This material is of variable quality and ranges from dispassionate assessment to impassioned critique of the mass media's performance. The breadth of commentary is itself indicative of the spectrum of diverse and often intense debate about the war carried out in the wider public sphere. The literature also reveals some striking similarities to the coverage of the 1992 Gulf War, whilst also underscoring significant differences and developments. As with the First Gulf War most of the work has been on news (rather than current affairs) coverage, with the bulk of studies examining British and US media. However, more international and Arab perspectives have been evident (see Kamalipour and Snow 2004), particularly given the growth in

² The books reviewed are by Hoskins (2004); Domke (2004); Knightley (2003) and Miller ed. (2004).

importance of regional broadcasters and news providers, such as Qatari-based Al Jazeera whose rise to prominence during the Afghan and Iraq campaigns mirrored, to some extent, that of CNN in the 1992 war (see Straus 2001; Seib 2005; Snow and Taylor 2006).

It is generally agreed that the transnationalisation of media organisations had continued and, to some extent, accelerated in the period between the First and Second Gulf Wars driven by a series of media mergers and the launch of various satellite broadcasting operations (see Sreberny 2000; Thussu 2004; Pintak 2007). These technological and economic developments offered new challenges to the ability of states to control information flows and forced domestic broadcasters to compete and offer a product attractive to local audiences. For example, CNN and BBC World which had been winning audiences in the Middle East in the mid to late 1990s quickly lost them again to Arab alternatives (ironically, in the case of Al Jazeera - BBC trained) around the turn of the century (see McQueen 2000; Iskander and el-Nawawy 2004; Snow and Taylor 2006). By the time of the 2003 invasion there were already a number of twenty-four-hour, satellite-based Arab news channels running news-gathering operations staffed by experienced, indigenous reporters who proved more attuned to Arab sensibilities than their western competitors (see Bodi 2004; Maluf 2005). Channels such as the Saudi-backed Al-Arabiya, Abu Dhabi TV, Lebanon's Al Manar, Syria's Space Channel and Al Jazeera gave greater emphasis than many western broadcasters to global and regional anti-war sentiment as well as unflinching coverage of the suffering of Iraqi civilians during and after the period of conflict (see Berkowitz 2003; Hammond 2005; Pintak 2006). Some of these channels also offered sharply critical perspectives on the role of the US in the region, detailed charges of torture in the Abu Ghraib scandal (Bennett *et al.* 2007) and sympathetic coverage of 'Iraqi resistance' against foreign occupation (see Hashem 2004; Iskander and el-Nawawy 2004; Miladi 2006), as well as countering what some critics labelled military 'misinformation' (Kellner 2005). Claypole (2003) argues that the military underestimated the influence of the Arab news channels, especially Al Jazeera and its 'archrival' Abu Dhabi TV:

Both organisations were "embedded" in the big cities of Iraq. They had in some instances rendered the coalition "information operational effect" - psy-

ops - impotent, volleying back on propaganda about the collapse of the Iraqi regime and the liberation or uprisings in Basra.

(Claypole 2003, p.11)

Bodi (2004) also notes how Al Jazeera's reporting from Basra and Umm Qasr provided a 'check for US claims that were dutifully being reported by western news channels' (p.245). However, it should be noted here that Arab channels were not alone in doing this. For example, the BBC's Adam Mynott (2003), an 'embedded' reporter with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, details his own counterclaims to the initial announcement that Umm Qasr had been 'secured' by US forces. Indeed the BBC's more sceptical attitude to coalition claims compared to US broadcasters is a running feature of several (mostly American) studies (see Lori and Zenitha 2004; Kellner 2005)

Nevertheless, the BBC's occasional and somewhat tentative qualifications of coalition claims is some way from the detailed refutation and eye-witness denunciation that Arab satellite news channels provided throughout the war. While some critics remarked on a new and hopeful 'contra-flow' of news from the Arab world challenging the predominantly western (and often pro-war) discourse of broadcast television (see Thussu 2007), such optimism is largely misplaced according to Wessler and Adolphsen (2008) who note a frequently selective, sanitised or sceptical reframing of much of the material, when it is included at all. Pintak, for instance, writes of Al Jazeera's coverage: 'Almost nothing was too gruesome to show: close-ups of open wounds, limbs torn asunder, people collapsing in agony. But those pictures were largely ignored by the US networks' (2006, p.208). For Brown (2003) the technological and political transformations, of which Arab satellite broadcasting is a part, created a situation in which the potential visibility of conflict was dramatically enhanced. Thus, 'perception management' became an even more important instrument of the conflict 'through encouraging the involvement of new groups or attempting to win over hostile groups' (p.89). This could be seen even in the name given to the invasion by the US administration 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' – a tag used uncritically by some broadcasters such as Fox News (see Thussu 2004; Alterman, 2004).

Media scholarship has been generally united in its concern about the rise of Murdoch's Fox News Channel which came to prominence in the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. Fox News gave strident and uncritical support to the Bush administration's 'War on Terror', encouraged its correspondents 'to express anger and a thirst for revenge' (Knightley 2002, p.171) and aggressively championed the 2003 war in Iraq. The 'openly partisan agenda of Fox' (Allan and Zelizer 2004, p.6) was a major departure for television broadcasting and the continual blurring or deliberate erasure of the line between 'news' and belligerent Republican, 'opinion' set remarkable new benchmarks in pro-establishment reporting at a time when 'neo-conservative' views were at their peak influence (see Kellner 2005). Fox imported much of its 'shock-jock' language, presentational style and interview techniques from American radio and the hyper-patriotic and unrestrained cheerleading for the war proved extremely popular, especially in the US where Fox's ratings reportedly increased by 300% during the conflict (BBC 2003) making it the most watched cable news channel (see Bennett 2005; Kitty and Greenwald 2005; Kumar 2006). Fox's rapidly rising fortunes added a sense of urgency to the competition for national and international audiences and further intensified some of the features of 24-hour news that had been developing since the First Gulf War, including 'a shift from a serious to a more popular news agenda', more 'human interest' stories and 'the framing of news in terms of infotainment' (Thussu 2004, p.98-99).

Another growing feature of 24-hour news noted by media scholars is the increased use of live reporting from various locations, including the military front. This was enabled by low-cost and lightweight communications technology which permitted satellite transmission and new military-media arrangements giving 'embedded' reporters, in some cases, the opportunity to report directly from the front-line. The use of 'real-time' but 'sanitised' images had increased during the reporting of wars in the Balkans, Central Africa and Afghanistan bringing with it charges of superficiality and sensationalism by news organisations who, in the opinion of some scholars, made 'a virtue out of a minimal approach to analysis and avoiding criticism of powerful government and other entrenched interests which jeopardised their global access' (Allen 1999, p.38-39). However, as Livingstone and Bennett (2003) note, the technology also had potential ramifications for the traditional reliance of war reporters on official sources and in the

framing, gatekeeping and managing of news material, although their study of event-driven news found that officials were 'as much a part of the news as ever' (p.376).

While the use of new technology by broadcasters did allow some on-site reporters to provide documentation of 'the more raw and brutal aspects of war' (Kellner 2005, p.64) it brought added dangers as well. The BBC's Nik Gowing is one of several commentators to note the increase in the targeting of journalists that has followed from the impact of their 'capability to bear witness immediately'. Gowing, who investigated the American bombing of Al Jazeera's Kabul office (see Hoskins 2004), claims that reporters are being actively targeted 'by warriors, warlords and forces of even the most highly developed governments who do not want us to see what they are doing' (Gowing 2003, p.233). Former BBC reporter Martin Bell agrees, denouncing attacks by US military forces on Belgrade television in May 1999, the Al Jazeera office in Kabul in November 2001 and Baghdad television in March 2003 (see also Miller 2004b). These civilian operations, Bell argues, were falsely labelled 'legitimate military targets' and destroyed without a 'whisper of protest' from the American media (Bell 2003, p.40). Brown (2003) alleges that the destruction of Al Jazeera's office and the jamming and air strikes against Taliban Radio in Afghanistan can be understood within the context of Allied 'information operations' (IO) which view media organisations as potential elements of an opponent's military effort (p.92). Bodi (2004) describes similar attacks on Arab journalists including the shelling of the Sheraton hotel in Basra which was being used as a base by Al Jazeera correspondents and the air strike on Abu Dhabi TV and Al Jazeera's Baghdad bureau. Tumber and Palmer's (2004) study gives further details of US military strikes against media including the bombing of Voice of Sharia radio station in Afghanistan and the shelling of the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad on 8th April 2003 (see also Knightley 2002, 2003; Carpentier 2006).

Byrne (2006) writes of the difficulty of critical or investigative reporting in Iraq, particularly in the post-invasion phase as the security situation slipped out of control. She notes that more journalists have died in Iraq than in Vietnam, or even covering Second World War battlefields, with the overwhelming majority of the victims being Iraqis who are often 'deliberately targeted'. She contrasts the dangers of the 'post-war'

phase for ‘unilaterals’ with the relative freedom of movement experienced by journalists until the fall of Baghdad:

It is easy to forget that immediately following the invasion, journalists moved with relative freedom. As the dangers increased for Western journalists, their movements became increasingly restricted to the Green Zone (the heavily guarded Central area of Baghdad where the US authorities live and work) or nearby fortified compounds from which they could venture out only under heavy guard - or embedded with the military.

(Byrne 2006, p.30)

Tumber (2004) notes the problem for ‘unilateral’ journalists and reporters not embedded with military units during the 2003 invasion: ‘the physical dangers they encountered not only from Iraqi attack but also from so-called “friendly fire”.’ (p.204). The BBC, like other broadcasters, used a great deal of live and recorded footage of coalition forces in action in reports from their ‘embedded’ (sometimes uniformed) reporters, such as Ben Brown, Gavin Hewitt and *Panorama*’s Jane Corbin. There were also reports from Baghdad and other parts of the country by non-embedded correspondents such as Rageh Omaar, Fergal Keane and John Simpson – himself the victim of a serious ‘friendly fire’ incident in northern Iraq (see *Panorama Special: in the Line of Fire* tx: 9/11/03). There were also daily press conferences by political and military leaders; running commentary from journalists, presenters, retired military personnel and a considerable amount of other information presented through interactive services, rolling text and frequent ‘breaking news’ headlines.

Comparisons were often made in the media between the First and Second Gulf Wars (see Adams 2003; Simpson 2004) and it was noted that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime was achieved in just twenty-one days and with a smaller force than had been deployed in the forty-three-day military action to remove the Iraqi army from Kuwait in 1991 (Hashem 2004, p.158). The relatively low number of US troops deployed in 2003 was subsequently condemned as a strategy imposed on the US Army, against expert advice, by Donald Rumsfeld and others at the Pentagon which contributed significantly to the chaos and violence in Iraq that followed (see Ricks

2006; Hagan and Bickerton 2007). The inability of the occupying powers to restore order or basic services and allegations of beatings, torture and human rights violations became the focus of widespread media criticism of the post war occupation (see Hull 2004; Kellner 2005; Bennett *et al.* 2007), criticism echoed in *Panorama's* coverage.

However, for most commentators the first three weeks of the campaign to topple the Iraqi government represented an 'astonishingly successful' military operation (Hagan and Bickerton 2007, p.182) with the initial fall of Baghdad marking 'the most conspicuously pro-government moment of news coverage during the war' (Lewis *et al.* 2004, p.154). As US tanks entered the capital the BBC's Nicholas Witchell described it as 'absolutely, without a doubt, a vindication of the strategy' (*BBC News* at 18:00, 9-04-2003) and the BBC's Mark Mardell claimed that, for Tony Blair, the war 'has been a vindication for him' (Breakfast news, BBC1, 10-04-2003). The BBC's political editor Andrew Marr drew similar conclusions, stating that 'Mr Blair is well aware that all his critics out there in the party and beyond aren't going to thank him – because they're only human – for being right when they've been wrong.' (BBC News at Ten, BBC1, 9-04-2003, cited Edwards and Cromwell 2006, p.51-52). For Miller (2003) the BBC's selective and sanitised reporting of the war, over-reliance on military sources and embedded journalists and the use of terms such as 'liberation' to describe US and UK victories meant that 'the BBC enunciated a version of events very similar to that of the government'. These charges are rejected by the BBC's Head of News and Current Affairs Richard Sambrook (2003) who counters what he regards as Miller's 'selective' use of research and cites a study in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* which showed that the BBC was 'even-handed' in its reporting of the US military action and in reporting of casualties.

Contrasting jubilant media commentaries on the fall of Baghdad on April 9th to the highly critical reports some months later detailing the abuse, torture and killing of prisoners, and the apparent inability of the interim authority to govern or even stabilise Iraq amidst a violent insurgency illustrates how the broadcast media coverage of the conflict underwent significant change over time. This view is supported by Tumber and Palmer's (2004) analysis which shows a degree of scepticism of the need for war in

sections of the British press, partially aligned with the newspaper's political allegiances (see also Goddard *et al.* 2008; Hammond 2003) in the pre-invasion phase (until 19th March 2003). In the invasion phase Tumber and Palmer's analysis shows that the media generally retreat to what Hallin (1986) calls the 'sphere of consensus', returning to more critical coverage after the fall of Baghdad (see also Altheide and Grimes 2005). For comparative purposes this survey of coverage and framing of the 'Second Gulf War' is considered in three distinct phases (which for convenience are referred to in this study as 'pre-war', 'war' and 'post-war') before, during and after the period of 'major combat operations' (20th March-30th April 2003). Clearly, however, conflict characterised all three periods, and was arguably undiminished for several years in the 'post-war' period when casualties amongst occupying forces rose to levels more than ten times higher than suffered in the forty-two days of 'major combat operations' [4,597 coalition deaths and more than 30,000 wounded by April 2009] (see Hammond 2005, CNN 2009).

6.1.2 Framing

Current research indicates that official sources increasingly build, set and frame considerable portions of the agenda for the media and that 'official sources substantially influence journalists in the process of (re) framing television news' (Jelen 2007, p.1). As in the First Gulf War there were numerous studies which critically examined the framing of events by the media and found, in many cases, an over-reliance on a narrow spectrum of sources and viewpoints that reflected levels of official agreement and consensus (see Lewis *et al.* 2006; Bennett *et al.* 2007). However, several critics acknowledge that the media's performance was far from homogenous and reflected, to a greater or lesser degree, the lack of consensus on the need for military action at a national and international level, both amongst political 'elites' and ordinary citizens and the diverse response within distinct national journalistic cultures (see Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005, 2008). This is unsurprising given that 'the media do not exist outside the political and social world they describe' (Allen and Seaton 1999, pg.3) and play a key role in publicising discussion and disagreement amongst political actors as well as, in a more limited manner, reaction and debate in the wider public sphere. Furthermore,

as Thussu and Freedman (2003) note, at a time when consensus starts to break down, sections of the media are forced to respond to major public debates, not out of a deep-rooted commitment to 'objective journalism' but, at least in part, for commercial reasons. They argue that while 'the stakes in reporting conflict are high' they are not 'independent of the tensions that arise out of the struggle of political elites to get their way and the determination of citizens to stop them' (Thussu and Freedman 2003, p.8).

Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging a degree of plurality in British media coverage, particularly in the press, patterns of framing emerge from the various studies which bear comparison with that of the 'First Gulf War'. These same patterns of framing can also be found in *Panorama's* coverage and are noted in parenthesis here, before a fuller exploration below (see 6.2). Attention to claims that Saddam Hussein's regime posed a threat to the world through its possession and continued development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were central in the pre-war phase. Associated with this was the progress of UN inspections led by Hans Blix and Mohamed Elbaradi and debates relating to their efficacy ('Chasing Saddam's Weapons' tx: 09.02.03); Saddam's duplicitous, tyrannical leadership and the cruel nature of the Ba'athist state ('Saddam: A Warning from History' tx: 03.11.02); Iraq's links with terrorist organisations (given greater emphasis in the US than in Europe) ('Bin Laden's Biological Threat' tx: 28.10.01) and divisions at the UN and in the British parliament on the timing or justification for military action ('Blair's Road to War' tx: 18.03.03). In the invasion phase: military action, reverses and successes feature prominently along with the use of 'smart' weapons; the rapid advance on, and 'liberation' of, Baghdad ('The Race to Baghdad' tx: 06.04.03) and the collapse of the regime symbolised by the felling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Paradise Square (see Lewis *et al.* 2006)

In the 'post-war' phase more negative coverage dominates with initial celebrations giving way to reports of looting, the breakdown in law and order and loss of control by coalition forces; anti-occupation demonstrations and violence ('The Price of Victory' tx: 28.09.03); ethnic and religious tensions and anti-coalition insurgency ('Simpson in Iraq' 30.01.05); the hunt for Saddam Hussein ('Saddam on the Run' tx: 28.03.04), evidence of his regime's human rights abuses and the discovery of mass graves; the absence of

any Weapons of Mass Destruction ('Still Chasing Saddam's Weapons' tx 23.11.03; 'A Failure of Intelligence' tx 11.07.04); US and British troop casualties and Iraqi civilian deaths; allegations of beatings, torture, indiscriminate killings, murder and collective punishment by coalition troops and security forces (Shamed tx: 19.05.04; A Good Kicking tx: 13.03.07); and political fallout from the war - including the Hutton Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a former British weapons inspector David Kelly ('A Fight to the Death' tx: 21.01.04) (see Wring 2005).

There is a great deal of detailed, critical commentary on these various aspects of the media's representation of the Iraq conflict, particularly in the pre-war and invasion phase. There is not the space here to deal with all of this material, but attention is sharply focussed on how the media uncritically reported various definitive claims and assurances made on WMD by the British and U.S governments and related agencies which subsequently proved to be without foundation (Dorril 2004; Lewis *et al.* 2004; Kumar 2006; Bennett *et al.* 2007). Edwards (2003) accuses British broadcasters and the press of a 'respectful silence' over the claim that Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction represented a serious threat. Edwards suggests the argument that there was "a moral case for war", and 'that the US/UK governments were making "desperate efforts to find a diplomatic alternative" to war - went almost completely unchallenged by the BBC and the media generally' (2003, p.4). While there was coverage of anti-war protests and the largest march in British history on 15th February when one and a half million people marched through London was headline news (Couldry and Downey 2004), the arguments of the anti-war movement and those highly credible experts who challenged the government's claims were largely excluded according to Miller (2003, 2004a, 2004c), Edwards and Cromwell (2004), and Kumar (2006), although this charge was rejected by the BBC's Head of News and Current Affairs Richard Sambrook (2003).

As in the First Gulf War simplistic and stock images of Saddam as a 'super-human monster who threatened the peace of the entire world' (Walden, cited Hoskins 2004, p.105) were readily reproduced in the media. Hiebert (2003) argues that framing a nation as a person has been used in many conflicts to justify a war against his or her

people: 'In the case of Iraq, the person was Saddam Hussein. The individual becomes demonized in all the government's references' (p.244) a fact reflected in previous decades in much of the Anglo-American media's portrayal of Nasser, Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Noriega and Milosevic. As Seaton (1999) has observed 'depicting your enemy as a mad, ravaging tyrant has been part of the stock in trade of propagandists since war began' and the role of the media in inciting these feelings is part of modern warfare (pg.46).

Hiebert (2003) also points out that when the French refused to join the US and U.K. in what the White House described as 'Operation Enduring Freedom', President Jacques Chirac was briefly demonized and Reese (2004) notes how reactions in elements of the US media 'verged on the xenophobic, even in the so-called respectable press' (p. 263). According to Lakoff (2002) the 'nation as person' metaphor becomes part of an elaborate system 'in which there are friendly nations, rogue states, and so forth' (cited Hiebert 2003, p 244). In fact, numerous studies, including that by Tumber and Palmer (2004), show how 'references to policy disagreements between major players were frequent' (p.94) in media coverage of the pre-invasion phase (see Goddard *et al.* 2007, 2008), both at national and international level.

The thematic structure or framing of the news coverage at the beginning of the war shifts away from questions of the necessity or morality of the invasion towards description of the military action. According to research carried out by Semetko and Kolmer for Media Tenor in the first week of the war, military action was at the centre of the coverage in the media in all analysed countries, particularly in the US and in Great Britain. A comparison with US TV news revealed that 'the Arab language news channel Al Jazeera and the German satellite channel Deutsche Welle featured almost twice as much information on the political background of the war' (Media Tenor 2006, p.1).

As in the First Gulf War the British and US media focus on military action and strategy does not result in widespread television reporting of the coalition's carpet bombing of enemy targets, the use of anti-personnel mines, depleted uranium shells, Iraqi troop

casualties or, to a lesser extent, the kind of visceral images of civilian injuries and deaths found on several Arabic television channels (Soloman and Erlich 2003). For Thussu and Freedman (2003) the Pentagon's focus on 'smart' bombs and innovative computerised combat systems allowed 'the military establishment in their PR efforts to present a new and 'bloodless' view of war that looks good on domestic television screens' (p.7). As in previous conflicts this image of a 'virtuous war' combines an emphasis on 'virtual technologies with a claim to embrace humanitarian motives' (Derian 2002 cited Thussu and Freedman 2003 p.7).

Chouliaraki (2005) brings a slightly different emphasis to the missile attacks of 'Gulf 2' when he examines the BBC's framing of the March 2003 aerial campaign on Baghdad as a spectacle of 'shock and awe'. The author argues that transmitting television images of such a 'compelling spectacle' of destruction to a sceptical public 'does beg for the temporary, immediate management of emotion on screen' (p.146). Chouliaraki identifies a dilemma for broadcasters in how to avoid representing coalition forces targeting the city as aggressors, posing it as a question of how 'the BBC [can] deal with this, essentially political, question of distributing the potential for emotion in the spectacle of a city blasted with missiles every night, by its own liberators?' (Ibid, p.146). The answer, for Chouliaraki lies partly through the exclusion of certain images, sounds or linguistic expression of human suffering. The BBC's placing of cameras and narrative framing of the air attack enabled 'objective' reporting according to the Corporation's public service commitments (Ibid, p.153-155). However, the broadcast footage also ensured the 'radical effacement' of Iraqi humanity through the cinematic proxemics of a 'spectacular' light show which, simultaneously, rendered the bombardment devoid of human agency:

[...] the semiotic choices of this footage construe the bombardment of Baghdad as a regime of pity, whereby the aesthetic quality of the spectacle effaces the presence of Iraqi people as human beings and sidelines the question of the coalition troops' identity either as benefactors or bombers. This combination is instrumental in aestheticising the horror of war at the expense of raising issues around legitimacy and the effects of the war.

(Chouliaraki 2005, p.143)

With the war underway, as in the reporting of ‘Gulf 1’, the focus moved to the performance of the coalition forces, with considerable attention given to military reverses and set-backs. This was particularly the case on the BBC, as already mentioned, which adopted a more sceptical attitude to some CENTCOM claims. More critical commentators suggest that such scepticism remained at the level of assessing tactics and performance, or ‘procedural criticism’ rather than the wider issues of the legitimacy of the war (Lewis *et al.* 2006; Chomsky 2006). Freedman (2004) sees this failure to address deeper questions as symptomatic of a relationship between governments and the media that, despite ‘moments of tension’, is ultimately built on mutual dependency and a historical reluctance by editors and correspondents to question the efficacy of war as a means of achieving peace: ‘Reporters have criticised particular military operations often in the hope of facilitating military objectives rather than challenging them, of prosecuting war rather than questioning it’ (p.68).

Media reporting of the fall of Baghdad is analysed in several studies, with the television coverage of the toppling of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Paradise Square on 9th April attracting considerable scrutiny (see Lewis *et al.* 2006). Hammond (2003) describes how tightly framed television images of the dozens of men around the statue gave the impression of a large ecstatic crowd, an impression reinforced on the BBC by Rageh Omar’s excited commentary. Hammond compares these images, suggestive of the fall of the Berlin Wall, with the wide angled shots of the same event circulating on the Internet which showed a largely empty square guarded by the US army. According to Lewis *et al.* (2006) the long shots of a ‘fairly empty square’ made the celebrations much less impressive, yet there ‘were no long shots used in *any* of the reports on the main evening reports on BBC1, ITV, Channel 4 or Sky’ (p.150) [original emphasis]. The episode underscores, in the clearest terms, the ideological dimension of mediatized conflict in which the (literal) framing of an event and the contested meanings implicit in the shot selection and editing of any televised sequence can become a matter of dispute. Hammond links the doubts expressed about television coverage of the statue to broader concerns about the media’s ability to manipulate images and produce illusions of reality: ‘Digitalisation, the Internet, and the growth of global media audiences all play a

role in promoting a greater self-consciousness about image construction in the context of popular political disengagement' (Hammond 2003, p.30).

In the post-war period critical reports on the military campaign and occupation appeared in the broadcast media with far greater frequency. Tumber and Palmer's content analysis of British television coverage shows 'a massive and clear change in focus, as television reporters switch their attention from the conduct of the campaign [...] to matters related to the effects of the military campaign' (2004, p.102) with a 'dominant focus on bad news' in Iraq and sceptical reporting of the government's justification for going to war (Ibid. p.162). Altheide and Grimes' US study notes a similar shift towards 'stronger criticism' with closer attention paid to the major claims about Iraq's support for the 9/11 attacks and the 'elusive' WMD as well as news coverage and visuals of 'Iraqis rioting, resisting US rule', and the 'collapsed infrastructure that was difficult to get running again so that the new regime could govern' (2005, p.630).

Altheide and Grimes argue that the move towards more critical coverage in the 'post-war' period is a predictable step in an 'ordered sequence of activities' that also characterises the reporting of the First Gulf War and other recent conflicts. This sequence, which they label as 'War Programming' predicts media (and academic) critique in the post war period as a mostly acceptable and expected element of a wider 'narrative' or 'script'. War Programming suggests there is a repeating pattern to the media's coverage of conflicts which exhibits a 'game-like structure' in which the dominant discourse dominates in the pre-war and war period, often 'crafted by think tanks and highly organized claim makers' (Ibid. p.617) and in which the critiques 'that contain different frames and assumptions for a serious dialogue' are muted or excluded (p.622), at least until the post-war period. Hence War Programming 'provides a loop, so to speak, around the criticism, and thereby provides a syntax of meaning as well as a temporal point for criticism and dissent to occur, on schedule' (Ibid). While Altheide and Grimes' conceptual scheme is occasionally expressed in somewhat programmatic terms their War Programming model offers a useful intervention that can go some way to explaining the apparently contradictory evidence that is brought to debates around media 'compliance'.

Finally, Taylor's (2008) 'mapping' of four major areas of concern and contestation around issues of 'security, international law, morality and opportunity' (p.73) usefully highlights how many of the arguments employed by a wide range of actors were framed in relation to Iraq War. Taylor explains how these frames functioned in different way both for those opposed to, and for those in favour of, military action. He then goes on to argue that six major 'schools of thought' emerged in the debates about the war that developed the arguments commonly heard in distinct ways. The three pro-war schools of thought are characterised as 'Neo-conservatism' the 'official' line, and 'Liberal Hawks'. The three antiwar schools are labelled 'Antiwar Realists', 'Liberal Doves' and 'Antiwar Radicals' (p.82). While sometimes overlapping in the kind of evidence presented, Taylor's model underlines how each of the six schools based their arguments on a distinct set of premises. Taylor's model offers a useful template for considering the various arguments and frames of understanding at play in the media's treatment of the controversy surrounding the war and the how positions advocated by various groups were represented.

6.1.3 Censorship and 'Flak'

Many studies have indicated that *overt* censorship of the kind seen in previous wars was far less prevalent in reporting the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Partly, this was technologically driven, as ITN's Chief Executive Stewart Purvis has remarked: 'The widespread availability of high-tech kit makes it easier to by-pass the control freaks in uniform' (cited in Clarke 2003, p.13). While this may be true, we should recall that some doubts have been cast on technology's ability to challenge traditional gatekeeping and indexing functions (see Livingstone and Bennett 2003). *Covert* censorship was, several critics maintain, built into the rules of embedding ³ (see Tumber 2004; Bell 2008); and into broadcasters' own taste and decency guidelines (see Hoskins 2004).

³ For instance, restrictions applied to the showing of casualties.

Overt censorship is also a practice that runs against various principles of military-media relations that have been developing since the First World War. Badsey (1996) outlines some of the recent thinking in the British military that plays a role in shaping conflict coverage. This involves treating the media as ‘allies rather than as enemies’ (p.17), avoiding conscious lies and emphasises the importance of a continuous flow of carefully-crafted public relations⁴. He also argues that the ‘dirty tricks’ of psychological warfare, such as black propaganda, should be kept entirely separate from any agency responsible for official contacts with the media (Badsey 1996, p.18). In practice, however, this principle came under severe strain in the post-2001 conflict coverage environment (see Snow and Taylor 2006; Kumar 2006; Davies 2009).

While overt censorship may have diminished, routine manipulation and intimidation of the broadcast media, particularly the BBC, seems to have increased since the First Gulf War fought under John Major’s leadership. While the attempts at intimidating the BBC by Tony Blair’s government in its coverage of Yugoslavia was expressed openly in Parliament (see Simpson 1999, p.10), recalling Thatcher’s admonitions of the BBC over the Falklands, Ireland and other conflicts, much of the intimidation of the BBC’s coverage of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq was direct and behind the scenes. The then BBC Head of News and Current Affairs Richard Sambrook recalls one experience over a report from Afghanistan:

Rageh Omaar had reported from the smouldering remains of the Red Cross food depot which he said had twice been bombed by mistake. Campbell called Sambrook on his mobile with a torrent of foulmouthed abuse, and followed up with a letter saying this was "as pure a piece of Taliban propaganda as the Taliban and the terrorists they harbour could have hoped for." Omaar’s report shows Campbell had lost all perspective.

(cited Ware 2004, p.14)

⁴ See also McLaughlin (2002a) who describes PR is ‘the new censorship’ (p.101).

Alastair Campbell's capacity for 'foulmouthed' intimidation became almost legendary, and its frequency was cited as a factor by BBC management in not spotting a real crisis in the Corporation's relationship with the government over the Gilligan-Kelly affair. Certainly *Panorama* staff had been subject to similar bullying and abusive attacks in the past (see Byrne 2007)⁵, but no examples of such abusive behaviour have yet emerged in the research so far conducted into *Panorama's* coverage of the 2003 war, although it was an almost daily occurrence for BBC News according to evidence submitted at the Hutton Inquiry. Gary Horne, for instance, found no evidence of pressure from the government on *Panorama*:

D.M. I understand that the 'BBC News' got quite a lot of calls from Downing Street.

G.H. Yes, but they were in an entirely different physical building.

D.M. So that was pressure was on 'BBC News' and not on current affairs?

G.H. Not on current affairs. Or, if it was, it wasn't coming through or being talked about.

(personal communication, October 10, 2007)

In fact most *Panorama* staff are keen to point how 'free' of interference and intimidation they were when making programmes about the Iraq invasion⁶ by contrast to Roger Bolton's gruelling experience both at the BBC and ITV following intense government 'flak' over his coverage of Republican paramilitary activity in the late 1970s and 1980s (cf Bolton 1990, 1997; Thames Television 1989; Wilby 2006).

⁵ Byrne's piece on foul-mouthed abuse by a Health Department minister's 'spin-doctor' in a telephone call to Eamonn Matthews was confirmed in my interview with the former *Panorama* producer. Other interviewees recall intimidation from previous administrations. For instance, David Lomax recalls David Mellor [in John Major's Conservative Government] 'making noises about the licence fee' when unhappy about a programme (personal communication, November 14, 2007).

⁶ Tom Giles, John Ware and Mike Rubin make this point very forcefully in interviews conducted for this research.

Interestingly, the only interviewee who recalls any ‘flak’ against *Panorama* around the Second Gulf War is former Director General Greg Dyke, who makes the point that the Downing Street ‘hated’ *Panorama*, especially after a report by John Ware revealed the government was effectively re-announcing spending commitments⁷ [Spin Doctors tx: 13-3-2000]. He claims that Alastair Campbell ‘would go for them at every available opportunity’. However Dyke is unable to recall any specific *Panorama* programmes relating to the war that were subject to government flak:

DM: It’s funny because all the Panorama people I’ve talked to, and I’ve talked to about ten of them, they all deny that there was any pressure on them from the Government.

GD: What from Campbell?

DM: Well they said all the pressure was on News, they said they didn’t get any on Panorama.

GD: Well I don’t think that’s true. I got complaints about them.

DM: Did you? About the Panorama programmes?

GD: Yes about certain *Panorama* programmes. Not a great deal. I mean to be fair I didn’t get a whole lot of pressure the time I was there until we got to Iraq.

(personal communication, October 16, 2009)

On the available evidence from interviews with current and former *Panorama* staff the conclusion can be drawn that government ‘flak’ was unlikely to be an overt influence on coverage of the invasion of Iraq in the same way it had been with previous conflicts such as Northern Ireland and Suez (see Chapter 4.4). Nevertheless, ‘flak’ was certainly a prominent feature of the BBC’s relationship with the government for other programme makers⁸ and, given *Panorama*’s tense relations with governments on

⁷ In ‘Spin Doctors’ John Ware investigates accusations that Government announcements on the NHS amount to recycling the same information to create a more positive ‘spin’ than the real figures.

⁸ For example, Kevin Marsh Radio 4’ *Today* Editor at the time of the war claimed that calls from Downing Street were, at one point, on an *hourly* basis (personal communication).

previous occasions, this may have played a more subtle role in shaping or constraining coverage of the war.

6.1.4 Conclusion

As the BBC's Annual Report for 2004 makes clear, the story dominating the year was the war in Iraq and its aftermath:

The conspicuous lack of national consensus here meant that, once again, the BBC's impartiality came under intense scrutiny. BBC News passed the test. An ICM poll in April 2003 indicated that it had sustained its position as the best and most trusted provider of news.

(BBC 2004a, p.43)

These findings are to some extent supported in a survey by Lewis (2003) in which respondents thought the BBC 'more trustworthy' on this subject than the other UK channels (cited Tumber and Palmer 2004, p.99). The BBC's Annual Report does, unsurprisingly, admit some limitations. Military sources were sometimes not treated with enough scepticism; the BBC lagged behind the technological advances of some of its rivals and, importantly, 'current affairs special programmes did not make the expected impact' (Ibid). It is unclear if *Panorama* is amongst the current affairs programmes that 'did not make the expected impact' and why this should be so is likely to be beyond the scope of this study (which does not deal with audience reception of the programmes), although some answers may lie in its findings. These reservations, notwithstanding, the BBC Annual Report is mostly upbeat about the BBC performance in the war, despite the bruising Hutton Inquiry, claiming there was 'much to be proud of' both in the breadth and depth of the coverage, in the range of Arab and Muslim opinion, and in some outstanding defence analysis on *Newsnight* and *The World at One*' (Ibid). There is no specific mention made of *Panorama* in the report.

A similar, generally clean health check is found in the Neil review team's report entitled *The BBC's journalism after Hutton* which states that 'the BBC is independent of both state and partisan interests, and will strive to be an independent monitor of powerful

institutions and individuals' (BBC 2004b, p.7). How far the BBC can, in fact, maintain real independence from powerful institutions like the government at times of war will no doubt continue to exercise critics and academics so long as the BBC and international conflicts involving U.K. forces exist. While the latter is a virtual certainty, the continued existence of the BBC, especially in its present form, is in more doubt. As Greg Dyke remarked in one of many parting shots at the Labour government he once supported:

[...] I did have the Dr. Kelly affair, where, by his actions, Gordon Brown has virtually admitted we were right, and yet the BBC has been bombarded by the Government in the three years since the affair in an attempt to destabilise the organisation. My worry is that in this new environment they might succeed.

(Dyke 2007, p.2)

On a broader level I will conclude this survey of the literature and key debates around conflict coverage by looking forward to the unenviable prospect of the media's reporting of future wars. Young and Jesser, exploring 'political and military liason' and perception management in 1997 predicted, with remarkable prescience, how it was likely to apply in future conflicts:

The only variables will be the level of domestic political concern or international objection and the only saving grace for a generally unprepared media, lacking the central control or organisation to counter this form of pre-planned manipulation, is if the military should receive a setback or the conflict becomes protracted. Such a situation makes it difficult for the military to maintain popular enthusiasm. It also affords the media the opportunity to break free of its political and military constraints and use independent means to present a critical analysis.

(Young and Jesser 1997, p.295)

Standing back from the debates outlined above, it seems clear that Young and Jesser's conclusion is likely to apply to US and British mainstream broadcast media coverage of future wars. The reporting of conflict involving British forces is likely to prove as

problematic and controversial for the BBC as ever so long as the BBC is serious in its commitment to being an ‘independent monitor of powerful institutions’ and maintaining its duty ‘to offer a diversity of opinion’ that is not merely token (Born 2005, p.378). Should another war pass by without controversy for the BBC or expression of deep dissatisfaction from major centres of power it seems reasonable to assume it would have failed in these fundamental public service commitments.

We now turn to a closer analysis of *Panorama*’s coverage of the Second Gulf War.

6.2 *Panorama*'s coverage of 'Gulf II'

6.2.1 Introduction

As we have seen, issues of 'information management' and government 'pressure' on the BBC twinned with concerns about a BBC culture of 'shared political assumptions' and uncritical over-reliance on 'official' sources frame many of the debates around the Corporation's handling of the Iraq War. How far do *Panorama* broadcasts relating to the Iraq conflict reinforce or undermine these concerns? Does *Panorama*'s reporting provide further evidence in support of models of media performance within the critical tradition which indicate the privileging of 'elite' opinion and the marginalisation of dissenting viewpoints? To what extent do consensus (or dissensus) views expressed within the House of Commons establish guiding frameworks for *Panorama*'s conflict coverage (see Groshek 2008)? Is there an over-reliance on official sources or examples of so-called 'information management' in episodes dealing with different phases of the war?

6.2.2 Hypotheses for all phases of conflict

In order to compare *Panorama*'s coverage of the 1991 and 2003 wars against Iraq the same hypotheses (cf. chapter 5.4) are posed to test a body of evidence provided by twenty-five *Panorama* episodes dealing with the lead up to, invasion and occupation of Iraq transmitted between October 2001 and October 2005. Twenty-one of the twenty-five programmes were pre-recorded for which transcripts were available from the *Panorama* website. These twenty-one transcripts were then coded using a variation of the coding key developed for the First Gulf War (see Appendix 2.6). All twenty-five episodes were watched and further transcription work was carried out on the remaining four live episodes which are included in the analysis of interviewees and reporter/presenter's contribution.

Answering the research questions and enabling a comparison between the two conflicts requires testing the four hypotheses employed when looking at the First Gulf War, namely:

H1. Frames of debate in *Panorama*'s coverage of the war are indexed to the degree and level of 'parliamentary consensus'.

H2. There is less substantively framed coverage in *Panorama*'s coverage of the First Gulf War of 1991 when parliamentary consensus was greater [563 M.P.s in support of military action, 34 against] than the 2003 Gulf War where consensus was considered low [396 to 217 without UN mandate] (cf. chapters 5.2; 5.3; 6.1).

H3. Official UK/US sources ('primary definers') predominate in all *Panorama* coverage (cf. chapter 6.1).

H4. Dissenting opinion on the legality, morality and motives (rather than timing, strategy or conditions) for the war have a marginal presence in *Panorama*. Arguments against the war are usually advanced only when they emerge within powerful institutions, such as Parliament, the US Congress or the military establishment and echo divergent views discussed within the 'Sphere of Legitimate Controversy' (cf. chapter 5.3, 6.1).

As in the discussion of the First Gulf War *Panorama*'s coverage will be divided into three major periods in order to test these hypotheses in ways that take account of Altheide and Grimes (2005) 'War Programming' model (see Chapter 6.1), whilst retaining attention to the interrelated issues of framing, sourcing and indexing. As the pre-invasion phase was the period in which Parliamentary consensus was most conspicuous by its absence greater attention is paid to this period, including a qualitative framing analysis of the contribution of reporters/presenters (see Chapter 3) and the visual impact of the programmes. A quantitative framing analysis of the

reporter/presenter's contribution to the reports for the pre-war period that parallels the interviewee coding is also employed (see discussion in Chapter 3 and below).

6.2.3 *Panorama* and Iraq

The BBC's legal duty to maintain 'impartiality' and 'balance' in its news and current affairs coverage proved especially difficult to meet to everyone's satisfaction in the case of the Iraq war because the opposing positions were so far apart and so entrenched. The BBC was accused, on the one hand, of being 'anti-war' by elements of the US and British press and the British Government. For instance, Alastair Campbell, the Government's Communications Director alleged that 'there was an agenda in large parts of the BBC... there was a disproportionate focus upon, if you like, the dissent, the opposition, to our position' (Campbell cited *Panorama*: 'A Fight to the Death' tx: 21.01.04). The BBC was also accused by some who were opposed to the war as being slavishly uncritical or of being cowed by a hostile government who were muttering threats about the license fee and their charter, a threat, allegedly, made directly by Tessa Jowell (Ibid). For some critics the charge extended to BBC News and Current Affairs effectively legitimising the war through the systematic exclusion of dissenting voices (Edwards and Cromwell, 2006). These and other allegations of 'bias' by either side were vigorously denied by those working in the wider industry (Tait, 2004.), the BBC (Sambrook, 2004) and *Panorama* (Simpson, 2003), specifically.

What does a closer examination of *Panorama*'s coverage of the war reveal? Twenty-five of the *Panorama* episodes that deal with the topic of Iraq since 2000 (see Appendix 1.1) reveal a sense of how the invasion and occupation unfolded as a series of debates about the justification for war, the conduct of the war and the aftermath of the war. A focus on personalities ('Saddam', 'Blair' or 'Bush') is apparent in the titles of eleven of the programmes, such as: 'Saddam - A Warning from History' [tx: 03.11.02], or 'Blair's War' [tx: 23.03.03]. There are also an unusual number of programmes with audience participation in them – interactive specials '*Panorama* Interactive: Iraq Crisis' [tx: 29.09.02], national and international audience debates 'Tackling Saddam' [tx: 02.02.03], 'Questions from a Divided World' [tx: 30.03.03] and 'After Saddam' [tx:

13.04.10] which reflect one *Panorama* strategy for dealing with public and establishment divisions around the subject. The qualitative, textual analysis of the broadcast material that follows below is supported by a quantitative study which sets out to determine an objective measure of *Panorama* airtime allocated to the range of views that existed in relation to the war (see Appendix 2.8). The quantitative study makes use of the same coding scheme used in the study of the First Gulf War (with small variations in the descriptors relating to the specific details of the wars - see chapter 5.4 and Appendix 2.6) to allow comparison of coverage of the conflicts. An attempt to code *Panorama* reporter or presenter input along similar lines is also made in the crucial pre-war period when consensus was weakest and public opinion, arguably most open to change. Given the traditional role of presenter/reporter as 'devil's advocate' and at the 'fulcrum' of the debate (see Kumar 1975 and discussion chapter 4.3) this exercise proved problematic but nevertheless provided further important evidence of how the debates were structured and led. For both 'Bin Laden's Biological Threat' and 'The Case Against Saddam', for instance, a coding of the presenter's contribution indicates more than 80% to be framed in ways congruent with pro-war or partially pro-war views (see Appendix 2.8.1). Reporter/presenter contributions were coded in the same way as other contributors (i.e. code 1 'support'; code 2 'partial support'; code 3 'neutral'; code 4 'partial opposition'; code 5 'opposition' and code 6 'official Iraqi view'). However, this is not to suggest that these statements represented the reporter or presenter's views, but rather that particular themes/problem definitions emerge from the reporter/presenter's contribution which feed into or support particular 'packages' and 'schools of thought' (see Taylor 2008). Furthermore, in many cases, as we shall see, reporters and presenters were simply 'doing their job' and reporting the views of others in a manner consistent with the BBC's commitment to 'balance and impartiality' (see chapter 4). The coding scheme is included in Appendix 2.6 and further discussion of its effectiveness can be found later in this chapter.

6.2.4 Findings: Pre-War Phase

Nine *Panorama* programmes related to the conflict are broadcast between October 2001 and the invasion of Iraq which commenced on 20th March 2003. Five of these are pre-recorded ‘investigations’ composed largely of reportage, analysis, extensive use of library footage and interviews (‘Bin Laden’s Biological Threat’, ‘The Case Against Saddam’, ‘Saddam a Warning from History’, ‘The Case Against War’ and ‘Chasing Saddam’s Weapons’). The remaining four live broadcasts are in the form of two ‘interactive’ debates (‘Iraq Crisis Interactive’ and ‘Tackling Saddam’) in which BBC reporters and correspondents responded to viewers’ questions; and two studio debates – one featuring invited guests in New York and Amman and the second amongst politicians and journalists/commentators on the eve of war in London.

A key aspect of the framing of the Iraq war was the use of fear (see chapter 6.1). This was evident from the earliest *Panorama* report which dealt with Iraq, ‘Bin Laden’s Biological Threat’ [tx: 28.10.2001] which made a link between the Iraq regime and Al Qaida operatives, a link later shown to be false and possibly a result of deliberate ‘misinformation’ (see below). Immediately following the ten second *Panorama* signature tune and revolving globe graphic, Tom Mangold’s voice-over sets the scene against low synthesiser notes and an eerie high-pitched electronic warble akin to that found in the horror film genre:

TOM MANGOLD: The fear is as old as history. The plague doctor of the middle ages helpless in the continent where disease killed millions. Today the images have returned and with them the fear that disease may walk the land once more.

This chilling introduction is accompanied by black-and-white library footage of viruses attacking a cell under a microscope and half-lit studio shots of a man in a leather Medieval plague doctor’s mask. This cuts quickly to a close-up of the eyes of the mask lit so that they appear empty, which then cuts to an identically-framed close-up and then

medium-shot of a man in contemporary biological warfare suit. The low, insistent synthesiser notes continue as the images dissolves to sheer white. From white there is another dissolve to the image of a screen in a mocked-up laboratory on which television footage of Tony Blair giving a speech to Parliament is projected - with the subtitle '14th September 2001':

TONY BLAIR: [Speaking in the House] We know that they would, if they could, go further and use chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons of mass destruction. We know also that there are groups or people occasionally states who will trade the technology and capability of such weapons.

During this speech the camera cuts from the screen framed by studio-lit test tubes to a close up of Tony Blair's face before cutting to another establishing shot of the screen and lab. The camera tilts down towards an underlit glass laboratory preparation area on which more test tubes, beakers of blue and yellow liquids and other chemistry paraphernalia is arranged and against which rests a colour photograph of Osama Bin Laden. The voice-over during this sequence offers the possibility that such frightening images will be exposed as government 'scare-mongering':

MANGOLD: Could there really be a biological attack by Al Qaeda terrorists and are we ready for it if there is? Tonight *Panorama* sorts facts from fears and investigates the reality behind six weeks that have shaken the world.

In Corner's (1996) typography of documentary discourse, the opening shots described above could be characterised as in an 'associative mode' as the 'pro-filmic' shot types and editing, rely on a set of horror and science-thriller (cf. *The Satan Bug* 1965; *The Andromeda Strain* 1971; *Outbreak* 1995) generic conventions. As Corner notes, such image references 'may be primarily aesthetic rather than cognitive' aiming to produce an effect on the audience and not necessarily 'increased informational yield' (p.29). After this attention-grabbing introduction the programme switches into a less 'pro-filmic' 'illustrative mode' employing a series of clips from recent news footage to illustrate the emerging argument. It starts with a medium shot of George Bush answering journalists' questions, before moving to rapidly-cut images of postal workers

in face masks, investigators removing sacks of post from US government buildings in biological-weapons suits and spraying each other to remove possible anthrax contamination:

24 October 2001

GEORGE BUSH: First of all I don't have anthrax.

MANGOLD: The man in the White House may have escaped but three people have been murdered by proxy, another ten infected and thirty-two more exposed. Letters laced with anthrax have closed Congress and sent the US mail service into chaos. The perpetrators remain free. No link has been established to Bin Laden but there is growing evidence in the West of his involvement in the new horror of biological terrorism.

Before looking at the allegations made against Iraq in the programme, what subsequently emerged as the background to the events portrayed in these clips is worth dwelling on briefly here as it reveals important omissions never addressed in subsequent *Panorama* investigations into WMD. Not mentioned in Mangold's report is that the attacks began only one week after September 11th with anthrax letters mailed to the NBC television network and New York Post, but which were not reported until more than two weeks after they were opened (see Rosenberg 2002). It was, according to Rosenberg's account, a further week after the death of the first victim before reports on NBC and elsewhere acknowledged that letters had been received by media organisations containing anthrax spores and threats of more attacks. By this time more deadly letters had already been posted to Democrat Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (New York Times 2009). From the middle of October to the end of November four or five letters bearing the same handwriting and containing lethal, 'weaponised' anthrax were sent, resulting in eighteen cases of infection and five deaths. Thirty-three thousand Americans were administered anthrax vaccines or other drugs (Kasuya *et al.* 2005), many of which had severe side effects and the postal service was forced to spend billions of dollars to protect their workers from possible attacks (Baltimore Sun 2002).

However, almost as soon as it became clear that the anthrax had originated in an American US germ warfare laboratory (see New York Times 2009), media interest in the case appeared to 'fizzle out' (see Monbiot 2002). Television networks and

newspapers that had been direct victims of the attacks seemed unperturbed two months later that those responsible for the deaths of five people, an assassination attempt on the leadership of the Democratic party and the temporary shut down of parts of the US government and postal services were still at large (cf. Robin's 2004 study of media coverage). No suspects were ever apprehended and put on trial, as Mangold notes, and yet neither *Panorama* nor any other British or US teams of investigative reporters looked at the failed FBI investigation or the possibility that the same killers might strike again. It seems the media were unwilling to follow the trail of the killer into what Tom Engelhardt describes as: 'the darkest heartlands of US bioweapons research, and so into the heart of Cold War military R&D from which so much has emerged to endanger our world.' (Engelhardt, 2002, p.1).

Later in 'Bin Laden's Biological Threat' evidence is brought forward of meetings between the 9-11 plotter and Iraqi officials that has subsequently been denied by the CIA and thoroughly discredited (Tagliabue 2001, Kaufmann 2004) but in 2001 it is presented in the report as fact. Sitting at Prague Airport Tom Mangold addresses the camera in 'evidential mode' (see Corner 1996) sitting in the location the 9-11 plotter and an Iraqi intelligence officer are supposed to have met, Mangold faces the camera and presents the following evidence:

MANGOLD: [...] The reason we know the terrorist and the Iraqi spy met here at Prague Airport on at least one occasion is because they were photographed together by the Czech Security Services on the day that Atta flew to the United States. But what was Mohamed Atta plotting, and why did he have to come so far out of his way just to meet the man who was Saddam Hussein's station chief in Prague?

JIM WOOLSEY (Director, CIA, 1993-95)

It looks extremely suspicious and I doubt very seriously if Mr Atta was in that lovely city of Prague as a tourist and just happened to chance upon an Iraqi intelligence officer as his tour guide on two occasions, and I also, I rather doubt that his interest in crop-dusting was at that point because he was interested in a second career. He knew he had no second career. Those are both extremely suspicious acts on his part.

Jim Woolsey is interviewed in a conventional manner wearing a suit and tie and filmed in medium close up (MCU) lit, like many of the interviewees, in a muted low-key style

with what appears to be a key light and possibly a fill light so that some shadows are cast on his face. The location seems to be an office in an urban area although the window he sits in front of has the net curtains drawn which mostly obscure the view. As with other interviews, 'name supers' (subtitles) at the bottom left of the screen next to a *Panorama* logo fade in and out briefly at the beginning of the sequence to indicate his status, in this case as 'Director, CIA, 1993-95'. The interview with Woolsey appears to represent confirmation of the meeting between Mohamed Atta and an Iraq spy by US intelligence sources, but on closer inspection it is clear the account of the meeting has not been officially verified at all, but simply commented on by a former intelligence chief.

In a telephone interview with this author Tom Mangold admits that the information about the meeting was supplied by a single (named) source from Czech intelligence and that reports of the supposedly photographed meeting could not be corroborated further at the time. In the interview Mangold describes the information given by his source as 'totally untrue'. Queried if he *knew* it was untrue, he replies, 'Yes, I was totally lied to'. It was then put to Mangold that: 'If it was a lie, that suggests it was disinformation' to which he answers, 'Yes, it was.' When asked why Czech intelligence was feeding false information to him, he replies: 'I have no idea what the broader plan there was, but it was complete... [pause] ...it was all bollocks. Complete nonsense.' (interviewed 4th September 2009). Former CIA director Jim Woolsey's wry, carefully worded assessment of this information for the *Panorama* episode is difficult to explain, but may suggest a form of 'off-the-record' American intelligence endorsement and, at worst, possible involvement in 'planting' the story. However, Tom Mangold was unwilling to speculate in this area: 'It was some time ago and I can't remember' and so without further evidence the precise background to this investigation remains unclear. Jim Woolsey appears twice in the programme. Each appearance is less than thirty seconds, but each is a highly effective 'soundbite'. His description of the weapons inspector's success in relation to biological weapons is withering:

Saddam succeeded in keeping all biological agents and all actual material away from the inspectors, probably so they couldn't analyse it and type it, and he said that he destroyed all of his biological weapons and material for it, and if you believe that, as we say over here, I have a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell you.

The cynical dismissal of Iraqi claims is given extra credence by the calm and measured tone it is delivered in. Assessing material offered by intelligence agencies and related individuals can be problematic as the current *Panorama* Editor Tom Giles indicated in interview:

D.M: *Is there a problem with using security services as your information?*

T.G: Of course there is.

D.M: *I mean when you talk about authoritative and reliable sources...*

T.G: You've got virtually no way of vouchsafing it and they may very well have, you know, a clear agenda in what they're telling you. And you have to be very, very careful. Clearly in the run to war, if someone's telling you 'Well we have complete, you know, we're absolutely sure.' It comes down to your confidence in that source.

D.M: *So do you think there's more scepticism now, post 2003, of intelligence claims?*

T.G: Absolutely. I mean the full consequence of what happened with the Gilligan affair, the subsequent Butler Inquiry, the Hutton Inquiry, all these inquiries being absolutely to see, to reveal once and for all, though in some ways it's amazing anyone believed otherwise, the politicisation of the security services. Of course that has made everyone far more suspicious, far more suspicious of the sorts of information that was coming out.

(personal communication, June 1, 2009)

By relying on an unchallenged, and ultimately unreliable, single source a case could be made that 'Bin Laden's Bomb' failed in terms of the legal requirement on current affairs programme makers to provide 'impartial', 'balanced' and factually correct information (see chapter 4). This is because while *Panorama* only dealt with the 'threat' from Iraq in parts of the programme, no counter-arguments were set forward to cast doubt on the (now discredited) evidence of links between Saddam's regime and Al Qaeda, although British intelligence doubts on this score were voiced by Jane Corbin eleven months later in 'Iraq Crisis Interactive' (see below). Of the seventeen interviews conducted for 'Bin Laden's Bomb' one was with Khidir Hamza, former Head of Iraqi Nuclear Weapons Programme, who describes how Saddam had 'no compunction' about using WMD

adding that 'looking at it now, if he could use it with complete deniability, he would'. A second is with Nabeel Musawi of the Iraqi Opposition National Congress seeking Saddam Hussein's overthrow. Musawi, interviewed in what appears to be a hotel suite, describes his discussion with an anonymous defector from Iraq's Intelligence Services recently debriefed by American Intelligence agents. A grainy, black-and-white photograph of a young, bald man wearing shaded spectacles taken from behind comes into focus, held at an angle against a bright x-ray viewer-type screen. In front of this espionage-style photograph of the man (who we assume is the defector) a metal grid moves shakily like an aircraft bomb target, perhaps to give the impression of a hunted individual who, as Mangold explains, 'needs to stay in hiding'. The unnamed Lieutenant General was alleged to have witnessed the training of Arab Afghans in Salman Pak, which Mangold describes as 'home of the [Iraqi] biological weapons programme'.

NABEEL MUSAWI: He witnessed on many occasions Arab Afghans going in and out of the camp in Salman Pak, but specifically he saw the training of Arab Afghans by an Iraqi intelligence officer, another Lieutenant General who was training them on hijack [sic] and the protection of planes on a Boeing 707 used in the same camp.

The alleged training of 'Arab Afghans' by Iraqi intelligence 'close to Saddam's continuing biological warfare activities' is made by an unnamed source and reported by an intermediary in the Iraqi Opposition National Congress, but goes unchallenged in the programme. Amongst the other interviewees are six British or US emergency services/health experts tasked with dealing with WMD attacks; the Chairman of the US House Intelligence Committee who recommends that the intelligence community 'connect those dots and test it and say is this something that is possible'; and a former Head of the Soviet Biological Warfare Programme. No experts, academics or former weapons inspectors are brought forward to throw doubts on the claims of links between Iraq and Al Qaeda despite widespread scepticism of any such connection (see Appendix 2.5). As Hans Blix, Director of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) (2000-2003) has written it was not 'seriously claimed that there was any significant link between the Iraqi regime and those responsible for the [9-11] terror attack' (2005, p.266). Yet *Panorama* makes such a link

in 'Bin Laden's Bomb' supported by the testimony of a number of apparently credible sources.

In 'The Case Against Saddam' (tx: 23.09.02) *Panorama* examines 'Saddam's history of developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and examines just what he may have' (BBC 2010).

JANE CORBIN

We've put together the hard evidence of what he's actually got today and what he stands a good chance of getting in the not too distant future. Tonight we ask what is the real case against Saddam Hussein and is it strong enough to justify going to war?

Corbin's introduction is followed by library footage of Saddam Hussein in Paris in 1975 meeting the then Prime Minister of France, Jacques Chirac. Just before we see Saddam Hussein there are library shots of the Eiffel Tower and tourists in Paris accompanied by music. This begins, under the image of the Eiffel Tower, with the opening bars of *The Godfather* (1972) soundtrack which may have been selected to suggest Saddam Hussein's ruthless, criminal character. The image of the Eiffel Tower is followed by a brief shot of a tourist painting Notre Dame Cathedral as the voice-over adds: 'Paris, 1975, a visitor with a secret ambition arrived on a costly shopping spree'. There is a zoom on a large, white, low-rise building in a more rural setting which cuts to Saddam Hussein sitting next to Jacques Chirac and then of him being led, by men in white lab coats, on a tour of a nuclear facility. Corbin explains that Saddam had come to buy a nuclear reactor 'for peaceful purposes, he said'. The next shot shows Saddam in Iraq and the music segues into a sinister Arabic-style horn accompaniment, perhaps from a film such as Alexander Korda's *The Thief of Baghdad* (1940), as Corbin's voice-over tells us: 'But back in Baghdad Saddam was soon summoning his top atomic energy officials'.

Now it is revealed that Saddam's real plan was to develop a bomb and he persuaded some of his top scientists, using threats and brutal torture techniques to work on this secret weapons programme. Interviews with Dr Hussein Al Shahrstani, former Senior

Scientific Advisor, Atomic Energy Organisation of Iraq who spent eleven years in an Iraqi prison, give vivid testimony to this method of persuading scientists to work on the nuclear programme. Library footage of the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor at Osirak in 1981 are followed by footage from a *Panorama* programme made in 1990 showing how Saddam Hussein was undeterred in his nuclear ambition and was using his 'vast oil reserves' to buy nuclear technology from western companies. The use of the *Panorama* archive is made explicit in 'The Case Against Saddam' by rolling the earlier 1990-style *Panorama* globe graphic before the sequence and, later, by including shots of a younger-looking Jane Corbin conducting the interviews.

An interview with Richard Perle begins around six minutes into the programme. Perle is one of 68 US interviewees compared to 70 British interviewees in the 25 episodes studied (excluding members of the public) showing the very strong trans-Atlantic flavour of *Panorama*'s coverage as in Gulf 1 (see Appendix 2.5). Perle is introduced as Chairman of the Defence Policy Board at the Department of Defence, but is speaking to *Panorama* 'in his personal capacity'. He begins by arguing that allowing Saddam to develop his weapons would mean 'we will be unable to oppose his ambitions whatever they may turn out to be'. The interview filmed in a darkened studio setting is divided into seven different segments and is intercut with a variety of other interviews, many from the *Panorama* archive, along thematic lines. Interviewees from the archive include senior British and US military figures such as General Sir Peter De La Billiere (Commander, UK Forces, Gulf War) and General Colin Powell interviewed in 1996 and a contemporary interview with Dr David Kay (Chief Nuclear Weapons Inspector, 1991-92) discussing Iraq's nuclear and chemical weapons capability in the 1990s.

'The Case Against Saddam' [tx: 23/09/02] uses a number of previous *Panorama* investigations of the Iraqi regime to build its case alongside information from a government dossier which was yet to be released to Parliament. Reporting from a studio with banks of computer screens and large aerial photographs scattered across the desk dramatically lit in much the same way as the opening sequence in 'Bin Laden's

Biological Threat' Jane Corbin uses evidence from earlier *Panoramas* and the new, as yet 'unreleased' evidence from intelligence services to make the following assessment:

CORBIN: So where has Saddam got to in rebuilding his chemical weapons capability today? He still has enough material to manufacture 200 tons of VX gas in just a few weeks. And he's got several hundred tons of mustard gas, the choking agent he's used before, plus several thousand munitions to deliver it on the battlefield. This summer a chemical plant at Faluja showed signs of being rebuilt after an earlier pounding from British and US warplanes. Satellite pictures revealed new chemical storage tanks, buildings and piping systems. The CIA believes Saddam is up to his old tricks, producing chlorine here, but far more than Iraq actually needs. Chlorine is an ingredient in some chemical weapons.

Corbin's evidence suggests that government and/or US intelligence services cooperated extensively with *Panorama* in the making of the programme, a view supported by statements such as: 'The CIA believes Saddam is up to his old tricks'. Unlike 'Bin Laden's Biological Threat', however, counterarguments are given space, such as comments by Sir Michael Quinlan former Permanent Under-Secretary Minister of Defence (1988-92) who says 415 words (coded partial opposition) and the more critical former UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Iraq Hans von Sponek (168 words – coded full opposition). In fact, grading degrees of support or opposition becomes problematic as the following quote makes clear. Von Sponek is asked by Corbin:

CORBIN: The reporters only saw one small part of the vast complex and not being experts could only report what they Iraqis told them. But he's known to have hidden his chemical weapons production facilities all over the place. There are many sites with dual use, so it's hard to really know what's going on in Iraq.

SPONECK: I would agree that it is not easy to know what's happening in Iraq, but the important point to remember is that we have in different areas, in the humanitarian field as well as in the disarmament field, we have examples where information is given to the public, information is given to political decision makers, which is wrong. That was what worries me because you don't want to end up involving Europe and the US in a war based on conjecture and disinformation.

Coding Corbin here as neutral is clearly an issue, as is Hans von Sponek's response. Coded 5 as oppositional, it could equally be coded 4 as partly oppositional as von Sponek (a prominent anti-war figure) admits some degree of uncertainty as to 'what's happening in Iraq'. Similarly, Sir Michael Quinlan's doubts (coded 4), while diplomatically expressed and employing the 'not enough evidence' argument, are forceful enough to merit full opposition coding (5):

SIR MICHAL QUINLAN: I find the desire to push this forward in great haste disquieting. No one claims that Saddam has nuclear weapons now. I've seen no compelling evidence that he is very close to getting nuclear weapons and that stands quite aside from the question of even if he has them. Even if one day he gets them, why will not deterrence work as it has in so many other contexts and as it did with Saddam?

Coding of the entire transcript, even assuming Corbin's commentary as 'neutral' indicates a more than three-to-one 'bias' towards broadly pro-war arguments (21.3% coded partial or full opposition against 73.7% supportive or partially supportive). Yet, Corbin's conclusion at the end of the programme underlines the problem of coding reporters as 'neutral' and is indicative of the direction pointed by most of the evidence presented:

CORBIN: The dilemma is that if politicians do not act, Saddam will continue down the nuclear path. But if he's attacked, then he may use his chemical or biological agents. The hawks are clear where America's interests lie.

Well, if containment has failed with Saddam Hussein, what message does that send to other states seeking weapons of mass destruction about the attitude America will take towards them?

PERLE: Well, I hope it sends the message that if you pursue weapons of mass destruction and if you are a threat to the United States, we will not stand by and allow you to achieve your objectives.

CORBIN: The Bush administration has put Saddam and the rest of the world on notice. This is a new era. Time for Saddam Hussein is running out.

The interview with the hawkish Richard Perle was one of five appearances in separate *Panorama* episodes in which he laid out the neo-conservative strategy (a total of 1,593 words).

Corbin's concluding remarks make three assumptions based on this 'evidence': firstly, that the 'Saddam's regime' had an active and potentially threatening nuclear programme, secondly, that it was in possession of chemical or biological agents and thirdly that 'containment' has failed to prevent Saddam Hussein developing these weapons. As Scott Ritter and other former weapons inspectors not interviewed by Jane Corbin had argued, none of these assumptions were correct (see Ritter 2005). The coding of pro- or anti-war statements and views aired by *Panorama* in this study initially excluded any comment by the presenters or journalists (coded simply as (7) reporter's comment), but, as has been shown, any assumptions about the 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' of such comments are thrown into doubt on closer examination. Consequently a framing analysis of the reporter/presenter input was conducted on the nine pre-war *Panorama* episodes to assess their contribution (see Appendix 2.7). This was designed to parallel the coding scheme (1-7)¹ developed for interviewees (see discussion of methodology in Chapter 3). While this approach proved problematic, particularly given the supposed role of reporter as critical interrogator or 'devil's advocate' in interviews, it did provide some indication of how the debates were structured and led. For both 'Bin Laden's Biological Threat' and 'The Case Against Saddam' a coding of the presenter's contribution indicates more than 80% to be framed in ways congruent with pro-war or partially pro-war views (see Appendix 2.8.1).

In 'Iraq Crisis Interactive', by contrast, BBC correspondent and reporter input tends to be far more 'neutral' and open to admitting both pro- and anti-war voices. In fact, while voiced contributions from the public make up less than 4% of the total programme, more than twice as many of these offer anti-war or partly anti-war views compared to pro- or partly pro-war contributions. This may be due to the public mood of the time

¹ Paralleling the coding of other interviewees: (1) 'support' (for the war), (2) 'partial support' (3) 'neutral', (4) 'partial opposition', (5) 'opposition' (6) 'official Iraqi view' (see Appendix 2.7)

which polls showed was still largely anti-war. As Greg Dyke wrote in 2003 in an open letter to the then Prime Minister Tony Blair in defence of the BBC against charges of anti-war bias:

[...] I set up a committee which ...decided to prevent any senior editorial figures at the BBC from going on the anti-war march; it was that committee which insisted that we had to find a balanced audience for programmes like *Question Time* at a time when it was very hard to find supporters of the war willing to come on.

And it was that same committee when faced with a massive bias against the war among phone-in callers, decided to increase the number of phone lines so that pro-war listeners had a better chance of getting through and getting onto the programmes. All this was done in an attempt to ensure our coverage was balanced.

(21st March 2003)

In the live broadcast 'Iraq Crisis Interactive', the first of its kind for *Panorama*, veteran World Affairs Editor John Simpson is amongst eight BBC reporters and special correspondents answering pre-filmed and emailed viewer questions. The journalists are, like *Panorama's* Jane Corbin and John Simpson, either gathered around a large, circular glass table with their laptops open or, as with Matt Frei, Andrew Marr and Alan Little, telecast from locations around the world on a bank of large wall-mounted screens. Viewers are encouraged to 'vote' by text, or telephone, on the question 'Is war inevitable?' exactly echoing the title of a Gulf 1 *Panorama* 'Is War Inevitable' [tx: 14.01.91]. Gavin Esler calls for viewer's votes on this motion in a manner similar to polls on shows such as *Strictly Come Dancing*, *X Factor* and *Big Brother*:

GAVIN ESLER: Or you can also vote by phoning the following numbers 09001800311, to vote Yes, war is inevitable and 09001800322 to vote No. Calls cost no more than 10p.

It is noteworthy that such an uncontroversial, 'predictive' question was put to the vote, rather than the more controversial and widely debated 'moral' and 'political' question of whether a war was the right thing for the nation to be embarking on, a question that was being debated passionately in the wider 'public sphere'.

Seated in this colourful studio with video conference screens showing other BBC journalists in Washington, Paris and Baghdad, Simpson offers his view of Iraqi weapons capability, amongst other topics relating to the looming war. Simpson is responding to a series of diverse questions posed by members of the public, who are filmed in 'vox-pop' style on high streets around the country. These members of the public face the camera with their brief questions and are framed to the left of the screen occupying around a third of the image - inset within an orange and brown computer-generated map which flashes to indicate the cities they are filmed in. Gavin Esler's joke about the burkah at the end of the viewers' questions, incidentally, refers to Simpson's lampooned but, probably tongue-in-cheek quip in 2002 that, arriving ahead of the army, the BBC had 'liberated' Kabul (cf. Simpson 2002):

NATALIE [Manchester]: Hi, my name's Natalie, I'm from Old Trafford and I would like to know is this going to escalate into a full world war?

GERALD MCMILLAN [Glasgow]: I believe we need to stop Saddam Hussain now and go to war and get it sorted out.

STEVE JARVIS [Cardiff]: Why didn't they finish him off last time? What's going to change this time?

NATASHA RITCHIE [Birmingham]: If we do go to war, will the UK be a target for terrorism?

BOB [Stockport]: Hello, my name's Bob and I'm from Stockport and I'd like to know is it safe to travel abroad?

ALICE PARSONS [Cardiff]: Is Blair putting Britain at risk by just agreeing with Bush?

GAVIN ESLER: John, well there's a flavour of it and John Simpson's seen a lot of war zones. And I have to say John some of the emails suggested you could go in and liberate Baghdad in a burkah, but let's get on to more serious matters.

JOHN SIMPSON: He'd be in trouble if I did.

ESLER: Perhaps he would. Neil in Manchester, How safe is the rest of the world with a regime like Saddam's? Picking up on a lot of those points there.

JOHN SIMPSON: It always seems to me that the real problem behind all this is that, if you stir up Saddam Hussein, he'll use the weapons that he undoubtedly has, secretly, and he's been developing, without any question at all, use them against Israel. Then we have the question 'Does Israel strike back at Iraq?'

Simpson uses the vague expression 'weapons', but the implication that these are 'undoubtedly' being 'secretly' developed suggests he is referring to WMD and this is picked up by the BBC's correspondent David Shukman in Vienna who, sitting with a file open on his lap, makes the same point more explicitly:

GAVIN ESLER: [...] Let me move over to Vienna and David Shukmann now because a lot of our questions also have asked, David, whether we are at risk. Whether there is a terrorist threat to us as Natasha Ritchie was saying in Birmingham there. Will the UK be a target for terrorism? What do you think?

DAVID SHUCKMAN: Well I think it's perfectly probable. Whether it's going to happen a lot, we simply can't tell. But I think there are probably two direct threats to British interests. One is, imagine British forces gathering in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia before an attack on Iraq and Saddam feels that his back is against the wall, he may well use the chemical and biological weapons that we know he has, as John was saying. The other route, that terrorist threat, if he feels that he really, his days in Baghdad really are numbered and he can only leave feet first, there is a possibility obviously that he may pass on whatever weapons he has to other groups that may be favourable to him.

While the BBC was to face its 'greatest editorial crisis' for Gilligan's claim that the government 'sexed up' its case for war and inserted intelligence knowing it was 'probably wrong', firm and unqualified assertions by BBC correspondents that 'we know' Saddam has chemical and biological weapons have largely passed unremarked in the media or in the bulk of scholarly work on the Corporation's conflict coverage. Nevertheless, not all BBC reporter/presenter contributions were framed in ways supportive of the official view. To take just one example Gavin Esler reads out some of the more sceptical anti-war views sent in and Caroline Hawley a BBC correspondent based in Iraq relays both official Iraqi denial and Arab anti-war sentiment in her response:

GAVIN ESLER: Let's just bring in some voices from elsewhere in the world. Some of our viewers are pretty sceptical too about the real reason why America is gunning for Iraq. Wendy from Bath is pretty typical here, she said 'This war has nothing to do with 9/11 or any threat to the West. It's all about oil, oil, oil.' That must play down pretty well in Baghdad eh Caroline?

CAROLINE HAWLEY: Absolutely, that's what they said all along. They say this is not about weapons inspections, it is about oil. I was speaking to a senior Iraqi official not too long ago who said, that really there is no reason now for any attack. That in Kuwait, after Iraq went into Kuwait in 1990, that was the justification, he said, for the 1991 Gulf War. But he said 'What have we done now? What have we done over the last decade?' So certainly the feeling in Iraq and the feeling among ordinary people as well is that it is about oil.

The difficulty of coding presenter/reporter contributions is obvious here. Gavin Esler introduces and reads out views which can be coded 'radical anti-war' and so his contribution is coded 5, yet the final line: 'That must play down pretty well in Baghdad eh Caroline?' could be read as critically framed as it allies anti-war sentiment with Ba'ath Party perspectives. Judging how to code this ultimately becomes a subjective matter and while this paragraph has all been coded 5 'full opposition' it is a judgement that could be disputed. Similarly, Caroline Hawley's contribution is a perfectly proper elaboration of the Iraqi Government's perspective and is obviously not meant to indicate Caroline's view. What 'they said' – indicates 'Iraqi official perspectives' and this contribution is coded 6 'Iraqi Government', apart from the last line which straddles both official Iraqi perspectives and Arab anti-war perspectives (see Appendix 2.7). This final line has been coded 5 'full opposition' but could also, equally, have been coded 6.

Coding of all the BBC presenter/correspondent contributions for this programme threw up many examples of framing that encompassed a number of views simultaneously, of ambivalence, shifts in perspectives and of qualifications or further questions. We see in many of the answers to viewer's questions the correspondents and reporters trying to 'hold the middle ground' (Kumar 1975) and not volunteer a personal view, but guide the viewer through competing explanatory narratives. Hence 51% of the contribution in

this programme is coded 3 as ‘neutral’ or too finely balanced to code any other way (see Appendix 2.8.1). The problem definitions are often, but not always, drawn from elite debates, particularly amongst the European, British and American political class and we see less time given to hawkish, neo-conservative pro-war or radical anti-war positions, but more to partly supportive ‘official perspectives’ (coded 2: 18%) or partly oppositional views (coded 4: 27%). In strong contrast to the previous two *Panorama* episodes, reporter/presenter framing appears to offer more support, on the whole, to a range of anti-war perspectives than to pro-war views.

The same cannot be said, however, for the next *Panorama* investigation ‘Saddam: A Warning from History’ [tx: 03.11.02] presented by John Simpson which opens with moving images from a computer game ‘Conflict: Desert Storm’ showing Saddam Hussein in his bunker and then on the run, intercut with Iraqi celebratory videos featuring the country’s leader. The commentary begins over edited shots from the game in which an American soldier runs through what looks like Baghdad: ‘A brand new game has hit America’s computer screens as Saddam Hussein lurks in his bunker the forces of freedom and democracy close in for the kill’. This is followed by clips from Iraq’s state-controlled television of the leader being handed flowers by children, walking amongst the public and firing a rifle from a balcony. Simpson links these ‘two-dimensional’ images of the Iraqi dictator: ‘But which of Saddam’s many faces is the real one? And as the final showdown comes, what lessons can we draw from the past about what he will do now?’ As these lines are delivered the title ‘SADDAM: A Warning from History’ freezes over a computerised image of a limping Saddam Hussein running towards the camera with a gun target superimposed on his face which then fades to black.

When the image fades in again it is on a black-and-white portrait of Saddam Hussein projected on a screen some distance away. As in the studio shots of Jane Corbin in ‘The Case Against Saddam’ the camera now tracks slowly towards the presenter sitting at a computer desk. The camera passes various objects in the foreground on a warehouse-style, metal open shelf, including two black-and-white still images of Saddam Hussein, a few Sony computer disks, a white hard drive, a jug and some glasses of water. As the camera tracks along the shelf passing the various objects and images of the Iraqi leader

a synthesizer descends dramatically down the scale. This menacing design sound effect is not unlike that used in the introduction of a villain in *Dr Who*. In the background, partly obscured by the shelf is a large screen on which computer images are projected, as in 'Bin Laden's Biological Threat'. The screen shows two grainy photographs of Saddam Hussein side by side with measuring points being manipulated on each face. Beneath the screen two men sit at a desk looking at a large computer screen which is the only other apparent source of light in the darkened studio. This casts a bluish light on the men whose faces are half obscured by shadow as they study the monitor. The tracking shot ends on this medium-long shot of Simpson and a German scientist Dieter Buhmann as they examine the computer screen with serious expressions. The following exchange takes place over close ups of Simpson and Buhmann and screen shots of Saddam Hussein and his various doubles:

SIMPSON: For years Saddam Hussein has been fooling everyone. A German forensic scientist Dieter Buhmann, armed with the latest computer technology, has analysed thousands of hours of video footage and made an extraordinary discovery.

BUHMANN: On the left side is the real Mr Saddam Hussein, on the right side is Mr Hussein in the year 94.

SIMPSON: He takes careful measurements of the images of the genuine Saddam. He knows there is one double but he is surprised at what he finds.

BUHMANN: I found the left one is the real Saddam Hussein in the year 1990, the second is a double and those are the other doubles.

SIMPSON: Are you absolutely certain that those are four different men that we are looking at there?

BUHMANN: I am absolutely sure.

This introduction sets the scene for the investigation which looks at Saddam Hussein's history of duplicity and cruelty from his earliest days as a violent youth in Tikrit, to his position as ruthless and feared dictator in Iraq. The programme is largely composed of library footage and includes several sequences seen previously in 'The Mind of Saddam' [tx: 11.2.91] during the First Gulf War. Indeed there are interviews with two of the same specialists: the CIA psychologist Dr Jerrold Post and Hassan Al Alawi

(former 'spin doctor' to the leader) as well as similar comparisons with Joseph Stalin who Saddam Hussein allegedly admired. There is also the same archive clip of Saddam being interviewed by Richard Lindley for *Panorama* shown in 'The Case Against Saddam' in which he willingly admits that his opponent should be 'subject to execution and to torture in accordance with the law'.

While much of the narrative is framed in ways implicitly supportive of the British Government's position, Simpson's voiceover also contains a few reminders of Saddam's previous status as western ally. In one extract, for instance, describing the Iraqi leader's willingness to use WMD in the Iran-Iraq War there is a short reminder of the west's role in arming him:

SIMPSON: The war had reached stalemate. Iraq was haemorrhaging men and money. Now he was backed into a corner Saddam showed how far he would go to save his regime. Again using western technology, Saddam deployed a weapon scarcely seen since the first world war - poison gas. It was horribly effective against the closely packed Iranian forces.

Hence, while the paragraph is mostly coded 2 (partly supportive), the third sentence is coded 5 (oppositional) because it reiterates a point made by many anti-war campaigners that Saddam Hussein had previously been a friend of Britain and the US. Nevertheless, a frame analysis of Simpson's contribution shows that it mirrors quite accurately the various contributions from interviewees, in that around 60% is coded partly supportive with around 30% 'neutral' or too finely balanced to code accurately. Simpson's attention to previous Western support for Saddam Hussein and failure to support the Shiite uprising that had been encouraged by George Bush senior following the First Gulf War led to 7% of his voiceover being coded 'oppositional' in its framing. While the problems of applying a framing analysis in an 'objective', strictly replicable manner are again apparent it is clear that the great majority of the programme, including John Simpson's contribution, was framed in ways that gave overwhelming (more than 8-1) support for the government's case for a 'tough line' against Iraq.

Looking back at the first four programmes related to the looming war it seems clear than until December 2002 *Panorama* had mainly relied on official US and British government spokespersons, Iraqi dissidents and intelligence sources for the ‘evidence’ of its investigations. As Miller (1994) notes:

Journalists continue to mistake authority and status for credibility and are orientated towards the state in their work practices and their reportage. However, the extent to which the state or the government comes in for criticism from the media is variable. It depends among other things on the balance of political forces at any time. If the government is weak or divided then it will be easier for journalists to criticise and for the broadcasters to resist pressure and intimidation

(p.277)

It is against this context at the end of 2002, with mounting alarm amongst sections of the established parliamentary parties, military and intelligence services that *Panorama* produced a programme that contained a range of explicitly anti-war arguments and voices.

If *Panorama*'s investigations had until this point been, in effect, ‘pro-war’ the next investigation was clearly framed to address the perceived imbalance. In ‘The Case Against War’ [tx: 8.12.02] several opponents of the war were interviewed. This was, in a sense, less a *Panorama* investigation than a chance for figures opposed to the war to express their doubts. Steve Bradshaw does the voice over but does not appear before the camera as he does later in ‘The War Party’ [18.05.03], or as Mangold, Corbin or Simpson had done in their investigations. It is through the content of the interviews that the case against war is made, although Bradshaw's voiceover does often add very telling detail to the arguments made. The interviewees include Major General Patrick Cordingley (Commander 7th Armoured Brigade 1988-91); Haifa Zangana, an Iraqi exile tortured by the regime, but still opposed to war; Robert Baer a former CIA agent who worried about destabilizing the region; Sir Andrew Green – former Ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia; Jessica Stern (former presidential advisor on the National Security Council); Chuck Hagel (Republican Foreign Relations Committee) a right wing senator and Vietnam veteran who called for more debate; and the Bishop of

Oxford Rt. Rev. Richard Harries who said: 'I don't think the traditional 'just war' criteria have been met'.

The interview with Jessica Stern to some extent typifies the tenor of the argument amongst those opposed to war for practical or tactical reasons, rather than on moral and legal grounds. Shots of Jessica Stern driving a Volkswagen car in a rainy US city (possibly Boston) accompany Bradshaw's voice-over introduction. As with the other anti-war interviewees there is a brief freeze frame of Stern which fades to monochrome with her title (in uppercase) superimposed on the image of her at the wheel. The introduction emphasises her credentials to speak on matters of security:

The PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER

In the 90s Jessica Stern was an advisor to President Clinton. She once warned that terrorists could nuke the Empire State building and to alert people for the dangers of so-called hyper-terrorism she helped make the Hollywood movie: "The Peacemaker" she was the model for the Nicole Kidman character who saves New York from a nuclear suitcase bomb. The former presidential adviser now lectures on public policy and religious terrorism at Harvard University.

JESSICA STERN (National Security Council, 1994-95)

There are compelling reasons to go to war against Iraq. Saddam poses a threat to the entire world. However, we need to consider whether the risks of going to war exceed the benefit and I believe they do.

Jessica Stern's contribution is coded 2 (partly oppositional) although she gives compelling security-based reasons for not going to war, many of which have proved prescient:

We are in the middle of a war on terrorism, this is the most important war we have to fight. Right now terrorists pose a far more significant threat to international security than states do. I think that attacking Saddam will increase the appeal, will help the terrorists mobilise disgruntled youth. We, in fact, will be doing Al-Qaeda's work if we attack Saddam.

More radical anti-war voices are given some space in the programme, although they tend to be used in the spaces between the more sober, 'institutionally endowed'

assessments, such as those by Chuck Hegel or the Bishop of Oxford. Tony Benn, President of the Stop the War Coalition which organized huge demonstrations, is ‘interviewed’ for ten seconds, for instance, compared to several minutes of airtime for each of the other contributors. Analysis reveals that the programme dealt mainly with nuances of opposition *within* the establishment – and reflected only incidentally the more radical perspectives of the anti-war movement. Arguments were largely based around the notion that the threat had not reached a level where a war was fully justified, rather than arguments that the war was completely unjustified, illegal and immoral.

The interview with the Iraqi exile Haifa Zangana, however, is mostly coded 5 (‘oppositional’) due to its focus on likely Iraqi casualties, Britain’s colonial history in Iraq and the issue of oil:

HAIFA: Iraq could be the largest reserve oil country in the world after Saudi Arabia and Britain is fighting to gain access to that, to have a share in the spoil of the war. The British involvement at the moment in Iraq, or trying to involve in this war, definitely will be looked upon by the Iraqis as another colonisation of Iraq, something which they fought very hard during the whole last century to get rid of.

In total more than 80% of Steve Bradshaw’s voiceover and of interviewees is coded partly oppositional (4) or oppositional (5) and ‘The Case Against War’ can be seen as the beginning of a rebalancing of *Panorama*’s coverage of the conflict, which until this point had been largely pro-war or partly pro-war in its framing of the debates.

In the first three months of 2003 as the story moved to the preparation for invasion, and with conflict more likely with each passing week, the focus increasingly shifted to justification for the coming war. *Panorama* programmes made in this period, particularly phone-ins and live audience debates (‘Bush versus Saddam’ [tx: 02.03.03] and ‘Questions from a Divided World’ [tx: 30.03.03] broadcast in the invasion period) reflect the deep split in public opinion on such a justification. Consisting of various levels of audience participation, these programmes may have been seen by the BBC as an opportunity to allow more dissenting voices. As already noted, however, in some cases these ‘interactive’ *Panoramas* were framed by the ‘expert’ responses of BBC

correspondents (which dominated the programmes) in ways that tended to sidestep or downplay many of the central claims made by those opposed to war.

‘Tackling Saddam’ (tx : 02/02/03) is the second live, studio-based ‘interactive debate’ on the war in which very brief, pre-recorded questions from members of the public (273 words in total) or emails sent in during the programme are put to BBC correspondents and *Panorama* reporters. The somewhat futuristic studio includes an orange background and enlarged photographs of Saddam Hussein as well as screens showing moving images of Saddam Hussein and library footage of burning oil wells from the First Gulf War. This is one of three *Panorama* episodes on the conflict in which BBC journalists have an unchallenged platform to address their ‘expert opinion’ on the conflict to the general public (see chapter 4.4), a trend in television coverage noted by Hoskins (2004) and others.

The questions from the public are overwhelmingly anti-war in terms of themes and issues explored although at 273 words, in total, the filmed public input remains marginal compared to 7,627 words given over to presenter/reporter input. Reporter/presenter contribution has been mainly coded neutral (52%) or partly oppositional (38%), compared to just 6% partly supportive of the drive towards war. 91% of the small number of filmed questions posed by the public were partly oppositional and around 9% fully oppositional. One example of the oppositional-style questions comes from Rhianna Khan, who has a Welsh accent and first name but whose surname and appearance suggest Pakistani roots:

ESLER: Well our cameras have also been out and about, all across Britain, getting your views. Here is one comment which sums up a lot of the concerns we’ve been hearing from you this week.

I’m Rhianna Khan from Cardiff and I’d like to know when Tony Blair’s going to stop following George Bush and think for himself?

Gavin Esler puts Rhianna’s question to Andrew Marr, the BBC senior political correspondent at the time. His answer exemplifies the BBC presenter/reporter’s ability to straddle the debate, including awkward details about the Blair-Bush relationship

whilst defending Bush from charges of idiocy and of Blair from the accusation that he was a 'poodle' to US power:

At a personal level it seems they get on remarkably well, given that alleged political difference. This weekend George Bush stood there and lavished praise on Tony Blair in a most toe curling manner, I mean it was really quite extreme. And Tony Blair says in private that Bush is no idiot, he's not like he's made out to be, he does listen, and clearly Blair thinks that he has influence, that he's kept George Bush inside the United Nations process for much longer than he would otherwise have done and that he is listened to. It has to be said, in Washington, people on the hawkish end of the spectrum, sometimes talk about the relationship being reversed and somehow George Bush has been conned by Tony Blair.

This answer has been coded 3 'neutral', despite ascribing 'toe curling' sycophancy to George Bush and asserting Blair's positive private views on the US President. It is a typically finely balanced response that effectively neutralises the question whilst remaining uncontroversial and 'balanced'.

Later, Andrew Marr is quite revealing about splits on the war amongst the ruling elite:

So there is a more Arabist and perhaps a more moderate open attitude inside most of Whitehall. The strange thing at the moment is that it doesn't appear to be shared, especially as far as your rhetoric goes, by the guy at the top, the Prime Minister.

This so-called Arabist tendency has been seen in Sir Andrew Green's (former Ambassador to Syria and Saudi Arabia) contribution to 'The Case Against War' in which he argued 'There's certainly a group of people at the top of the American administration who have a great deal of sympathy with Israeli aims in the region'. All of Green's contributions in 'The Case Against War' were coded 5 (oppositional) as they were broadly in line with popular Arab anti-war sentiment and perspectives. However, detailed discussion of splits amongst the parties, diplomatic breakthroughs and setbacks and other commentary on political manoeuvres in 'Tackling Saddam' relying on a 'strategy frame' (see Jamieson 1992; Jackson 2009) were coded 3 (as 'neutral'). These were popular themes for discussion in the *Panorama* studio as the war approached, as was discussion of the 'inevitability' of war – an uncontroversial question explored at length before the First Gulf War. Discussion of tactical military options played a

smaller role in *Panorama*'s discussion of the Second Gulf War compared to the First Gulf War, perhaps because the overwhelming military success of the First Gulf War had considerably lowered expectations of the threat posed by the Iraqi army (which had been further degraded in the intervening years), a point made several times by John Simpson:

It's true that Iraq is weaker now than it was before. This time I hope we won't get that kind of turgid propaganda that kept talking about the fourth largest army in the world, which we had in 1991, and all those tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of soldiers dedicated to giving their lives for Saddam Hussein, because we know that's not true now and that will be even less true this time. I mean, a leading Arab political figure said to me the other day 'The problem that the Americans are going to have when they invade Iraq is going to be the major problem is going to be fending off all those generals coming towards them with white flags in jeeps.' That was an Arab leader, that wasn't an American. So we're not talking about a tough and heavily defended Government, we're talking about a Government which has got some very nasty weapons, and may use them, but doesn't have the kind of back up support we managed to delude ourselves back in 1991 that Saddam Hussein had.

Simpson's reference to 'nasty weapons' again strongly suggests that Iraq possesses some form of WMD such as chemical weapons, although this contribution is coded 'neutral' as it partly supports the view that attacking Iraq might provoke the use of such weapons, an argument often made by those opposed to the war on tactical, security grounds.

When discussion moves on to how attacking Iraq would affect the 'War on Terror' 'Tackling Saddam' is revealing of possible splits between elements of the British and American political and intelligence community over the issue of links between Iraq and the 9-11 hijackers. When Gavin Esler asks Jane Corbin to comment on the alleged links she replies:

CORBIN: There's a real problem here Gavin, because the Americans have been consistently trying to draw the link between Al-Qaeda and Iraq and really they haven't made it at all. And in the meantime the British Government has been sort of sitting on the sidelines, hoping they're not going to make too much of it, because British intelligence basically just doesn't agree with that assessment. I've been covering Al-Qaeda for a

number of years on *Panorama*, I've been to Afghanistan, I've travelled very widely, I have never managed to put my finger on any direct link.

In Corbin's case she summarises the British intelligence view that cast doubt on US government claims. The British intelligence position that no 'firm evidence' of organizational links between the Iraq regime and Al Qaeda exists is a view which Corbin tentatively supports - based on her reporting experience.

In the seventh programme to deal with the Iraq crisis 'Chasing Saddam's Weapons' [tx: 09/02/03] Jane Corbin follows the UNMOVIC team of weapons inspectors for three months from November 2002 as they inspect various sites around Iraq. The investigation is composed of several interviews with members of the team and with Iraqi officials. The interviews with Iraqi officials are sometimes very critically framed, as in this example:

CORBIN: The problem for Iraq is that in the past you've said you didn't have weapons of mass destruction and then they were discovered. You lack credibility. You yourself even said you didn't have them in the past. So the world says well why should we believe you this time?

TARIQ AZIZ (Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq)

No, when the inspectors came, madam, when the inspectors came in 1991 we didn't say that we don't have weapons of mass destruction. Chemical we did have, long range missiles we did have. We did have a nuclear programme. We didn't have nuclear weapons, but we did have a nuclear programme, we confessed that to UNSCOM and to the IAEA. As regards the biological area, we revealed all the facts to UNSCOM after 1995.

CORBIN: But it took years.

AZIZ: It took years because why, why?

CORBIN: Because you didn't put it all on the table to begin with.

AZIZ: Who is to blame for that? Who is to blame for that?

CORBIN: Mr Aziz had conveniently forgotten that after the Gulf War Iraq never revealed any significant weapons until the Inspectors found them.

Corbin's questions and comment are coded 2 here (partial support) due to the highly sceptical tone. Yet, not all of Corbin's interviews are so critically framed, as in the following example coded 6 (official Iraqi view):

CORBIN: Does the President Saddam Hussein feel the pressure on the country, on himself?

AZIZ: Of course. He is the leader of Iraq. When there is a pressure on his country he is the first person to feel the pressure. But President Saddam Hussein is a very strong and courageous person. He will not bow to pressure.

Corbin's contributions are coded almost 4:1 'partially supportive' against 'Iraqi official view'. Many of the interviews are with British or US officials who are sceptical of Iraq's compliance with the UN inspection process. This interview with the UK Ambassador to the UN is fairly typical:

Sir JEREMY GREENSTOCK (UK Ambassador to the United Nations)

The silences are eloquent. They have not wanted to explain what we have fairly strong evidence they are still holding and the onus is on Iraq to explain those silences under the resolutions and it's a huge disappointment to the UK which wants to resolve this whole thing without the use of force that the declaration has not been used as an opportunity to do that.

'Chasing Saddam's Weapons' provided the Iraqis with the best opportunity to state their case and Iraqi official perspectives take up 37% of the programme's interviewees, although some of these are very critically framed as we have seen. There were also a large number of 'neutral' perspectives (40%) offered by UN inspectors who were clearly being careful not to provide contentious evidence either for or against the Iraqis in the programme.

In the eighth programme 'Bush v Saddam' [tx: 02/03/03] we hear more 'marginal' or 'dissident' views on the war than in any other programme. This is due, in part, to the locations of the debate which is a café in New York and a restaurant in Amman, Jordan. Gavin Esler introduces the programme from a family-run restaurant and is filmed in the

opening sequence, rather strangely, through the roasting coals of an open oven where meat is being cooked:

You join us in a Jordanian family restaurant for a unique experiment bringing together people from here in the heart of the Arab world and Americans in New York to discuss the crisis in Iraq. Well, as the politicians stoke up their war of words and the military build up continues. How wide is the gap of misunderstanding between the west and Arab people? How, if at all, can we bridge that gap? Here in a village on the edge of the Jordanian capital Amman the mood is fairly grim I'd have to say with everyone I've been speaking to saying that America's war on Iraq is inevitable and most people adding that it is completely unjustified.

In fact, the programme reveals that the gap of misunderstanding is a huge one, at least between the mostly hawkish New York interviewees and the overwhelmingly anti-war Arab speakers. The guests, both in New York and Amman, are articulate and passionate and drawn mostly from the professional classes. In Amman this includes a journalist, a novelist, a former Jordanian Minister of Information, a Catholic priest, a sociologist, a housewife, a dentist, the Head of an Islamic Shurah Council, a TV presenter and a businessman. In New York they include the former Mayor (Ed Koch), a cab driver, a Vietnam War veteran, a publisher, a housewife, a teacher, a columnist and a lawyer. Lisa Pinto, a lawyer and conservative activist gives voice to the kind of ultra-hawkish viewpoint rarely heard on *Panorama*, making an explicit connection between Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein:

PINTO: He's provided money for them. He's given them a safe haven, he has a jumbo jet that they can practice hijacking planes on. He's on his way... he's well on his way to a nuclear weapon. In fact he's been actively trying to acquire fissionable material, and we know that nuclear weapon would be heading our way the next day. He's sponsored these terrorists. He pays \$25,000 to the family of the suicide bombers, and besides the fact that a thousand times he's fired on coalition aircraft in violation of the 1991 ceasefire agreement. We know he doesn't plan to keep his promises. So he's destroyed two lousy missiles, there are a hundred more to go. And meanwhile, even as we sit here today, he's manufacturing sarin nerve agent, mustard gas, and we know, as Americans, that it will all come our way.

Lisa Pinto, like the other interviewees is filmed in the New York café at a simple formica table with her back to the window which overlooks a rainy street. Her contribution is coded 1 and is in line with many, but not all, of the American speakers.

By contrast, in Amman, almost all of the speakers articulate highly critical anti-war perspectives that focus on issues such as oil, the destabilising effects of a war on the region, US hypocrisy and double standards in its dealings with the Middle East. This, combined with the few anti-war voices from New York account for the almost 60% fully oppositional (code 5) perspectives aired compared to 35% fully supportive (code 1). TV presenter Danna Abu Sham, for instance, articulates a radical antiwar perspective:

Well that's not the point. They [the US] never wanted to liberate... I mean it's not democracy what they are seeking. Democracy would be exactly the opposite of what they are seeking in Iraq. It's against their interest to have democracy in Iraq. The whole point is the oil. It has always been the oil.

Interestingly, there is some common ground here between Arab anti-war opinion and the most hawkish US perspectives where there is recognition of the importance of oil in the conflict. Nisha Pillai asks if it is a 'war for oil' as some of the Jordanians had claimed. Keith Zakai's answer (coded 1) does not dismiss this notion:

NISHA: Nobody has mentioned oil which we heard a lot about in Jordan. Keith Zakheim, underneath it all, isn't this really about oil, a war for oil?

KEITH ZAKAI (NEW YORK) Public Relations executive

A part of it is about oil, but that's not a crass ideal. Oil is the engine to the world economy. Oil allows all the women in apartment buildings in America to turn on the heat. Oil allows computers to go. Oil allows middle class workers to get in their cars and drive to their jobs. It's not about some cabal of people getting rich off oil. It's about making sure the economy, which everybody in this world enjoys, keeps on humming.

The last programme before the onset of the conflict is a live studio debate in London hosted by David Dimbleby. This *Panorama Special* 'Blair's Road To War' [tx: 18/03/03] focuses on the effect of the Iraq debate on the Labour Party and on Blair's

leadership. By contrast to ‘Bush v Saddam’ many of the arguments appear tangential to the central debates about the rights and wrongs of the war – focussing mostly on the effects on Tony Blair’s leadership and damage to the Labour Party.

Three of the contributors are British journalists, as in previous live debates, but this time two are newspaper columnists – Alice Thompson from *The Telegraph* and Andrew Rawnsley for *The Observer*, both of whom wrote articles in support of the war, but who mainly limit their discussion to the issue of political fallout on the Labour Party in this debate and are therefore mainly coded 3 (neutral). The discussion even amongst the politicians attending (Peter Mandelson for Labour, Michael Portillo for the Conservatives and Simon Hughes for the Liberal Democrats) is polite and non-confrontational. Dimbleby appears keen to keep the debate away from the controversy about the case for war, drawing it back repeatedly to the question of Blair’s leadership, as in the following exchange with Glenda Jackson, an opponent of the war filmed in a live link from Westminster before a vote on the war:

DAVID DIMBLEBY: But if you can’t trust a man to get a big decision right, how can you trust him on the other decisions?

GLENDA JACKSON: Well I don’t think it’s right to say that one can’t trust him. There is a genuine difference of opinion here. And I’ve always been opposed to a pre-emptive strike against Iraq because I cannot see how it presents any real and present danger either to my country or to our allies. And I see absolutely no reason why we are dispensing with a policy, which has kept him within his box. And I’m particularly exercised at having announced that we were in this to maintain the will of, and respect for the United Nations, when UN officials asked for more time...

DAVID DIMBLEBY: Yes..

GLENDA JACKSON: that was turned down.

DAVID DIMBLEBY: Yes well your reasons are well known but I want to come...

GLENDA JACKSON: That doesn’t make them any less real.

DAVID DIMBLEBY: Well, no, I’m not disputing that, but I want to stick with this issue of the standing of the Prime Minister if we can, just to concentrate on that for a moment. Bob Marshall-Andrews, you would

surely agree that these attacks that are being mounted in this huge way, diminishes the Prime Minister's authority.

We see a massive swing in this programme away from the controversial arguments of 'Bush v Saddam' towards a relatively un-contentious 'strategy' frame by Dimbleby and presenter contribution is coded 93% 'neutral' in this programme. Similarly, around 38% of interviewee comment is coded 'neutral' or too finely balanced to code with around 33% pro- or partly pro-war views expressed compared to 28% anti- or partly anti-war.

Over all nine pre-war programmes the balance of voices is quite even with a slightly greater percentage (41% to 39%) expressing anti- or partly-antiwar perspectives compared to those in favour; and of a slightly higher percentage of reporter/presenter contributions framed in ways supportive of the conflict (31% to 27%). While a fairly wide range of views are expressed by contributors to the programmes, especially in public debates, reporter/presenter contributions tend either towards 'neutral' or finely balanced judgements and 'partial opposition' or 'partial support', rather than strong pro- or anti-war positions.

6.2.5 Findings: Invasion Phase

'Blair's War' appears to give the anti-war movement its best opportunity for making the case against invasion. However, the programme was broadcast on the 23rd March when British and American troops were already deep into Iraqi territory and, to some extent, the arguments had been superseded by events. The film was, in fact, made in the run up to the biggest march in Britain's history and in it *Panorama* goes 'to the heart' of the Stop the War Coalition and contrasts it with Blair's rallying call for support. Screening the programme at all at this time might have been regarded as a 'risk' for the BBC given the furious government reaction to *Panorama's* 'Can We Avoid War?' (1982), when the Falkland's 'task force' was at sea. However, *Panorama's* focus is not on, some might argue, the most informed and articulate leading anti-war figures such as Tariq Ali,

George Galloway or Tony Benn, but rather the unlikely supporters from ‘middle England’ attracted to the march. Vivien White interviews a novelist, a former army Major and a professional female Labour supporter who works for a Birmingham think tank. There are brief appearances by anti-war organizers who are introduced with something of a ‘health warning’: Lindsey German: ‘a long-serving member of the Socialist Workers Party’ and Andrew Murray: ‘a communist’. Murray was filmed for a week and interviewed many times (personal communication Andrew Murray March 27, 2006) but only says 129 words in the programme compared to 462 words by Tony Blair or 721 words by Jack Straw. We do not hear any of Lindsey German’s arguments and only 24 words by The Stop the War President, Tony Benn, widely regarded as one of Britain’s most eloquent speakers (see Marr, 2004).

By April 27th, more than two weeks after the fall of Baghdad, a *Panorama* report entitled ‘The Battle for Basra’ was transmitted with Jane Corbin focusing on the British occupation of the southern city. Corbin is ‘embedded’ with British troops although her report does include some critical assessment of the progress of the war amongst material favourable to the occupying forces. There is some insight into the plight of civilians caught up in the war, for instance, when Corbin interviews the victims of a British airstrike that was targeting Saddam Hussein’s cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, nicknamed ‘Chemical Ali’. The strike killed several members of a respected, English-educated doctor’s family. The survivors are able to tell their tale in fluent English and show photographs of the children and adults who were killed. Corbin explores the power vacuum in Basra and looks at how the troops are asked to do a ‘difficult job’ winning a ‘hearts and minds campaign’ with few resources. There is no water, electricity, fuel, or backup administration, for instance.

Jane Corbin is embedded with British troops in Basra for the report. The process and effect of embedding journalists has raised many questions about the possibility of balance and impartiality (see Bell 2003, Miller 2004, Hoskins 2004, Tumber 2004, Lewis *et al.* 2006). Corbin offers no criticism of the occupying forces and the language employed, including the comparison with Nazi Germany, suggest her loyalties are firmly with the British forces she accompanies:

CORBIN: The imam of a local mosque however can't run a city the size of Basra. The Ba'ath Party dominated almost every aspect of life here as the Nazis once did in Germany. It will prove almost impossible to root the Ba'ath out completely. The problem is, how do you know who the good guys are and the bad guys? That's a real problem for you surely?

McSPORRAN: It is but what we're doing is we're deferring to the people that we can identify and particularly as with this gentleman's own case, the sort of religious leaders who the locals obviously respect, we found very quickly in the small villages on the outskirts of town that the key Ba'athist members, the people who've been responsible for enforcing the regime were indicated to us straightaway.

CORBIN: So people here know who the bad guys are.

McSPORRAN: Yes, they do very much so.

CORBIN: The bad guys were still very much in evidence on the streets of Basra as the Irish Guard were finding on their nightly patrols. These young soldiers with experience of Northern Ireland reckoned that some criminal elements were seizing their opportunity as the regime released its grip on Basra. But Sergeant Perry suspected that some of the gunmen were one-time members of Saddam's militias seeking to prolong the anarchy.

Ba'ath party members may genuinely have had a reputation amongst local Shiites as the 'bad guys' especially given the party's record in Basra, but the simplistic label 'good guys and bad guys' is questionable language, to say the least, for a journalist to use whilst reporting with an occupying army.

In April another *Panorama* examined possible problems with the invasion strategy, including the doubts of former military figures that the coalition had enough troops to take Baghdad. John Ware puts some of the doubts raised to the Minister of Defence Geoff Hoon including this question:

WARE: The Americans have bombed the information ministry. Yet, although its signal has sometimes been shaky, Iraqi TV is still on the air. Do you think it was a mistake not to have taken Iraqi TV off the air straight away?

GEOFF HOON MP
Secretary of State for Defence

What we were trying to achieve in this campaign was both military success but also to leave as much of the infrastructure of the country in place as possible.

WARE: But the TV is a central part of the Saddam regime, isn't it?

HOON: Certainly it has been used for propaganda reasons. It's been used to support the military resistance. It is part of the regime, and certainly I have consistently complained about the way in which Saddam's propaganda has been rebroadcast not least in the Arab world but even in the western world.

This appears to be a remarkably hawkish line of questioning for a journalist to ask a Defence Minister and raises important ethical questions about the role of journalists at times of war and Government's responsibilities to abide by International Conventions protecting civilians from deliberate attack.

As in the pre-invasion phase there is some evidence that *Panorama's* investigative reporting favoured pro-war voices against anti-war voices during the invasion period. Coding of statements made in pre-edited *Panorama* programmes (not live debates and phone-ins) shows that 48.5% of statements were pro- or partially pro-war; against 40.4% anti- or partially anti-war. Many of the 'partially anti-war' statements cast doubt on the effectiveness of particular tactics rather than arguing against the legitimacy of the war itself – a position rarely found after 'Blair's War', recorded at the height of the anti-war movement, but transmitted after the invasion phase had begun. Interestingly, statements coded as 'neutral' fell from 30.6% before the invasion to just 11.1% and anti-coalition Iraqi forces statements fell from 9.3% to just 0.3% between the pre-invasion and invasion phase.

6.2.6 Findings: Post-War Phase

It is after the end of official hostilities (declared on the 1st May 2003) that we see far more critical investigative journalism begin to emerge. 'The War Party' is the first of these transmitted on the 18th of May, but mainly recorded during the invasion. The

programme exposes the aims and ambitions of the so called ‘neo-conservatives’ in Washington, especially those behind the Project for a New American Century. It does this through extensive interviews with ‘neo-cons’ and their opponents. In fact, a coding of the programme reveals that 68% of the views aired were pro- or partially pro-war, with only 23% given to opponents of the war and the neo-con agenda. However, the ‘neo-conservative’ position (cf. Taylor 2008) is framed critically in the report with their views shown to be deeply influential, extreme and potentially dangerous. This strongly suggests that coding can only be of limited value in assessing overall degrees of partiality to given views. Closer contextual reading is more useful at teasing out framing strategies and the ‘positioning’ of the *Panorama* audience. In the following excerpt we see how interviews with leading neo-cons are used to clarify their position and present a sense of the possible threat they present to peace in the Middle East and the wider world:

BRADSHAW: How did you feel when the statue came down?

WILLIAM KRISTOL (Project for the New American Century)
Moved. It was a moving moment really. Great to see.

BRADSHAW: Looks like you won. What next?

KRISTOL: Well, I think we need to help get Iraq on its feet and help establish a decent government there, and then really work to remove other dictators with weapons of mass destruction and deal with the threat of terrorism around the world, but hopefully not with military action, hopefully through diplomatic pressure, but this is the end to the beginning of this broader war, it's not the end of the end.

KRISTOL: [addressing public]: This was a very important moment I think in all honesty in American history this last 3-4 weeks. After Vietnam many Americans came to think that we couldn't be a force for good in the world, that our military

BRADSHAW: Much of the world peers into the New American Century with anxiety. Neo-conservatives hope we'll rally round their faith in American power. They may not win every battle, George Bush may yet find them a liability. But his ideological shock troops are on a roll. Bad news if you're in the way.

Kristol's contributions is coded as pro-war but the reporter's (Bradshaw's) line of questioning and narration frame the neo-con position problematically '[...] *his ideological shock troops are on a roll. Bad news if you're in the way*'.

Another four months pass in the post-invasion phase before the next *Panorama* during which time the initial euphoria of 'liberation' (shown in some invasion-phase programmes) seems to have worn off. In 'The Price of Victory' *Panorama* reporter Andy Davies spends six months with the American 427 field artillery nicknamed 'Thunder Battalion' from March 2003 – August 2003. 'The Price of Victory' traces the progress of the occupation over the period. It shows how early, cautious support for the troops from many of those Iraqis grateful to see the back of Saddam, quickly soured as the army was forced into a peacekeeping and law enforcing role for which it was not equipped. Andy Davies' report shows the frustration of Iraqis as months into the occupation there is still no water, electricity or law and order – the provision of which is a legal duty for any occupying power.

We are also shown how violence flares up as a result of poor decision making by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). For example, as large denomination notes lose their value because of falling confidence in the old bank notes, the CPA decides to allow Iraqis to exchange these for smaller denomination notes. But instead of using a network of banks they distribute them through a handful of offices. Consequently there are huge queues outside these offices in the heat of the summer. The US troops have to police these and we see the patience of the waiting crowd and troops snap and the *Panorama* crew films a group of soldiers beating and abusing the angry crowd. Later a protestor is shot dead in a demonstration by former Iraqi soldiers who have not been paid for months. Andy Davies interviews the family of the dead man who we see in dignified grief. They say they want justice, either the man who killed their brother must be punished and blood money paid. If not, his brother swears to kill four soldiers for every one they have killed.

Some aspects of the report are possibly affected by the embedding process (see chapter 6.1) such as the generally positive representation of most US soldiers who are shown to be doing their best against difficult circumstances. Examples of ignorance, racism or

‘trigger-happiness’ that have been common allegations against occupying troops are only hinted at, as in an extraordinary brutal sequence which appears to show a ‘drive by’ shooting of an innocent civilian accompanied by the following understated narration:

A group of American soldiers had just taken a hit on one of their vehicles and they decided to hit back with another overwhelming show of force. But this was a busy shopping district and in the confusion the soldiers opened fire on a group of onlookers.

There are also, as with ‘The Battle for Basra’ interviews with Iraqis supportive of the invasion. However, Andy Davies is also able to leave the battalion to report on the appalling conditions in local hospitals and (over the six months) show the rapidly deteriorating security condition. Consequently, there is a sense here in which an investigative reporter has given a more ‘balanced’ and sophisticated view of events on the ground than in previous *Panorama* reports that relied more heavily on official and uncritical sources, or gave a more ‘embedded’ view.

‘The Price of Victory’ is typical of many of the *Panorama* investigations in the post-invasion phase that look at difficulties with the occupation and cast doubts on the necessity of the war (as predicted by the War Programming model). These include Corbin’s follow-up report ‘Still Chasing Saddam’s Weapons’ [tx: 23/11/03]; ‘A Fight to the Death’ [tx: 21/01/04] – John Ware’s critical account of both the government and the BBC’s conduct over the Gilligan affair; ‘Shamed’ Jane Corbin’s damning investigation into the Abu Graib scandal; ‘A Failure of Intelligence’ [tx: 11/07/04] or ‘Iraq, Tony and the Truth’ [tx: 20/03/05] - Ware’s own reports on the ‘thin’ and ‘exaggerated’ intelligence that took Britain to war; ‘Troops Out?’ [tx: 30/10/05] a debate on the anti-war arguments for withdrawing troops and ‘A Good Kicking’ [tx: 13/03/07] on the beating and torture of Iraqi prisoners by British soldiers.

The theme of the price of ‘victory’ for all sides is also explored in ‘In the Line of Fire’ [tx: 09/11/03] a *Panorama* ‘special’ running at an unusual length of one hour and

fifteen minutes and which contains some of the most graphic images of the effects of the war in *Panorama's* coverage.² 'In the Line of Fire' recounts through, what Corner (1996) identifies as 'testimony' and 'expositional mode', the events leading to a so-called 'friendly fire' incident in which John Simpson, his producer Tom Giles and camera operator Fred Scott were injured and sixteen others were killed including the team's translator, Kamaran Abdurazaq. The film makes use of Simpson's voiceover and three (overlapping) types of interview content that include information, viewpoint and experience (cf. Corner 1999, p.42-43) as the participants recount and reflect on the events. Interviews with the crew as well as people affected by the incident are filmed in studios and in what appear to be the domestic setting of the participants' homes, as well as on location. There is also the use of dramatic reconstruction intercut with footage filmed by the team on location in Turkey, Northern Iraq and Baghdad both before and after they were bombed by a US military aircraft. The 'friendly fire' incident forms the dramatic centre of the film with events leading up to it and the consequences of the attack explored in different ways.

'In the Line of Fire' gives viewers a glimpse of the effects of Allied bombing in Iraq, particularly as it affected the 'semi-embedded' crew employed by *Panorama*. In a rerun of a sequence that had been shown in truncated form on BBC news bulletins in April when the attack occurred, we see blood trickle down the camera lens immediately after the airstrike (although the F-14 jet is not seen actually dropping the bomb) and an impression of chaos, death and destruction that is largely achieved through the use of sound (the roaring aircraft, a wailing car alarm and men shouting incoherently) and handheld filming. A subjective point-of-view shot is maintained as the camera operator struggles to wipe the blood from his lens and rushes to check on the health and whereabouts of his colleagues. The sequence is powerful - illustrating the destructive capacity of a single bomb as well as the human impact of the war, although the most graphic material shot was not screened as the producer felt that it would be 'intrusive' and 'wrong' (personal correspondence with Tom Giles). Interestingly, in terms of the framing of the incident, the film also includes fairly lengthy interviews with US Navy

² The programme was viewed by a 'disappointing' 2.9 million people on BBC1 against 4.1 for BBC2's 'Louis and the Brothel' (Broadcast, 2003) (cf. discussion on current affairs ratings in Chapter 4.3).

pilots Lt. Commander Larry Sidbury, Lt. Robert Roy and Lt. Commander Ron Stinson F-14 pilots and navigators explaining how the error occurred.

An arguably more disturbing sequence briefly showing the effect of the Allied bombing campaign on civilians in Baghdad occurs later in the programme in which we see a very young girl in hospital who is shown to the camera crew by an Iraqi doctor armed with a Kalashnikov for protection. The girl is crying and suffering from appalling injuries only partly covered by the bandages. The doctor says a single line and the camera, almost uniquely in *Panorama's* coverage of the entire war, holds on an almost unbearable image of suffering:

DOCTOR: This patient has burns from the bombs and all her family are dead.

While the entire sequence is only twenty-two seconds in length there is time for Simpson's voiceover, following the doctor's understated, but compassionate comment, to anchor the image in ways, that I would argue, go to the heart of the debate presented in this thesis. In two sentences, Simpson first describes and then contextualises the girl's injuries in terms of a wider narrative:

SIMPSON: In the intensive care unit lies a little girl; the extent of her suffering is impossible to imagine. In a way, she too is a victim of friendly fire: she too has paid for her country's liberation.

Here we see an acknowledgement of suffering and an emotive discourse of compassion which then switches to a quite different order of discourse in the second sentence. Here the girl's plight is compared to that of the *Panorama* crew – she too is a victim of 'friendly fire', perhaps also the victim of a mistake by well-meaning pilots. Her suffering is also the price of 'victory' – a very heavy price, no doubt - that has to be weighed against the gain of 'her country's liberation'. This discourse of political freedom cannot completely take the sting from the sequence, but its effect - if read at face value – may be to soften it, or to make the unbearable more 'bearable'. It is also, significantly, a discourse based on the presupposition that the invasion was indeed a 'liberation', although it could be argued that Simpson is being heavily *ironic* in his selection of words. An examination of other statements by the reporter in this film and

others would suggest, however, that Simpson is not being ironic at all. Of course, as Hall *et al.* (1981) have pointed out ‘the broadcasters’ objective is to have the audience reconstruct [or decode] the programme as it has been ideologically inflected and structured by them’ (p.99) yet such a reading they note cannot be guaranteed. When different groups of BA, MA and PhD media students have been asked to code these two sentences according to the coding scheme developed (see Appendix 2.6) there have been widely differing readings, ranging from fully supportive through neutral, to fully oppositional. This would suggest that a great deal of ideological work has gone into this voiced-over sequence which tries to create a space in which a ‘harmony’ (cf. Hall *et al.* 1981) of contradictory positions can be held.

Continuing this theme, programmes in the post-invasion period still contained statements partly supportive of the invasion although they are almost always tempered by criticism of the conduct of the occupation. Simpson’s observations at the end of ‘Simpson in Iraq’ [tx: 30/01/05] following the elections suggest that while deeply flawed, the occupation can bring about some benefit to the Iraqi nation with his own prediction of the long-term outcome:

SIMPSON: A lot of Iraqis must have reflected today that these elections would have been far more peaceful if only the Coalition had agreed to hold them before the Sunnis were so alienated and the insurgency grew so strong. I don’t think it ever occurred to me in all the years I’ve been coming to Baghdad, that the first time Iraqis were able to cast their votes in a free and fair election that it would be in an atmosphere like this, half empty streets and the noise of explosions every now and then, and a general sense of anxiety and fear. But I do think it’s important not to assume from what’s happening today that the entire process is bound to fail, in fact on the contrary I think it’s bound to succeed. It’s just that it’s been so badly botched along the way by so many people.

Simpson’s conclusion exemplifies how senior BBC correspondents, particularly ‘star reporters’ are permitted to suggest an opinion within current affairs. Within the exposition there is clear acknowledgement of his expertise when it is stated: ‘in all the

years I've been coming to Baghdad [...]'. This flags Simpson's years of reporting in the Middle East and specifically Iraq, in case the viewer didn't know. The passage, delivered as a voiceover against shots of Iraqi soldiers in tanks and armoured vehicles on the streets of Baghdad, is offered as a personal view, not the view of the BBC 'I don't think it ever occurred to me [...]' and in the penultimate line: 'But I do think it's important not to assume from what's happening today that the entire process is bound to fail, in fact on the contrary I think it's bound to succeed'. Simpson's viewpoint also suggests Kumar's (1975) insights into the role of the current affairs presenter in 'holding the middle ground' are relevant more than thirty years after they were made (see chapter 4.4). There is an admission that the occupation of Iraq has not gone according to plan, it was 'badly botched along the way by so many people', the Sunnis are 'alienated', the insurgency is 'strong', elections have taken place in 'half empty streets', amidst explosions and an atmosphere of 'anxiety and fear'. Yet, Simpson's view, despite this, is that 'it's bound to succeed', perhaps implying that 'democracy', even when enforced by foreign powers, is a 'natural order'. It is a conclusion that appears to tacitly suggest, as with his commentary on the badly injured girl, that the sacrifices made on all sides have been, or will be, somehow worthwhile, or at least not in vain. Iraq's democracy is 'bound to succeed' now that Saddam Hussein has been overthrown. In order to keep the process of coding as unproblematic as possible Simpson's remarks, as with all reporter commentary (excluding the pre-war phase), are not coded, but once again this example clearly demonstrates the difficulty of attempting to 'code' 'complex communicative acts'. It should also be noted that reporter's commentary make up around 60% of all the words spoken in *Panorama*'s coverage of The Second Gulf War.

Putting such coding issues to one side, however, content analysis reveals that pro- or partially pro-war statements and arguments are found in far fewer proportions amongst *Panorama* programmes transmitted after George Bush declared an end of major hostilities (see coding results Appendix 2.8.4, 2.8.5). This finding is in line with the model of 'War Programming' advanced by Atheide and Grimes (2005).

6.2.7 Conclusion

Panorama is not a monolithic entity. In fact, speaking to former *Panorama* journalists – one of the criticisms of the programme is that reporters work in separate teams. Michael Crick who now works for *Newsnight* said:

I mean on *Newsnight* everyone sort of gets on with each other as far as I can tell. You know everyone's sort of cooperative, whereas on *Panorama* there was almost a sort of quiet glee if somebody else did a programme that wasn't very good.

(personal communication, February 16, 2007)

Consequently, the type of investigations that get made can be quite different from each other with journalists and producers following up their particular interests.

Nevertheless, some quite consistent patterns emerge from a study of *Panorama's* coverage of the war that tie in with some models and frameworks of understanding developed within critical media theory.

Panorama's pre-war coverage was neither overwhelmingly pro-war nor anti-war. The BBC's legal obligation to provide 'balance' can, at one level, be found in the range of opinions found in the programmes transmitted, particularly if live debates and phone-ins are included. This partly supports Tumber and Palmer's (2004) study of the Iraq War which shows a high degree of scepticism in the run up to the war in sections of the media. As Hallin (1989) argues, the way the media reports events is closely tied to the degree of consensus among the political elite or the 'sphere of consensus' as he labels it and such a consensus was not apparent in the same way that it was in previous conflict, such as over Afghanistan or Yugoslavia. *Panorama* was able to respond to the strains in the foreign policy elite by producing far higher amounts of critical coverage without abandoning 'objective journalism' for some activist or anti-establishment conception of their role.

However, the question of ‘balance’ in the pre-war phase is not so easily answered. Simple quantitative analysis, for example, cannot clearly account for the ‘quality’ or types of arguments excluded, or the context for arguments put forward. Examination of (post-war) ‘The War Party’, ‘In the Line of Fire’ and ‘Simpson in Iraq’ shows there is no easy correlation between the number of pro- or anti-war statements and the overall framing of the programme, a process which evades simple categorisation of this kind. Chronology also needs factoring in to any assessment of balance in the pre-war phase. Programmes in the early pre-war phase were generally supportive of a pro-war viewpoint, while anti-war voices were heard more clearly as war approached. The crucial period for influencing public opinion in order to prevent war may well have passed by the time British troops were being sent to the region.

This study of *Panorama*’s coverage of the Iraq conflict offers some evidence for theories of source behaviour which are used in critical studies to explain how the media can ‘support’ a war without abandoning their ‘objectivity’ in a technical sense. Media-government relations are explained by Bennett’s (1990) ‘indexing hypothesis’:

Mass media news professionals, from the boardroom to the beat, tend to index the range of voices and both news and editorials according to the range of views expressed in mainstream government debate about a given topic.

(p.13)

According to the hypothesis, non-official sources only appear in news stories when their opinions are already emerging in official circles. When institutional opposition collapses, even if public opinion is opposed to a particular policy, the volume of opposition in news and editorials is indexed accordingly. Hence, as the war began and the major Parliamentary parties all lent their support to the efforts of the British troops the media reduced access to anti-war voices, or they were reported at a distance. Only ‘organisationally endowed claims makers’ got consistent access once hostilities began. This view was partly confirmed by this study, although ‘Blair’s War’ and a live debate ‘Questions from a Divided World’ transmitted in the early stages of the war offered an opportunity for a range of dissenting voices as well as pro-war voices to be heard. The contents of ‘Questions from a Divided World’ and ‘After Saddam’ support the ‘War Programming’ model’s prediction of coverage in wartime as dealing with ‘international

reaction and anticipation of the war's aftermath'. 'The Battle for Basra' and 'The Race to Baghdad' confirm the model's prediction of 'coverage of the current war [...] to capture the various aspects of the battle front, the home front [and] the media coverage' Jonathan Mermin's (1996) elaboration of Bennett's indexing theory suggests the media are able to claim they are fulfilling journalistic ideals of balance and objectivity when a conflict is underway by switching to presenting and analysing the ability of the government to achieve the goals it has set. Reporters offer critical analysis inside the terms of the apparently settled policy debate. In the case of *Panorama*'s coverage this was articulated along strategic questions such as: Can the coalition forces capture Baghdad with the relatively small number of forces they have? Shouldn't the coalition forces have 'taken out' the Ba'athist dominated television station? Do they have enough men to maintain control after the fall of Saddam's regime?

This study lends support to the view that it is in the 'post-war' phase that 'critical' investigative journalism is most likely to take place and confirms the pattern of coverage anticipated by the 'War Programming' model. Why should this be? Did the media operate as 'co-conspirators' in the preparation for war? Was the BBC intimidated by the government into excluding anti-war perspectives? The evidence of this study suggests a more complicated process at work.

While government pressure on the BBC was a daily reality in the lead up to and execution of the invasion, there is no evidence that such pressure *directly* influenced *Panorama* journalists. It certainly made individual reporters more careful in checking facts that might embarrass the government, but testimony from current and former *Panorama* staff suggests that investigating government claims on WMD or the case for war was never discouraged at senior levels (see discussion in previous chapters). The chilling effect of the Hutton Inquiry on the BBC may have tempered investigations for a time in the post-war period, but as we have seen it is in this period that the most critical material on the war is produced.

Was 'journalistic culture and practice' at fault for allowing government claims about the Iraqi regime to go relatively uncontested until just four months before war? As previously discussed the social composition of *Panorama*'s managerial infrastructure

and its programme makers lends some support to the view that ‘those in charge of mass communication tend to share similar backgrounds to those in control of economic and social systems’ (Johnstone et al in McQuail, 1987). The charges of ‘elitism’, or of an ‘Oxbridge’ bias may partly account for the restricted level of debate that Lindsey German complains of (in interview with this author) - and awareness of this problem at the BBC, documented above, may account for the opportunities (albeit belated and limited ones) given to proponents of an anti-war view to make their case. It seems likely that divided popular opinion, audience pressure and the widely publicised mass protest, had its part to play in encouraging attention to the wider debate at the BBC in this respect, although Mike Rudin who produced ‘The Case Against War’ argued that his own interest in exploring this area was a greater factor.

Serious flaws in the government’s claims about WMD were well known in advance of March 2003, and while some of these views were reported, they received relatively late attention from *Panorama* investigators. ‘Experts’ representing views wholly opposed to war and contrary to dominant discourse, such as former UN inspector Scott Ritter, former UN Humanitarian Coordinators for Iraq Hans von Sponeck and Dennis Halliday, US intellectual Noam Chomsky or other leading anti-war activists went largely unrepresented. *Panorama* programme makers argued this was because they were felt to be less persuasive for a general audience than more ‘establishment’ figures or ‘unlikely’ middle-class protestors. In other cases, as with Scott Ritter, they were regarded as ‘unreliable’ sources by those *Panorama* programme makers making the case against war (off-the-record correspondence). While *Panorama*’s coverage was not uniform, the majority of criticism and reflection followed major military action, rather than preceding it as expected with the War Programming conception of war coverage.

Research by Chouliaraki (2005) on news coverage of the Iraq war is in line with findings from this study, that journalists and media organizations do not consciously abandon ‘impartiality’ as a guiding principle at times of war or co-ordinate behind-the-scenes with the government to persuade the public of a point of view. Rather, that it is the more routine aspects of journalistic practice and editorial policy (see Allan, 1999), particularly reliance on official sources, the use of news frames and dominant thematic emphases to structure the selection, presentation and emphasis of reports, which help

explain the relative under-representation of dissenting and radical anti-war voices, particularly in the lead up to war.

In conclusion, this study of *Panorama*'s coverage of the Iraq war reveals a degree of professional autonomy at play, producing differing accounts of the justification, conduct and consequences of the war. These accounts served, on the one hand, as a conduit for unreliable 'intelligence information' to the public and, for a particular period, excluded expert and activist opinion opposed to the war. However, as war drew closer, oppositional views grew louder. The BBC's reliance on political elite discourse permitted the considerable disquiet with, and (partial) opposition to, US and UK foreign policy to be expressed by a variety of establishment and (to a much lesser extent) non-establishment actors. This disquiet continued, albeit muted, throughout the war and then grew as coalition control of Iraq broke down in the post-invasion phase. The study partly confirms a number of theories of war reporting and media-state relations, including Altheide and Grimes' (2005) 'War Programming' model; Bennett's (1999) 'indexing hypothesis' and empirical studies that show predominantly 'supportive' coverage by the broadcast media at times of war particularly in relation to how: 'dependence on government sources is understood to play a central role in shaping journalist's perceptions of events.' (Goddard *et al.* 2007b)

These findings, however, suggest that while the well-documented government intimidation of the BBC during this period may have impressed a need for 'caution' during investigations liable to embarrass the government's position, other factors are more likely to have shaped the *Panorama* team's coverage, particularly the journalistic culture and practices operating more widely within the BBC's News and Current Affairs Department. These other factors also include *Panorama*'s evolving, but deep-rooted journalistic traditions and sometimes fraught, but often close relationship to 'the establishment' (see chapter 4.4). In contrast to the First Gulf War strong and widely articulated opposition to the invasion emerged within British elite opinion, both at a party political and Parliamentary level (cf. Hansard 2002, 2003). There were divisions and arguments within the Cabinet, a number of Government departments and other powerful institutions such as the Church, the military and the intelligence community, as the recent Cudlip Inquiry has shown (The Iraq Inquiry 2010; Financial Times 2010).

Panorama provided a platform for airing some of these disagreements as well as many of the recriminations that ultimately followed the 2003 invasion.

It seems clear that such open divisions amongst the political elite also allowed *Panorama* to provide a space for a wide ranging, if carefully managed, public debate on the case for military action. As war approached in 2003, this included articulate and occasionally passionate pro-war and anti-war views, particularly amongst Arab and US contributors as in ‘Bush v Saddam’ [tx: 02/03/03]. However, opportunities for the radical anti-war movement and its leaders, experts and intellectual allies to make its case were limited and largely marginalised within the programmes, as they were for the Iraqi Government.

Expert opinion that was radically opposed to the war was only rarely expressed within *Panorama*’s investigative reports in the pre-war period which contributed to an inadequate critique of British and US government claims on Iraq’s weapons capability. Unlike *Panorama*’s coverage of the First Gulf War there were no major revelations that proved embarrassing to the government (cf. ‘Saddam’s Secret Arms Ring’, ‘Saddam’s Supergun’) until major hostilities had ceased. On the contrary, official US and British government perspectives and US neo-conservative positions were buttressed to a great extent by investigative reports leading up to the 2003 war, albeit tempered by the more cautionary anti-war voices particularly amongst accredited former military, intelligence and foreign office figures. This situation changed somewhat in the post war period especially once reporters were able to report ‘on the ground’ as independent eye-witnesses rather than embeds (cf. ‘The Price of Victory’), or when government claims on Iraq’s WMD capability were more closely scrutinised (cf. ‘Iraq, Tony and the Truth’).

As has been shown, *Panorama*’s coverage of the Iraq War of 2003 suggests the programme makers made efforts towards providing ‘balanced’ coverage of a highly contentious conflict in line with the splits in the Parliamentary consensus over the need for armed intervention (lending support to hypotheses H1 and H2). Nevertheless, a heavy reliance on British and US official, ‘institutionally-endowed’ or ‘establishment’

voices and perspectives and an apparent suspicion of more radical expert and academic opinion constrained *Panorama*'s ability to critique Government claims, at least until the post-war period (lending support to hypotheses H3 and H4). *Panorama*'s pre-war investigations largely supported Government claims that were later proven to be false or exaggerated, although several of *Panorama*'s public debates in the pre-war and war periods, especially those with international audience participation, made space for a range of critical viewpoints.

As this study suggests, making sense of *Panorama*'s conflict coverage is a multi-layered task that requires understanding the complex interconnections between state pressures and institutional constraints, of managerial and editorial decision making processes and of the influence of journalistic traditions, generic conventions and reporting practices at a departmental and programme level. These interlocking elements help shape *Panorama*'s coverage of war and tracing their operation in relations to the BBC's current affairs output will, it is hoped, be the focus of further research.

The concluding chapter that follows brings together some of the evidence presented in this chapter alongside findings on *Panorama*'s coverage of the First Gulf War (see Chapter 5.4) to draw some broader conclusions regarding the BBC's relationship to the 'Westminster consensus'.

7.1 Conclusion

In September 2009 former Director General of the BBC Greg Dyke addressed a fringe meeting of the Liberal Democrat Party Conference in which he claimed that the BBC is part of a ‘conspiracy’ preventing the ‘radical changes’ needed to UK democracy (BBC 2009). Dyke argued that British democracy is in crisis and that the media is ‘in denial’ of the scale of the problem because it is part of a ‘Westminster village’ view:

The evidence that our democracy is failing is overwhelming and yet those with the biggest interest in sustaining the current system – the Westminster village, the media and particularly the political parties, including this one – are the groups most in denial about what is really happening to our democracy. The separation of the political classes – and that includes you lot and me – from the people out there has never been greater. [...]

(Dyke 2009, p.1)

Dyke continued, describing the problems he faced as Director General, in trying to address this problem as he saw it:

Now I’ve been banging on about this for something like a decade. I tried and failed to get the problem properly addressed by the BBC when I was Director General – I was stopped by a combination of the politicians on the Board of Governors – one of whom was married to the man claiming for cleaning his moat - and the political journalists at the BBC. Why? Because collectively they are part of the problem. They are part of the Westminster conspiracy. They don’t want anything to change.

(Ibid)

Dyke’s speech directly confronts the central question explored in this thesis of whether the ‘Westminster consensus’ largely shapes the views and perspectives offered within the BBC’s News and Current Affairs coverage. With the assistance of former *Panorama* producer Gary Horne I was able to contact the former Director General to ask further

questions around this theme. The telephone interview conducted on the 16th of October with Dyke is frank and revealing:

DM: I'm very interested in this idea of a Westminster consensus, the idea of a 'Westminster village view' because that's central to what I'm looking at. So, it suggests to me that you do think that BBC news and current affairs has been too narrow and bound by the Westminster consensus. Is that a fair reading?

GD: Yes. News in particular. [...]

On the question of whether current affairs is also bound by such a consensus Dyke is more equivocal, suggesting that news had triumphed over current affairs in a long-running battle for primacy, partly due to technological developments, and that, as a result, current affairs was now more poorly resourced and less 'important'. Pressed on his views of *Panorama*'s coverage of the Iraq War Dyke defends *Panorama*'s record, whilst remaining critical of John Ware's report 'A Fight to the Death' for not giving him an opportunity to be interviewed. He argues that *Panorama*'s pre-war investigations were not able to expose the Government's claims on WMD to be false because: 'We didn't have the evidence and the pressure was enormous'. He points repeatedly to pressure from the Government, and from Alastair Campbell in particular, not only on the BBC's news coverage but on *Panorama*'s reporting generally, which he suggests 'they hated'. In spite of testimony from *Panorama* reporters and producers that the programme was not under any pressure from the Government in their reporting of the war, the view from the Director General who was being passed the worst complaints from Richard Sambrook, was that the pressure was real: 'Never underestimate that Campbell hated them [*Panorama*] and would go for them at every available opportunity'. Dyke offers little criticism of the *Panorama* team, standing by their pre-war investigations: 'I don't think you can complain about what *Panorama* did in the run up to the war. I think a lot of the evidence came out afterwards'. Perhaps surprisingly, Dyke is also defensive of Birt's controversial reforms of BBC Current Affairs and *Panorama*, saying 'I think he was right' and pointing to expenses irregularities and poor journalism by some of the 'old guard'.

Finally, towards the end of the interview we returned to a core theme of his speech at the Liberal Democrat Conference when I asked him why he thought Westminster views tended to dominate the media and the BBC's reporting. His answer is pertinent to discussions at the beginning of this thesis about ruling 'elites' and 'elite perspectives' (see chapter 1.1)

DM: Returning briefly to this Westminster view, do you think that Westminster culture is because of the background of journalists or is it to do with the pressure from the Government, is it to do with the training...?

GD: No I think it's to do with culture. It's a village and that village includes the politicians, it includes the civil servants, it includes the journalists, it includes the lobbyists and they have increasingly become one group and everyone else has become another.

DM: So they echo each other.

GD: And you are not allowed to question. Journalism is not allowed to question. I actually think we over-report politics.

DM: And do you think the training of BBC journalists is not making them critical enough, or not making them question enough ... to go beyond those sources?

GD: I think the victory of news over current affairs has not been to the benefit of our society. I think current affairs gave you time to analyse, understand, research, think. And I don't think news does.

This view of a 'victory of news over current affairs' is a persuasive one and Dyke's answer - expressed in the past tense 'current affairs gave you time to analyse, understand, research, think' suggests he feels the current affairs tradition is in decline. He somewhat sidesteps the question of how far BBC current affairs (as distinct from news) and *Panorama*, specifically, echo the Westminster consensus, pointing instead to a failure of journalism in general.

The evidence of this study lends some support to Dyke's view of BBC journalism, although it also provides evidence that current affairs as well as news has been substantially shaped by the 'Westminster village view'. This 'village', as Dyke has

indicated, is composed of a political elite that includes politicians, civil servants, journalists and lobbyists. To this list we should add former and serving diplomats, military officers, intelligence agencies and representatives from think tanks. However, this study has also found that American elite opinion is very influential in *Panorama's* coverage of the two wars against Iraq (see Appendix 2:10). Indeed a striking similarity between *Panorama's* coverage of two wars was the 'transatlantic view' of the conflicts. While political elites from other regions, such as Europe and the Middle East, were represented this was not on anything like the same scale as the number from Britain and the United States. Remarkably, in terms of the number of interviewees, US views actually dominated *Panorama's* coverage of the 1991 war and was almost equal (excluding public contributions) for the 2003 war. Given the high levels of concern about the first conflict in the Senate and Congress, compared to the British Parliament, this gives support to a number of explanatory frameworks regarding media coverage of war put forward by US scholars such as Herman and Chomsky (2008), Hallin (1989), Bennett (2005) and Mermin (1999). However, the number of US interviewees for the Second Gulf War suggests that US elite opinion carries considerable weight in terms of access to television media far beyond America's borders and does not depend upon significant dissent amongst the Washington elite. Certainly, *Panorama* gave US political, military and intelligence figures a great deal of airtime either to support (see Chapter 6.1) or, at times, offer an alternative (see Chapter 5.4) to the dominant Westminster consensus on these major international conflicts. That is not so surprising given the leading role the US played in both the First and Second Gulf Wars, but it also poses something of a challenge to the central thesis, as currently expressed, that '*Panorama* reflects the Westminster consensus in its coverage of conflict'.

Evidence in support of the central thesis emerges in the range of views found as shown in the coding exercises, identification of interviewees and, more revealingly, through close textual analysis. In the First Gulf War which received strong Parliamentary support, dissenting perspectives expressed outside Parliament amongst the British public or in anti-war groups received no coverage, other than that expressed by the relatives of soldiers in 'Is War Inevitable?' This despite what that programme describes as some of the largest anti-war protests seen in Britain since the anti-Vietnam marches of 1968. However, with Parliament split over going to war in 2003, the huge levels of

public protest and anti-war dissent were given much more airtime, albeit primarily in the form of ‘vox pop’ contributions, rather than lengthy interviews with anti-war activists and experts. Nevertheless, while pro- or partly pro-war voices outnumber anti- or partly anti-war voices overall in both Gulf Wars, the margin narrows dramatically from almost 2:1 in Gulf 1 to around 8:7 in Gulf 2 (see Appendix 2.9). In the First Gulf War pro-war perspectives dominate in all three periods studied and increase with the onset of war and increase again in the post war period where they peak at around 3:1. Military success and low casualty figures on the Allied side may go some way to explaining why partly anti-war perspectives fall to around 19% following the ceasefire, although a broader critique of the war’s long term success emerges as an important frame of understanding. Through all three periods studied strong dissenting, anti-war voices never account for more than 2.3% of all views expressed, lending substantial weight to critical studies that have noted the marginalisation of challenging anti-war perspectives in conflict coverage (and to hypothesis H4).

Coding of *Panorama*’s coverage of the Second Gulf War shows a somewhat different pattern. Pre-recorded *Panorama* programmes in the pre-war period include more pro-war perspectives than anti-war perspectives but by a lower margin of 43% to 35%, although the framing of the debate and reporter contributions (59% to 21% - almost 3:1) in *Panorama* investigations lends considerable support to the Government’s view of the existence of a substantial WMD programme in Iraq. If live debates are included, however, pro- and anti-war perspectives are almost evenly balanced with the balance tipped slightly in favour of pro-war arguments by BBC reporter/presenter contributions (31.5% to 27.4%) and very slightly against by interviewees and ‘vox pops’ (39.3% ‘pro-war’ to 41.5% ‘anti-war’). Furthermore, there is a seven-fold increase in the number of dissenting oppositional voices (around 14% compared to 2% coded 5) overall in coverage of the 2003 conflict compared to the 1991 conflict lending very strong support to the central hypothesis of this thesis (H1) that frames of debate in *Panorama*’s coverage of the war are indexed to the degree and level of ‘parliamentary consensus’ (see Appendix 2.9). Much of this dissent was expressed by members of the public – often, for example, from Arab countries. However, close textual analysis of the programmes and an examination of the background of interviewees (cf. Appendix 2.1, 2.5) does reveal a continuing reliance on ‘institutionally endowed’ experts and

establishment voices. 'Balance' in this respect continues to be somewhat lacking in *Panorama's* coverage.

Furthermore, as textual analysis has revealed, the supposed 'neutrality' of statements by BBC correspondents and reporters cannot be assumed at all, although they remain problematic to code in reliable, replicable ways. Indeed, if presenter/reporter contributions were always easily coded according to a limited number of problem definitions and frames of understanding it would suggest they were not presenting a 'balanced view' that took account of a variety of perspectives. The methodological problems raised by assigning reporter speech to particular categories have been made clear in an analysis of their contribution to the pre-war period of the Second Gulf War (2003), yet that contribution is substantial and can only be fully understood through close textual analysis that takes into account the visual and aural dimension of the programme. Such an analysis confirms the notion, previously discussed, that no reporter can present a wholly 'neutral' or 'objective' point of view. As reporter and presenter talk makes up more than fifty percent of all talk across *Panorama's* coverage of both wars this should give further reason to treat the coding results of interviewee's contribution as a provisional indication of certain trends within the series rather than as an empirically secure and complete picture of bias and point-of-view across all programmes.

In the invasion period of the Second Gulf War pro- and partly pro-war voices were more frequently heard (48.5%) although anti- and partly anti-war voices still had a relatively strong presence (41.5%). While 'Blair's War' and 'Questions from a Divided World' showed that powerfully-expressed anti-war perspectives could be heard even as troops were engaged in battle, anti-war activists and experts remained a relatively marginal presence in all three periods. In the post war period (until 2005 - the period studied) coding indicates that pro- or partly pro-war perspectives continued to be heard a little more frequently than anti-war perspectives by 45% to 41%, but this result does not fairly reflect the increasingly sceptical and critical framing of the war which emerged in many of the reports (cf. 'The War Party', 'The Price of Victory', 'Shamed').

The breakdown of interviewees in the coverage of both wars (see Appendix 2.1) is in some respects a more useful and less subjective guide to understanding how war narratives are constructed in the *Panorama* series. This shows that political, military, diplomatic and intelligence elements within the British (and US) State predominate both in supportive and critical discussion of the conflicts. Public voices, which are virtually excluded in the 1991 war, have a considerable presence in the 2003 conflict which may well be a response by the *Panorama* team to the high levels of public and Parliamentary dissent and disagreement. Significantly, Greg Dyke's letter to Tony Blair (see chapter 6.2) reveals that extra effort was made to include pro-war voices from the public as well as anti-war voices (in the setting up of extra telephone lines). With the possible exception of 'Questions from a Divided World' it is doubtful if any of the public voices made a real difference to the debate as contributions were extremely brief, usually consisting of a montage of critical questions and concerns which were, in many cases, blandly assuaged by in-house 'experts'. It would be instructive to compare *Panorama's* coverage of the 2003 invasion with that of the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan or the NATO action in the Balkans in 1995 to see exactly how unusual such levels of public participation in current affairs debates are. The use of BBC correspondents as 'experts' from 2002 to 2003 answering questions put by the public and by *Panorama* presenters was a significant break from *Panorama's* output in 1991 and it raises controversial questions around the role of reporters in debates about war. Unlike the First Gulf War, interviews with anti-war activists, peace campaigners, NGOs and experts opposed to the military intervention could be found in *Panorama's* coverage of the Second Gulf War, but they tended to be brief and largely marginal.

Close textual analysis provides more interesting insights into differences in the coverage of the wars. Coding and counting of content cannot reveal *Panorama's* complex and shifting framing strategies or how closely these correlate to various explanatory frames that informed discussion in the Houses of Parliament. While it is difficult to measure the exact degree to which these frames of understanding are 'indexed' to the numerous debates within Westminster, it seems clear from this study of the First Gulf War that the range of views explored and frames of understanding employed tended to remain within what Hallin calls the 'Sphere of Consensus' and 'Sphere of Legitimate Controversy' and only rarely strayed into the 'Sphere of Dissent'. However, within these limits

Panorama's investigative work in the First Gulf War is impressive and important. Corbin's work on arms sales and Western support for Iraq in 'Saddam's Secret Arms Ring' and 'Saddam's Supergun' is detailed and potentially damaging to the Government of the day. Robin Denselow's reports in 'Saddam's Fifth Column' and 'The Dreams of Kurdistan', David Lomax's report from Saudi Arabia in 'Behind the Desert Shield', Jane Corbin's two reports 'Kuwait: Out of the Ashes' and 'The Victims of Victory' and John Simpson's report on 'Saddam: the Survivor' throw real light on a complex set of forces and events.

Panorama's investigative successes in its coverage of the Second Gulf War can be described as more modest, at best. While some post-war investigations were revealing (notably 'The War Party', 'The Price of Victory', 'Shamed' and 'A Failure of Intelligence') the programme failed to throw any substantial doubt on the Government's inflated claims about WMD in the run up to the war. Instead, *Panorama* served as something of a conduit for unreliable intelligence and amplified Government claims about Iraq in Mangold's 'Bin Laden's Biological Threat', Corbin's 'The Case Against Saddam' and 'Chasing Saddam's Weapons' and Simpson's 'Saddam: a Warning from History'. Rather than investigating the doubts of leading weapons experts such as Scott Ritter, *Panorama* turned to a series of 'unlikely' opponents of the war who tend to articulate a softer anti-war line (in 'The Case Against War' and 'Blair's War') or fell back on interactive studio debates and discussion as if the factual case were closed. My interviews with producers and reporters involved in the war reinforce the impression that leading anti-war figures and spokespersons were either regarded as 'unreliable' or as a 'turn off' to the general public by the *Panorama* team. But if such figures are never given the space to articulate their views, how can the public ever hear the full range of arguments to form an opinion? Here, the example set by Robin Denselow in the First Gulf War in giving space to a full spectrum of views including that of leaders and radicals associated with violent or 'extremist' groups, is instructive. Had *Panorama* devoted as much time to the detailed arguments of those most closely associated with the anti-war movement as it did to the Government's claims in its coverage of the Second Gulf War it might have protected itself from the kind of charges levelled by Edwards and Cromwell (2002, 2006, 2009) and others who accused the BBC of pro-war bias.

As to the question of why such dissenting views were often marginalised in *Panorama*'s coverage in favour of a relatively uncontroversial 'Westminster consensus' this thesis can point tentatively to a number of contributory factors. A long history of Government pressure and 'flak' may not have contributed *directly*, as it did in the reporting of the Falklands Conflict or Northern Ireland, to influencing the *Panorama* team, but it certainly made programme makers aware of what was at stake 'if they got it wrong'. Dyke's view that this pressure was important may apply more to News than Current Affairs, but it remains a significant background factor in Gulf II (where tensions between the BBC and the Government were high), if less so in Gulf I (under John Major's leadership). The influence on *Panorama* of particular Director Generals, especially John Birt, has been emphasised in some accounts of *Panorama*'s work (cf. Lindley 2003a), yet Dyke's claim that he gave permission for current affairs to 'make trouble' was a challenge, arguably, never really taken up by the *Panorama* team in its coverage of the Iraq war. There was no sharp adversarial or investigative challenge to the official government view before the war and arguably too much passive acceptance of dubious and off-the-record intelligence claims. In this sense Williams (1968) criticism of *Panorama* as 'lacking a sceptical attitude towards institutions and those in authority' (p.98) might equally apply in 2003. By contrast, in 1991 under the watchful eye of John Birt, *Panorama* did, to some extent, 'stir up trouble' in its investigations (notably reports by Jane Corbin and David Lomax), leading to the lengthy postponement of at least one programme - 'Saddam's Supergun'.

The idea of a 'journalistic culture' (see interview with Greg Dyke above) shaping output is somewhat easier to defend than explanations which focus on government 'flak'. Yet this journalistic culture can be different, as we have seen, from one organisation to another (compare London Weekend Television and Granada), from one series to another (compare the BBC's *Panorama* to *Tonight*) and from one time to another (early *This Week* to its post *TV Eye* phase). *Panorama*'s current 'journalistic culture' as expressed in the post 2007 half-hour programmes, for instance, is clearly very different from that of *Panorama* fifty, twenty, or even five years ago (see Chapter 4.4). Change can occur quickly and is sometimes driven by powerful outside forces, institutional changes, managerial influence and even through the efforts of individual current affairs

programme makers to ‘break the mould’ (cf. Dimbleby 1975; Day 1990; Bolton 1990; Lindley 2003a). Until now, if there *is* a core to *Panorama*’s journalistic culture – it is identified by a reoccurring observation in critical coverage of the current affairs series over its long history. The observation is that *Panorama* has remained too ‘safe’, too close to establishment perspectives and official views (Williams 1968, 1971; Edwards and Cromwell 2006) or that it has provided a sounding board for a narrow range of opinion sometimes characterised as the ‘Westminster consensus’ (Hall 1981). This accusation has now been made against the Corporation’s wider journalistic culture by a former Director General providing further evidence that the charge has some merit and needs answering. A narrow, ‘Westminster village view’ of current affairs does not fulfil the BBC’s statutory obligation to provide a diversity of perspectives and reflect and respond to different views held in wider society. The obligation to ensure ‘that no significant strand of thought is knowingly unreflected or under represented’ (BBC 2005a, p.26) is particularly crucial at times of armed conflict involving British troops, when pressures on British broadcasters to conform to official perspectives are at their sharpest. With the threat of future conflicts ever present the BBC’s duty to serve the whole nation has never been greater and this duty bears most heavily on its current affairs coverage where there is more space and time to explore a range of views and options on present threats. *Panorama* has undergone many changes since its earliest broadcasts in 1953. The most urgent it now faces is to respond to this critical challenge and ensure that its coverage is no longer constrained by the ‘Westminster consensus’, particularly at times of war. While this change would present dangers for the BBC’s relationship to the Government of the day, as Roger Bolton discovered in 1979, the alternative presents a challenge to the long term relevance of current affairs and a grave threat to the public’s ability to rationally consider alternatives to war.

Appendix 1

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Appendix 1.1: List of *Panorama* programmes for Gulf 1 and 2.

GULF 1 - EPISODES OF PANORAMA 03/09/90-02/09/91

1. PANORAMA:SADDAM'S SECRET ARMS RING..... 03/09/90
2. PANORAMA:SADDAM'S FIFTH COLUMN..... 10/09/90
3. PANORAMA:GULF IN OUR DEFENCES..... 17/09/90
4. PANORAMA:BEHIND THE DESERT SHIELD..... 07/01/91
5. PANORAMA:IS WAR INEVITABLE?..... 14/01/91
6. PANORAMA:DESERT STORM:AFTER FIVE DAYS..... 21/01/91
7. PANORAMA:THE GATHERING STORM..... 28/01/91
8. PANORAMA:AFTER THE DESERT STORM..... 04/02/91
9. PANORAMA:THE MIND OF SADDAM..... 11/02/91
10. PANORAMA:SADDAM'S SUPERGUN:PROJECT BABYLON..... 18/02/91
11. PANORAMA:PEACE DIARY..... 25/02/91
12. PANORAMA:KUWAIT:OUT OF THE ASHES..... 11/03/91
13. PANORAMA:AMERICA'S SECRET WAR..... 25/03/91
14. PANORAMA:THE DREAM OF KURDISTAN..... 17/06/91
15. PANORAMA:KUWAIT:THE VICTIMS OF VICTORY..... 05/08/91
16. PANORAMA:IRAQ:SADDAM THE SURVIVOR..... 12/08/91
17. PANORAMA:THE ALLIES:IN THE EYE OF THE STORM.... 02/09/91

GULF 2 - EPISODES OF PANORAMA 28/10/01-30/10/05

1. PANORAMA:BIN LADEN'S BIOLOGICAL THREAT..... 28/10/01
2. PANORAMA:THE CASE AGAINST SADDAM..... 23/09/02
3. PANORAMA:PANORAMA INTERACTIVE:IRAQ CRISIS..... 29/09/02
4. PANORAMA:SADDAM:A WARNING FROM HISTORY..... 03/11/02
5. PANORAMA:THE CASE AGAINST WAR..... 08/12/02
6. PANORAMA:TACKLING SADDAM..... 02/02/03
7. PANORAMA:CHASING SADDAM'S WEAPONS..... 09/02/03
8. PANORAMA:BUSH V SADDAM..... 02/03/03
9. PANORAMA:PANORAMA SPECIAL:BLAIR'S ROAD TO WAR.. 18/03/03
10. PANORAMA:BLAIR'S WAR..... 23/03/03
11. PANORAMA:QUESTIONS FROM A DIVIDED WORLD..... 30/03/03
12. PANORAMA:THE RACE TO BAGHDAD..... 06/04/03
13. PANORAMA:AFTER SADDAM..... 13/04/03
14. PANORAMA:THE BATTLE FOR BASRA..... 27/04/03
15. PANORAMA:THE WAR PARTY..... 18/05/03
16. PANORAMA:THE PRICE OF VICTORY..... 28/09/03
17. PANORAMA:IN THE LINE OF FIRE..... 09/11/03
18. PANORAMA:STILL CHASING SADDAM'S WEAPONS..... 23/11/03
19. PANORAMA:A FIGHT TO THE DEATH..... 21/01/04
20. PANORAMA:SADDAM ON THE RUN..... 28/03/04
21. PANORAMA:SHAMED..... 19/05/04
22. PANORAMA:A FAILURE OF INTELLIGENCE..... 11/07/04
23. PANORAMA:SIMPSON IN IRAQ..... 30/01/05
24. PANORAMA:IRAQ,TONY AND THE TRUTH..... 20/03/05
25. PANORAMA:TROOPS OUT?..... 30/10/05

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Appendix 2

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<i>Programme number:</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
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Appendix 2.1: GULF 1 - breakdown of all interviewees

(excluding 'vox pops')

BRITISH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Prime Minister																		0
British government MP			2		3	1											1	7
Leader of Opposition																		0
British opposition MP	1		1		1	1			1									5
British Church leader (Bishop etc)					1													1
British civil servant/govt advisor						1												1
former British civil servant/govt advisor			1														1	2
British Ambassador/diplomat			1		1	1											1	4
former British Ambassador/diplomat					1	1				1	2							5
British Parliamentary Select Committee					1					1								2
British armed forces senior			4			2												6
British armed forces senior retired			1															1
British armed forces regular			2															2
family of British forces					3													3
British think tank			1			2												3
British journalist/editor (not BBC)					1													1
British academic/author (non-military)									2									2
British 'activist'/peace group etc																		0
British 'public'																		0

US	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
US Presidential staff					1											1	1	3
US Senator or House Representative					1	1	2	3			3						3	13
former US government	1				1	1	1	3			1		1				1	10
US intelligence																		0
former US intelligence					1		1						3					5
US think tank	1					1												2
US Ambassador/ diplomat																	1	1
US government/ govt. advisor	1			1	1	1	1	1								2		8
US government committee	1						1									1		3
US armed forces senior												1					3	4
US armed forces senior retired													1					1
US armed forces regular																		
US academic (non-military)									1									1
US journalist/editor																	1	1
US 'activist'/peace group etc																		
US 'public'																		0

ISRAELI																		Total
Israeli politician	1	4				1	1						1					8
Israeli military/intelligence		1					2											3
former Israeli military/intelligence													1					1
Israeli 'activist'/militant		1					0											1
Israeli 'public'		1																1

NON-IRAQI ARAB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Arab Sheikh, ruling family				2											1			3
Arab politician/ diplomat (non Iraqi)		1		2		1		1			2					1		8
Arab 'activist'/militant		3					1	1										5
Arab military (non Iraqi)																		0
Arab law and order															1			1
Arab journalist/editor				1		1												2
Arab religious leader							1											1
Arab academic/author						1		1	1									3
Arab business leader															1			1
Arab doctor		1		1								3						5
Arab 'public' (includes Kuwaiti)		2		2				1	1		7				3			16
IRAQI/KURD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Iraqi academic	1																	1
Iraqi politician/diplomat																1		1
former Iraqi politician/diplomat									5							2		7
Iraqi military																		0
former Iraqi military incl. deserter									1				1					2
former Iraqi journalist/editor									1									1
Iraqi academic/author									1									1
Iraqi doctor	1								1									2
Iraqi activist/militant/resistance																2		2
Iraqi 'public'	2								2									4
Kurdish politician													2					2
Kurdish activist/militant													4					4

OTHER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Company or Corporation	4									3		2					1	10
UN																		0
NGO																		0
Military expert/technician	2			1			4	1		6								14
European politician/diplomat	1					1					1							3
Turkish politician/diplomat														3				3
Soviet/Russian diplomat											2							2
BBC monitoring service											2							2

Participating Think Tanks/Institutes/Pressure Groups

Royal Institute of International Affairs

Center for Defense Information
Brookings Institute
Strategic Review

British academic
(School of African & Oriental Studies)

US academic
Harvard Center
for Mid East Studies

2.2: Coding key for *Panorama* transcripts of First Gulf War coverage

<i>Position re: war</i>	<i>Pre-Desert Storm (-15/01/91)</i>	<i>Desert Storm (16/01/91-27/02/91)</i>	<i>Post-Desert Storm (28/02/91-)</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<p>Coded 1 (red) Support 'sphere of consensus'</p>	<p>Statements or arguments explicitly supporting military action to push Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.</p> <p>Statements or arguments by official Allied military & government spokespersons and known supporters of war.</p> <p>Israeli officials and army spokespersons threatening military engagement against Iraq and its supporters eg PLO.</p>	<p>Statements or arguments explicitly supporting Desert Storm and its objectives. Uncritical perspectives on invasion. Emphasising low levels of civilian casualties.</p> <p>Official US military spokespersons. Kuwaiti celebrations and 'resistance' support for Desert Storm.</p> <p>(see chapter 5.3)</p>	<p>Statements or arguments explicitly supporting Desert Storm and its objectives. Uncritical perspectives on invasion. Emphasising low levels of civilian casualties.</p> <p>Official US military spokespersons. Kuwaiti celebrations and 'resistance' support for Desert Storm (see chapter 5.3).</p>	<p>George Bush, John Major, Tom King, Dick Cheney, Benjamin Netanyahu</p>
<p>Coded 2 (pink) partial support 'sphere of legitimate controversy'</p>	<p>Qualified support for military action. Evidence of Iraq's militaristic intentions in the region including the development of WMD. Focus on the threat posed by Saddam's regime.</p> <p>Evidence for Iraqi forces' brutality in Kuwait, or against captured westerners. Saddam's/regime's duplicity, cruelty, etc. (Lending implicit support for war.)</p> <p>Pragmatic and 'procedural' concerns about military and political strategy.</p>	<p>Interviewees (qualified) supportive of military action but critical of aspects of the 'handling' of the invasion and/or occupation. 'Coalition' soldiers' accounts when focus is on difficulties or problems with operations. Evidence for Iraqi forces' brutality in Kuwait, against captured westerners or Allied pilots. Pragmatic and 'procedural' concerns about military and political strategy. Opportunities for new regional peace that the war has brought.</p>	<p>Statements or arguments explicitly supporting continued military action against Saddam Hussein's regime. Argument that war was ended too soon.</p> <p>Kuwaiti accounts of Iraqi brutality.</p> <p>'Coalition' soldiers'/officers' eyewitness accounts focusing on problems with operations. Pragmatic and procedural concerns about military and political strategy</p>	<p>John McCain, Gordon Brown.</p>

<p>Coded 3 (yellow)</p> <p>‘neutral’ neither supporting nor opposing</p>	<p>Statements neither for nor against military action. Off topic discussion.</p>	<p>Statements neither for nor against military action. Off topic discussion.</p>	<p>Statements neither for nor against military action. Off topic discussion.</p>	
<p>Coded 4 (blue)</p> <p>partial opposition ‘sphere of legitimate contro- versy’</p>	<p>Interviewees urging caution and calling for time for sanctions to work, resisting immediate military response. The ‘not yet’ argument.</p> <p>Attention to Western governments’ tacit support for export of material that could be used to develop WMD. A focus on passive indifference of western governments to Iraq’s WMD programme. The ‘Why are we ‘fighting against own deadly weapons?’ argument</p> <p>Fear of backlash to western intervention in the area.</p>	<p>Iraqi eyewitness accounts of negative impact of war.</p> <p>Major long term problems with the war, such as environmental destruction, potential instability in the region.</p> <p>Accusations of prisoner mistreatment.</p> <p>Links between Iraqi military capability and western arms sales. Links between Iraqi WMD and Israeli WMD, including nuclear capability. Linking Palestinian grievances to future stability in the region.</p>	<p>Problems with Desert Storm such as ‘Gulf War syndrome’, environmental hazard of oil spills and burning oil rigs, high Iraqi level casualties.</p> <p>Interviewees critical of aspects of the ‘handling’ of the war and restoration of law and order in Kuwait.</p> <p>‘Coalition’ soldiers’ accounts when focus is on problems with operations.</p> <p>Kuwaiti disaffection and ‘resistance’ disagreement with aspects of reimposition of previous government.</p> <p>(see chapter 5.3)</p>	<p>Denis Healey, Gordon Brown.</p>
<p>Coded 5 (green)</p> <p>Opposition ‘sphere of deviance’</p>	<p>Unequivocal anti-war arguments. Highly sceptical views of motives for the war. Emphasis on oil resources, previous active western support for Saddam Hussein – including his use of WMD, the probable effect of the war on innocent civilians etc.</p>	<p>Unequivocal anti-war arguments. Highly critical of effects on civilians or on the region. Highly critical eyewitness accounts. Serious accusations of prisoner abuse, torture or use of disproportionate force. Focus on double standards of turning a blind eye to Israeli WMD.</p>	<p>Unequivocal anti-war arguments. Calls for immediate troop withdrawal. Highly critical eyewitness accounts, condemnation of Mutla Ridge ‘massacres’ etc (see chapter 5.3)</p>	<p>Tony Benn</p>

Coded 6 (brown) Anti- coalition Iraqi Forces Official Iraqi View	Iraqi Government and Military sources. Iraqi officials. Supporters of Saddam's invasion.	Iraqi Government and Military sources. Iraqi officials. Supporters of Saddam's invasion.	Iraqi Government and Military sources. Iraqi officials. Supporters of Saddam's invasion.	Saddam Hussein, Tariq Aziz, Yasser Arafat
Coded 7 (grey) Reporter comment	Panorama reporter or presenter.	Panorama reporter or presenter.	Panorama reporter or presenter.	Jane Corbin

(For notes on coding see Appendix 2.6, p.306 and 309-311. The coding parameters are discussed further in Chapters 3.1, 5.4 and 6.2)

2.3.1: *Panorama's* Pre-War Coding results (Gulf War 1991)

code	no. of words	%		Title
Pre-Invasion			tape 1	Saddam's secret arms ring 03.09.90
1	0	0.0		
2	842	32.2		
3	103	3.9		
4	1596	61.0		
5	73	2.8		
6	0	0.0		
7			2768	51.42 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	2615			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Pre-Invasion			tape 2	Saddam's fifth column 10.09.90
1	446	18.2		
2	72	2.9		
3	1,155	47.1		
4	0	0.0		
5	191	7.8		
6	590	24.0		
7			3163	56.31 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	2454			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Pre-Invasion			tape 3	Gulf: in our defences 17.09.90
1	1622	43.6		
2	1,848	49.7		
3	0	0.0		
4	252	6.8		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			2922	43.98 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	3722			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Pre-Invasion			tape 4	Behind the desert shield 07.01.91
1	42	2.1		
2	241	12.0		
3	1,554	77.1		
4	178	8.8		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			3128	60.82 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	2015			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Pre-Invasion			tape 5	Is war inevitable?
1	3018	50.7		14.01.91
2	213	3.6		
3	7	0.1		
4	2,654	44.6		
5	57	1.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			3828	39.15 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	5949			



code	no. of words	%		TOTAL PRE-WAR
Pre-Invasion			tape 6	rank
1	5129	30.6		1
2	3216	19.2		3
3	2819	16.8		4
4	4680	27.9		2
5	321	1.9		6
6	590	3.5		5
7				
total	16755		15809	48.55 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)

1	30.6		
2	19.2	49.8	% pro- or partly pro-war
3	16.8		
4	27.9		
5	1.9	29.8	% anti- or partly anti-war
6	3.5		

2.3.2: *Panorama's* 'Desert Storm' Coding results (Gulf War 1991)

code	no. of words	%		Title
Desert storm				
			tape 1	Desert storm: after five days 21.01.91
1	2506	41.4		
2	2521	41.6		
3	0	0.0		
4	1032	17.0		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			3937	39.39
total	6059			% journalist/ reporter speech (of total)

code	no. of words	%		Title
Desert storm				
			tape 6	The gathering storm 28.01.91
1	304	10.2		
2	2464	83.0		
3	0	0.0		
4	0	0.0		
5	0	0.0		
6	199	6.7		
7			3654	55.18
total	2968			% journalist/ reporter speech (of total)

code	no. of words	%		Title
Desert storm				
			tape 7	After the desert storm 04.02.91
1	1554	43.7		
2	953	26.8		
3	79	2.2		
4	673	18.9		
5	299	8.4		
6	0	0.0		
7			2830	44.30
total	3558			% journalist/ reporter speech (of total)

code	no. of words	%		Title
Desert storm			tape 4	The mind of Saddam
1	21	0.7		11.02.91
2	3132	99.3		
3	0	0.0		
4	0	0.0		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			2719	46.30 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	3154			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Desert storm			tape 5	Saddam's supergun
1	0	0.0		18.02.91
2	0	0.0		
3	290	9.4		
4	2795	90.5		
5	0	0.0		
6	3	0.1		
7			4386	58.68 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	3088			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Desert storm			tape 5	Peace diary
1	1102	34.8		25.02.91
2	961	30.3		
3	285	9.0		
4	748	23.6		
5	70	2.2		
6	3	0.1		
7			3051	49.05 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	3169			



code	no. of words	%		Title	
Desert storm			tape 1	Desert storm total	Rank
1	5162	32.5			1
2	4435	27.9			3
3	654	4.1			4
4	5248	33.1			2
5	369	2.3			5
6	6	0.0			6
7			16640	51.18	% journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	15874				

Desert storm			
1	32.5		
2	27.9	60.5	% pro- or partly pro-war
3	4.1		
4	33.1		
5	2.3	35.4	% anti- or partly anti-war
6	0.0		

2.3.3: *Panorama's* Post-War Coding results (Gulf War 1991)

code	no. of words	%	tape 1	Title
Post-desert storm				Out of the ashes 11.03.91
1	0	0.0		
2	1252	62.7		
3	47	2.4		
4	697	34.9		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			3612	64.41 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	1996			

code	no. of words	%	tape 2	Title
Post-desert storm				America's secret war 25.03.91
1	749	25.4		
2	1735	58.8		
3	126	4.3		
4	340	11.5		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			3118	0.51 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	2950			

code	no. of words	%	tape 3	Title
Post-desert storm				The dream of Kurdistan 17.06.91
1	0	0.0		
2	161	10.3		
3	766	48.8		
4	640	40.8		
5	0	0.0		
6	2	0.1		
7			3925	71.44 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	1569			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Post-desert storm			tape 4	The victims of victory 05.08.91
1	0	0.0		
2	0	0.0		
3	680	43.0		
4	903	57.0		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			2987	65.36 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	1583			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Post-desert storm			tape 5	Saddam the survivor 12.08.91
1	254	9.7		
2	1674	64.1		
3	124	4.8		
4	282	10.8		
5	245	9.4		
6	31	1.2		
7			2836	52.07 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	2610			

code	no. of words	%		Title
Post-desert storm			tape 6	The allies: in the eye of the storm 02.09.91
1	1829	44.4		
2	1700	41.2		
3	595	14.4		
4	0	0.0		
5	0	0.0		
6	0	0.0		
7			2164	34.41 % journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	4124			

POSTWAR TOTAL

code	no. of words	%	tape 7	Title	Rank
Post-desert storm				TOTAL	
1	2832	19.1		Jul-04	3
2	6522	44.0			1
3	2338	15.8			4
4	2862	19.3			2
5	245	1.7			5
6	33	0.2			6
7			15655	51.35	% journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	14832				

POSTWAR TOTAL

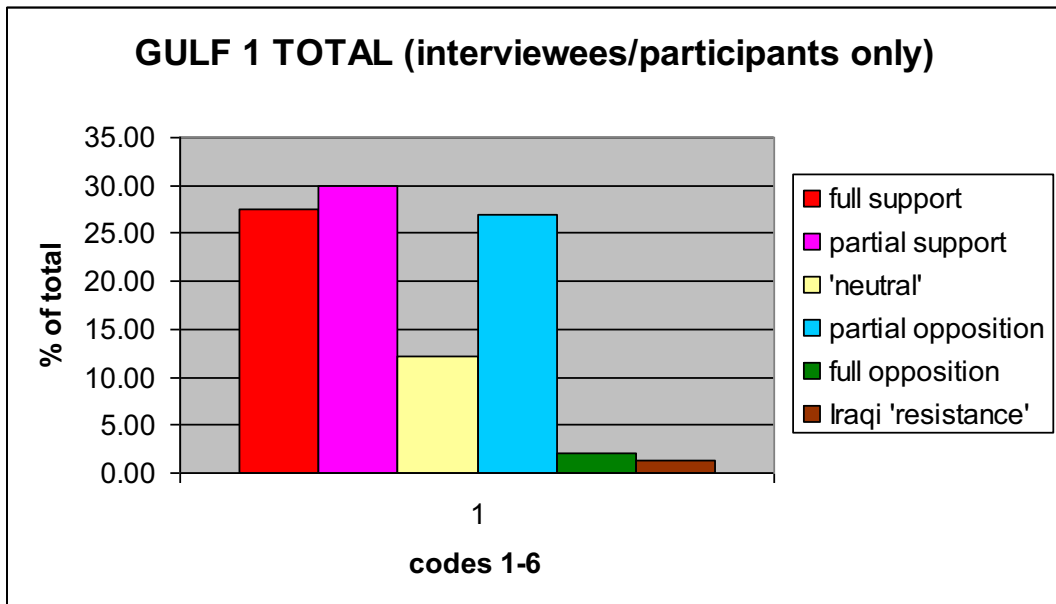
1	19.1		
2	44.0	63.1	% pro- or partly pro-war
3	15.8		
4	19.3		
5	1.7	20.9	% anti- or partly anti-war
6	0.2		

ALL PERIODS COMBINED (PRE-WAR, WAR, POST-WAR)

code	no. of words	%	tape 7	Title	Rank
Post-desert storm				TOTAL	
1	13087	27.6		Jul-04	2
2	14173	29.9			1
3	5811	12.3			4
4	12790	27.0			3
5	935	2.0			5
6	629	1.3			6
7			48104	50.36	% journalist/ reporter speech (of total)
total	47425				

2.4: Results for all Periods Gulf 1

ALL			
GULF 1 all periods participants/interviewees			
Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	13087	27.60	(coded 1 or 2)
2	14173	29.89	57.48 % 'pro-war'
3	5811	12.25	
4	12790	26.97	
5	935	1.97	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
6	629	1.33	28.94 % 'anti-war'
total	47425	100.00	



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**2.5-2.8: Second Gulf War
Breakdown of Interviewees
and Coding Results**

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Programme number:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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Appendix 2.5: GULF 2 - breakdown of all interviewees

(excluding 'vox pops')

BRITISH	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	total
Prime Minister																										0
British government MP								3	6	1	1													1		12
Leader of Opposition																										0
British opposition MP								2	1																	3
British Church leader (Bishop etc)					1																					1
British civil servant/govt advisor																										0
former British civil servant/govt advisor	1																							1		2
British Ambassador/diplomat					1		1																			4
former British Ambassador/diplomat				1						1														1		3
British parliamentary select committee																										0
former Defence intelligence/committee																										6
British armed forces senior														4		2			1							6
British armed forces senior retired	1				1					1		2												1		6
British armed forces regular												2														2
family of British forces																										0
British emergency services/health expert	3																									3
British think tank																										0
British journalist/editor (not BBC)								1	2																	3
British academic/author (non-military)				1						1														1		3
British 'activist'/peace group etc									2	4																6
British political party member									6	4																10
British 'public'	3	2		2	3		1	1	15	20	1	5														53

ISRAELI	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	total
Israeli politician																										0
Israeli military/intelligence former Israeli military/intelligence																										0
Israeli 'activist'/militant																										0
Israeli 'public'																										0

NON-IRAQI ARAB	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	total
Arab Sheikh, ruling family																										0
Arab politician/ diplomat (non Iraqi)													1													1
former Arab politician/diplomat								1	1			1														3
Arab 'activist'/militant																										0
Arab military (non Iraqi)																										0
Arab law and order																										0
Arab journalist/editor/media								2								1				1						4
Arab religious leader								2																		2
Arab academic/author																										0
Arab business leader								1																		1
Arab doctor																										0
Arab 'public'								4																		4
Arab NGO								1																		1

IRAQI/KURD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	total
Iraqi academic																										0
Iraqi politician/diplomat/aide/ruling family							2													1						3
former Iraqi politician/diplomat/aide	1			1																						2
Iraqi military																						1				1
former Iraqi military incl. deserter				1																						1
Iraqi scientist							2																			2
former Iraqi WMD programme	1	2		1								1						1								6
former Iraqi journalist/editor																										0
Iraqi academic/author/exile					1																1					2
Iraqi religious leader																				2						2
Iraqi doctor																2										2
Iraqi activist/militant/resistance																							1			1
Iraqi opposition	1											1														3
former acquaintance Saddam Hussein				2																						2
Iraqi 'public'														3		5	2			2						15
Iraqi Governing Council (post invasion)																					2					3
Iraqi opposition (post invasion)																						1				1
Kurdish politician																										0
Kurdish activist/militant																										0

OTHER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	total
Company or Corporation																										0
UN																1								1		2
former UN Humanitarian Coordinator	1																									1
UN weapons inspector						5												1								6
former UN weapons inspector	3			1																	1					4
NGO																										1
Military expert/technician	1																		1							2
NATO advisor																							1			1
European politician/diplomat										1																1
Turkish politician/diplomat																										0
Other nationality politician/diplomat																								1		1
Forensic scientist							1																			1
Soviet/Russian diplomat																										0
BBC crew as eyewitnesses																	3									3
BBC monitoring service																										0
BBC correspondent (as expert)			5			6			1				5													17
Former detainee (US prisoner abuse)																										2
Relation of former detainee																										1

Participating Think Tanks/Institutes/Pressure

Groups

- Defence Policy Board
- National Peace Lobby
- Strategic Issues Research Institute
- Project for the New American Century
- American Enterprise Institute
- Americans for Tax Reform
- Islamic Institute

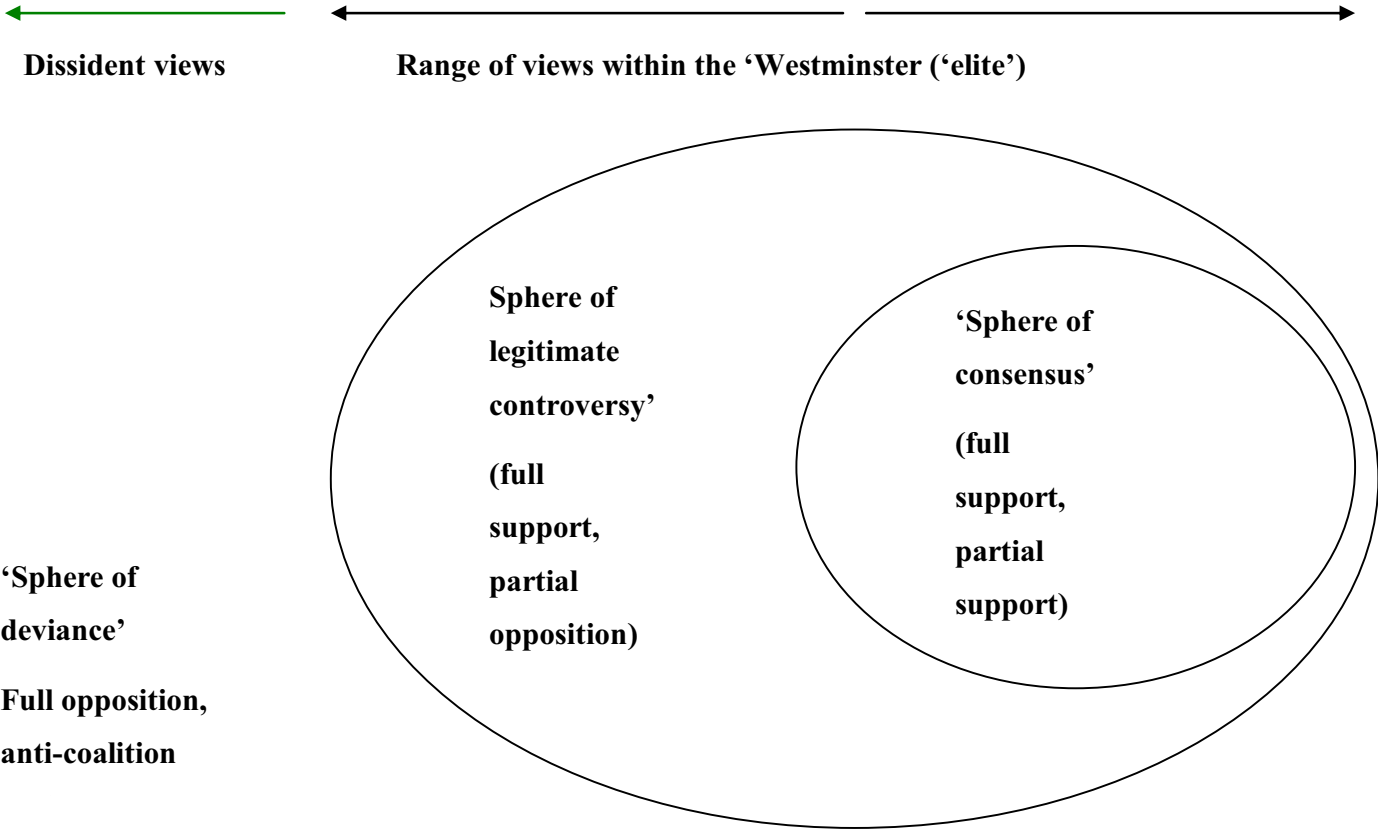
Appendix 2.6

Coding for *Panorama* Transcripts on Iraq Wars

Categories are generally indicative of positions below. (Note that there are obvious examples of overlap.)

Note: the ‘The Westminster consensus’, using Hall *et al*’s (1981) formulation of the agenda of problems and ‘prescriptions’ limited to those which have registered with, or are offered up by, the established Parliamentary parties would include codes (positions) 1-4, but not 5 or 6.

Mapping these positions within Hallin’s spheres of consensus, legitimate controversy and dissent is slightly more problematic, but *could* be represented diagrammatically as follows:



**Appendix 2.6: Coding key for *Panorama* transcripts
of Second Gulf War coverage**

<i>code</i>	<i>Position re: war</i>	<i>Pre-invasion (-19/03/03)</i>	<i>Invasion (20/03/03-1/05/03)</i>	<i>Post invasion (02/05/03-)</i>	<i>Examples</i>
1	(red) Support 'sphere of consensus/legitimate controversy'	Statements or arguments explicitly supporting 'regime change', military action, invasion etc.	Statements or arguments by official US military spokespersons and known supporters of war.	Statements or arguments explicitly supporting continued occupation. Official US military spokespersons.	George Bush, Tony Blair, Jack Straw, Richard Perle
2	(pink) partial support 'sphere of consensus/legitimate controversy'	Evidence for Iraq's WMD capability, Saddam's/regime's duplicity, cruelty, etc. (Lending implicit support for invasion/war.)	Uncritical 'coalition' perspective of invasion. 'Coalition' soldiers'/officers' eyewitness accounts (unless focusing on problems with operations). Celebrating Iraqis (implicit supporters of invasion)	Qualified arguments for 'coalition' troops to maintain (some temporary) presence, stabilise country etc.	Dr. Hussain Sharistani
3	(yellow) neither supporting nor opposing	Statements neither for nor against invasion (or) off-topic statements.	Statements neither for nor against invasion (or) off-topic statements.	Statements neither for nor against occupation (or) off-topic statements.	Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Dr. Hans Blix
4	(blue) partial opposition 'sphere of legitimate controversy'	Interviewees urging caution whilst mindful of possible future threat from Saddam. The 'not enough evidence' argument. Strategic and tactical arguments.	Interviewees critical of aspects of the 'handling' of the invasion and/or occupation. 'Coalition' soldiers' accounts when focus is on problems with operations. Iraqi eyewitness accounts of negative impact of war.	Interviewees critical of aspects of the 'handling' of the invasion and/or occupation. Iraqi eyewitness accounts of negative impact of the occupation.	MOD civil servant Sir Michael Quinlan. Iraqi civilian eyewitness accounts
5	(green) Opposition 'sphere of deviance'	Unequivocal anti-war arguments. Highly sceptical of existence of WMD or the need for war. War a 'criminal', 'illegal' action.	Unequivocal anti-war arguments. Highly sceptical of existence of WMD or need for war. Highly critical eyewitness accounts.	Unequivocal anti-war arguments. Calls for immediate troop withdrawal. Highly critical eyewitness accounts.	Edith Cresson (ex-French PM), ex-UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator for Iraq Hans von Sponeck,
6	(brown) Anti-coalition Iraqi forces	Iraqi Government and Military sources. Iraqi officials.	Iraqi Government and Military sources. Iraqi officials.	Iraqi 'resistance' - various factions calling for troop withdrawal by violent means.	Saddam Hussein, Tariq Aziz, Dr Rihab Taha
7	(grey) Reporter comment	Panorama reporter.	Panorama reporter	Panorama reporter.	Jane Corbin, John Simpson.

Notes on Coding

Despite efforts to refine the descriptors the coding remains a fairly blunt instrument. Attempts to divide up spectrum of opinion from interviewees on the wars against Iraq lump together views that are sometimes quite distinct. The context is often missing i.e how the quote is being used, what precedes it, etc. unless when quoted ironically (e.g. Rumsfeld* in Iraqi anti-war video-clip shown). The following examples illustrate some of the coding issues encountered:

- 1) Statements supportive of military action or by known supporters of war eg George Bush, Dick Cheney, Geoffrey Hoon etc. (on the topic), e.g:

US Vice-President DICK CHENEY: **The read we get on the people of Iraq is there's no question but what they want to get rid of Saddam Hussein and they will welcome as liberators the United States when we come to do that.**

but not off topic eg:

GEORGE BUSH: **Laura and I are very honoured to have our friends, Tony and Cherie Blair and their family, visit us here in Crawford. We appreciate the rain that the Prime Minister brought with him, and so do the other farmers and ranchers in the area. Mr Prime Minister thanks for bringing it.** (coded 'neither for nor against war')

- 2) For example, 'coalition' soldiers' eyewitness accounts of operations (unless focusing on problems with operations). Celebrating Iraqis. Not **I** because may only be celebrating fall of Saddam and but not pro-invasion e.g:

KHALOOD BANDA

President Saddam Hussein killed my husband. I have five children, five young girls. When he was killed I was pregnant with the fifth girl.

CORBIN: **Why was your husband killed?**

BANDA: **I think he was killed for political reasons.**

CORBIN: **And what is the situation now, are you still afraid of the Saddam Hussein regime?**

BANDA: **Yes, I'm scared of course of the people and of everybody. Thank you Mr Blair.**

CORBIN: **You want to thank Mr Blair for bringing the army here?**

BANDA: **Yes, yes. Very good.**

CORBIN: **And many people feel that in Basrah?**

ALL: **Yes, yes, yes, yes.** [applause]

MAN: **Thank God Mr Blair.**

Celebrating Iraqis coded partial support because they may have been opposed to invasion but now celebrating fall of regime.

3) Supposedly neutral, but obviously no statement can be completely 'neutral'. Here neutral means the statement cannot easily be coded as supportive or opposing the war. Hence Dick Cheney might be coded red (1), pink (2) or yellow (3) according to the subject of his statement. Neutrality also problematic as it may include statements of no *obvious* relevance to the invasion of Iraq such as interviews about the 9-11 plotters which were used in programmes alongside allegations of Iraqi collusion with 'terrorists'.

4) Opposition to the war may be based on practical, strategic considerations, on the timing, rather than morality, legality of the war, for instance:

JESSICA STERN (National Security Council, 1994-95)

There are compelling reasons to go to war against Iraq. Saddam poses a threat to the entire world. However, we need to consider whether the risks of going to war exceed the benefit and I believe they do.

Also, for example, 'coalition' soldiers' accounts if they focus on problems with operations.

5) Statements wholly against the war or by anti-war activists unless off-topic. Such statements could be expressed by 'unlikely' figures such as Conservative MP Ken Clarke:

KEN CLARKE MP

Conservative Minister, 1979-97

I think Mr Blair's mission was to try to cloak all this with legality, with the old world order. So because of Blair in part, the Americans allowed the politics and the diplomacy to go round a loop line trying to get some support for this in United Nations whilst the build up of the American and British armies and air force and navy continued, ready for the war to start in the spring.

Context dependent: eg when Rumsfeld's words are used in a anti-US video clip with images of injured children his words are coded as 5 (opposition)

* RUMSFELD: [message subtitled] The weapons that are being used today have a degree of precision that no one ever dreamt of.

6) Iraqi 'enemy'. Statements could be used to support pro-or anti-invasion arguments. These statements were often used within pro-invasion argument. Eg Saddam is asked if it is right to torture opponents by Panorama reporter Richard Lindley. Saddam Hussein answers: 'Nam' (yes)

IRAQI OFFICER: [addressing troops] 'Slit their throats and divide their hearts in two.' (coded Iraqi 'enemy' 6)

7) Reporter and presenter speech is, for the most part, problematic to code and is therefore coded separately as (7) **except for pre-war period** (see discussion Chapter 3 and Appendix 2.7). Reporters and presenters are supposed to remain 'impartial' so the assumption for the sake of the quantitative study (excluding pre-war period) is that they are. However, this assumption is clearly flawed. For example, during the invasion period John Ware asked Defence Secretary Geoffrey Hoon why they haven't 'taken out' the Iraqi Television station:

WARE: The Americans have bombed the information ministry. Yet, although its signal has sometimes been shaky, Iraqi TV is still on the air.

Do you think it was a mistake not to have taken Iraqi TV off the air straight away?

(Or)

CORBIN: The problem is, how do you know who the good guys are and the Bad guys? That's a real problem for you surely?

McSPORRAN: It is but what we're doing is we're deferring to the people that we can identify and particularly as with this gentleman's own case, the sort of religious leaders who the locals obviously respect, we found very quickly in the small villages on the outskirts of town that the key Ba'athist members, the people who've been responsible for enforcing the regime were indicated to us straightaway.

CORBIN: So people here know who the bad guys are.

Journalist can take up anything between 40 and 70% of airtime in any programme (see coding of Gulf 1 in Appendix 2.3). Not including *Panorama* reporters quoting or summarising the points of views of others is, as discussed (see Chapter 3, 5, 6), problematic yet coding these contributions is, as the pre-war coding exercise shows, equally problematic.

Note: coding says nothing of the quality of interviewees. Quantitative analysis does not account for how articulate, passionate, well-informed or qualified the interviewees are. It also does not account for full visual context – for example - is the interviewee recorded in a studio – properly lit, 'smartly' dressed, with microphone and clearly audible, or are they shouting to be heard in a demonstration, in casual clothes etc?

2.7: Coding for *Panorama* transcripts (BBC reporter/presenter contributions)

Categories are generally indicative of positions below. (Note that there are obvious examples of overlap.)

Pre-invasion only (-19/03/03) Evidence or questions eliciting these themes, unless very critically framed.	<i>Code</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<p>Themes/Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive benefits of ‘regime change’. - Opportunities for spreading democracy in Middle East. - Links between Iraq and Al Qaeda/terrorist groups. - Imminent risk of Iraq’s WMD capability. <p>Package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pro-war security oriented arguments; pro-war moral argument; pro-war legal arguments <p>Schools of thought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ‘Neo-conservatism’ - Hawkish ‘official’ view 	<p>Code: 1 ‘support’</p>	<p>MANGOLD: There's no doubt that qualified technicians could have converted the tanks and spray nozzles of these crop dusters into an horrific biological weapon, the technology had already been mastered in Baghdad. Mohamed Atta paid a second visit to the airfield.</p>
<p>Themes/Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iraq’s past and present WMD capability. - Risk of WMD falling into terrorist hands. - Security threat to region and/or west. - Saddam’s/regime’s duplicity, cruelty, human rights record (lending implicit support for invasion/war). - Obligation to disarm Iraq under International law <p>Packages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pro-war security oriented arguments; pro-war moral argument; pro-war legal arguments <p>Schools of thought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ‘official’ view - ‘Liberal Hawk’ view 	<p>Code 2: ‘partial support’</p>	<p>CORBIN: So where has Saddam got to in rebuilding his chemical weapons capability today? He still has enough material to manufacture 200 tons of VX gas in just a few weeks. And he’s got several hundred tons of mustard gas, the choking agent he’s used before, plus several thousand munitions to deliver it on the battlefield.</p>
<p>Themes/Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unrelated to conflict or too finely balanced between competing themes to code. - Commentary on diplomatic and political manoeuvres, breakthroughs, setback, splits. (strategy frame). - Military preparations, inevitability of war. 	<p>Code 3 ‘neutral’</p>	<p>MANGOLD: September 11th has renewed the struggle in the West between those who see Iraq's hand behind all Islamic fundamentalist terrorism, and now want a second front against Iraq to finish Saddam off, and those who say there may be circumstantial evidence but no proof, and until then he should be left alone.</p>

Note: For discussion of this coding scheme see Chapter 3 (Methodology) and Chapter 6.2.

<p>Themes/Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uncertainty over Iraq's WMD capability or Iraqi weapons programmes judged minimal/containable. - Why Iraq? (e.g. threat from North Korea greater) - Need to allow UN inspections to continue. - Arguments urging caution whilst mindful of possible future threat from Saddam. - Fears for stability in the region, US intentions towards other states (e.g. Syria) - Security threat of war, danger of Iraqi use of WMD, terrorist attacks and/or military quagmire/post-war chaos. Risk of British troop/Iraqi civilian casualties. - Financial cost of war. <p>Packages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-war security oriented arguments; anti-war moral arguments; anti-war legal arguments <p>Schools of thought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-war realists - 'Liberal Doves' 	<p>Code 4 'Partial opposition'</p>	<p>CORBIN: The Chief Civil Servant at the MoD during the Gulf War was Sir Michael Quinlan, the man who developed Britain's nuclear deterrence policy. But he's sceptical about the urgency of dealing with Saddam.</p> <p>BRADSHAW: Major General Patrick Cordingley is on his way to Westminster Abbey for Remembrance Sunday. For the General who retired two years ago it's time to contemplate the cost of war, including another war against Iraq.</p>
<p>Themes/Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energy resources (oil) - West's previous support for Iraqi regime. - Deep scepticism of existence of WMD (judged an excuse for war). - Immorality and illegality of the war. - Fear of massive Iraqi casualties. - Hypocrisy of West's attitude to Israeli WMD capacity and UN resolutions on Palestinian occupied territories. - 'US imperialism'/warmongers/war profiteers, US/Israeli regional ambition and British 'lapdog' role. - Fears of instability/civil war in the region. <p>Packages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-war security oriented arguments; anti-war moral arguments; anti-war legal arguments <p>Schools of thought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Antiwar Radicals' - Arab anti-war opinion 	<p>Code 5 'Opposition'</p>	<p>CORBIN: Yet despite all this the west went on selling Saddam technology. There were fat contracts to be had for ailing defence industries at home.</p> <p>BRADSHAW: Now Iraqis fear their natural resources are being coveted by a new imperial power. As the US builds up its forces in the Gulf, Haifa fears the world's solo superpower is starting to behave like Britain before it with the arrogance of empire.</p>
<p>Themes/Problem Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Iraqi Government and Military perspectives e.g. Iraq in full compliance with UN inspections/resolutions. <p>Package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-war security oriented arguments; anti-war legal arguments <p>School of thought</p> <p>Official Iraqi view</p>	<p>Code 6 'Official Iraqi view'</p>	<p>CORBIN: The West still doesn't seem to believe Iraq, there's still this feeling you're hiding something, that you're not really laying out your cards on the table.</p> <p>General AMER AL-SAAD Presidential Advisor Well how else can they justify their military build up? They must portray things as not being satisfactory, that Iraq is holding back, Iraq is hiding things.</p>

**Pre-invasion
period (Gulf 2)**

2.8.1: PRESENTERS and REPORTERS

BIN LADEN'S BIOLOGICAL THREAT tx: 28:10:01

1

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	786	21.62
2	2627	72.25
3	181	4.98
4	42	1.16
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00
total	3636	100

THE CASE AGAINST SADDAM tx: 23:09:02

2

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	106	3.21
2	2602	78.82
3	331	10.03
4	200	6.06
5	62	1.88
6	0	0
total	3301	100

IRAQ CRISIS INTERACTIVE tx: 29/09/02

3

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	15	0.19
2	1418	17.84
3	4036	50.77
4	2125	26.73
5	275	3.46
6	80	1.01
total	7949	100

(mostly composed of reporter comment)

SADDAM: A WARNING FROM HISTORY tx: 03/11/02

4

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	1,562	62.83
3	741	29.81
4	0	0.00
5	183	7.36
6	0	0.00
total	2,486	100

THE CASE AGAINST WAR tx: 08/12/02

5

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	75	3.06
3	267	10.90
4	1,952	79.71
5	155	6.33
6	0	0.00
total	2,449	100.00

TACKLING SADDAM tx: 02/02/03

6

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	471	6.18
3	3,966	52.00
4	2,921	38.30
5	269	3.53
6		0.00
total	7,627	100.00

(mostly composed of reporter/presenter contribution)

CHASING SADDAM'S WEAPONS tx: 09/02/03

7

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	22	0.56
2	1,493	37.68
3	1,759	44.40
4	151	3.81
5	0	0.00
6	537	13.55
total	3,962	100.00

BUSH V SADDAM tx: 02/03/03

8

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	150	4.74
2	228	7.21
3	1,743	55.12
4	618	19.54
5	423	13.38
6	0	0.00
total	3,162	100.00

BLAIR'S ROAD TO WAR DEBATE tx: 18/03/03

9

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	60	2.61
3	2,127	92.60
4	98	4.27
5	12	0.52
6	0	0.00
total	2,297	100.00



ALL
total pre-invasion **PRESENTERS/REPORTERS**

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	1079	2.93
2	10536	28.58
3	15151	41.09
4	8107	21.99
5	1379	3.74
6	617	1.67
total	36869	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
31.50 % 'pro-war'

(coded 4, 5 or 6)
27.40 % 'anti-war'

NO DEBATES
total pre-invasion **PRESENTERS/REPORTERS**

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	914	5.77
2	8359	52.79
3	3279	20.71
4	2345	14.81
5	400	2.53
6	537	3.39
total	15834	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
58.56 % 'pro-war'

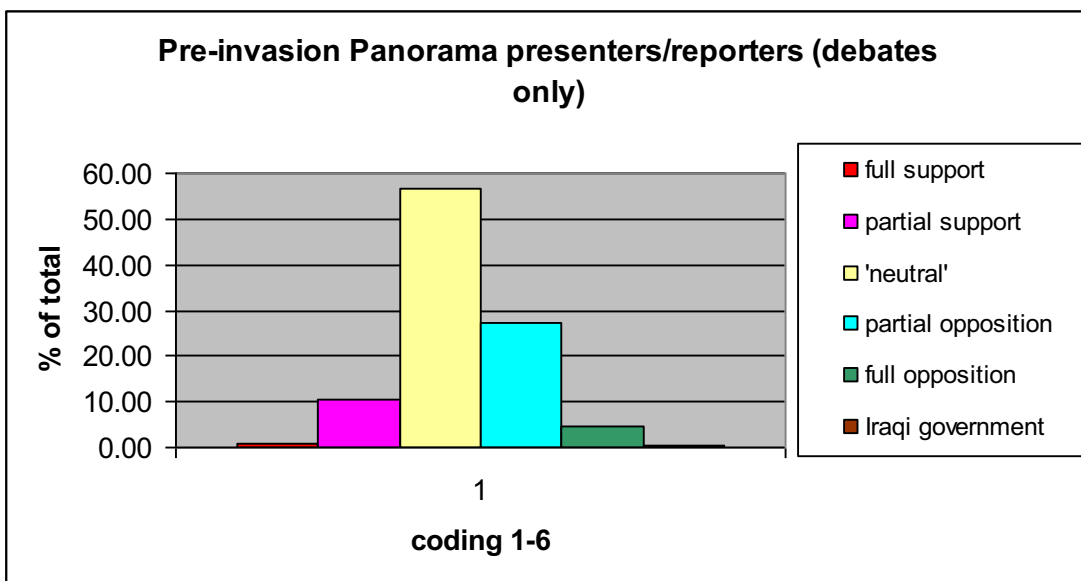
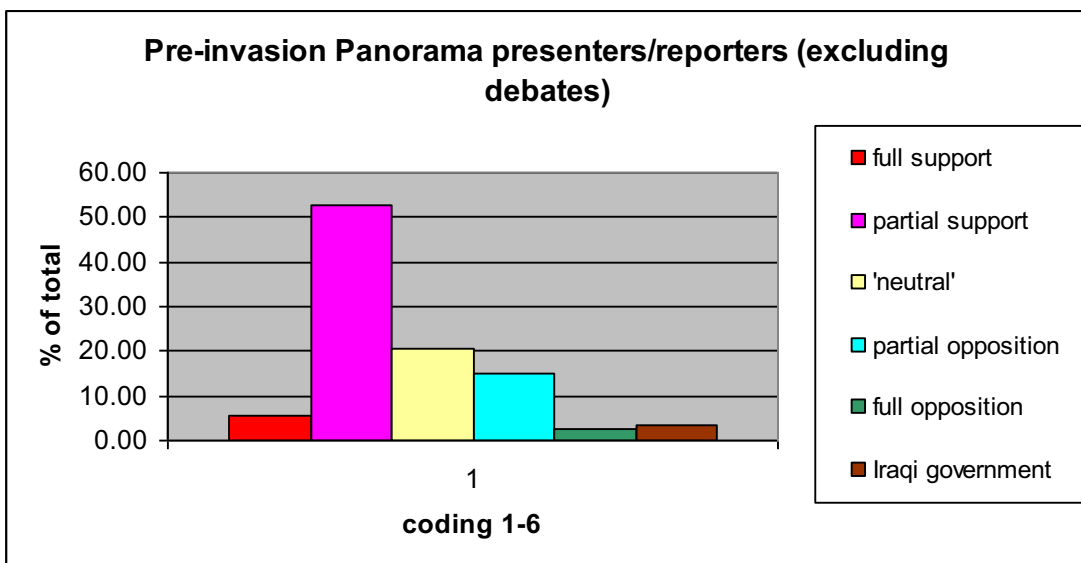
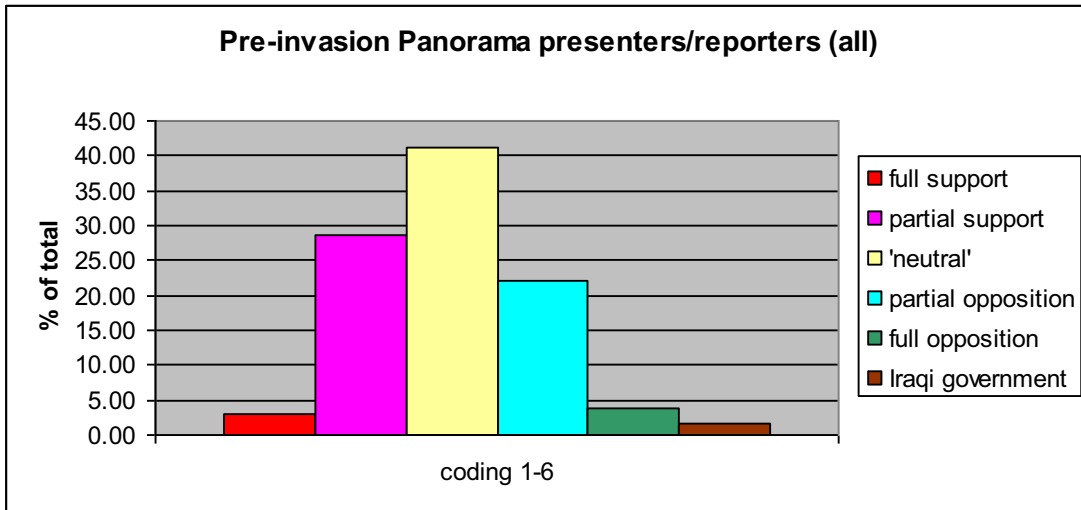
(coded 4, 5 or 6)
20.73 % 'anti-war'

DEBATES ONLY
total pre-invasion **PRESENTERS/REPORTERS**

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	165	0.78
2	2177	10.35
3	11872	56.44
4	5762	27.39
5	979	4.65
6	80	0.38
total	21035	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
11.13 % 'pro-war'

(coded 4, 5 or 6)
32.43 % 'anti-war'



Pre-invasion period (Gulf 2)

2.8.2: PARTICIPANTS/INTERVIEWEES

BIN LADEN'S BIOLOGICAL THREAT tx: 28:10:01

1

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	170	7.00
2	1432	58.98
3	826	34.02
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00
total	2428	100

THE CASE AGAINST SADDAM tx: 23:09:02

2

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	394	12.99
2	1845	60.85
3	57	1.88
4	481	15.86
5	168	5.54
6	87	2.87
total	3032	100

IRAQ CRISIS INTERACTIVE tx: 29/09/02

3

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	47	14.73
2	23	7.21
3	102	31.97
4	83	26.02
5	64	20.06
6	0	0.00
total	319	100

(Vox pop and clips from Blair and Bush speeches)

SADDAM: A WARNING FROM HISTORY tx: 03/11/02

4

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	53	2.34
2	1,422	62.75
3	712	31.42
4	0	0.00
5	0	0.00
6	79	3.49
total	2,266	100

THE CASE AGAINST WAR tx: 08/12/02

5

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	62	2.21
2	0	0.00
3	197	7.02
4	1,357	48.33
5	1192	42.45
6	0	0.00
total	2,808	100.00

TACKLING SADDAM tx: 02/02/03

6

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2		0.00
3		0.00
4	250	91.58
5	23	8.42
6		0.00
total	273	100.00

(only 7 brief vox pops, other contributors are reported speech)

CHASING SADDAM'S WEAPONS tx: 09/02/03

7

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	215	7.37
2	184	6.31
3	1,181	40.47
4	220	7.54
5	39	1.34
6	1079	36.98
total	2,918	100.00

BUSH V SADDAM tx: 02/03/03

8

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	2021	35.15
2	72	1.25
3	169	2.94
4	190	3.30
5	3298	57.36
6	0	0.00
total	5,750	100.00

BLAIR'S ROAD TO WAR DEBATE tx: 18/03/03

9

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	425	14.28
2	575	19.31
3	1,142	38.36
4	728	24.45
5	107	3.59
6	0	0.00
total	2,977	100.00



ALL
total pre-invasion participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	3387	14.87
2	5553	24.39
3	4386	19.26
4	3309	14.53
5	4891	21.48
6	1245	5.47
Total	22771	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
39.26 % 'pro-war'

(coded 4, 5 or 6)
41.48 % 'anti-war'

NO DEBATES
total pre-invasion participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	894	6.65
2	4883	36.30
3	2973	22.10
4	2058	15.30
5	1399	10.40
6	1245	9.26
Total	13452	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
42.95 % 'pro-war'

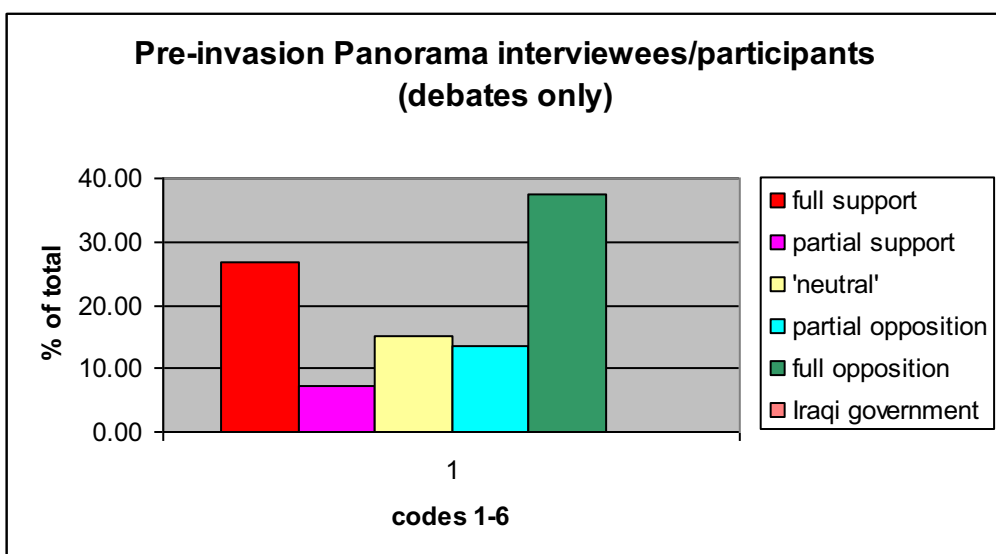
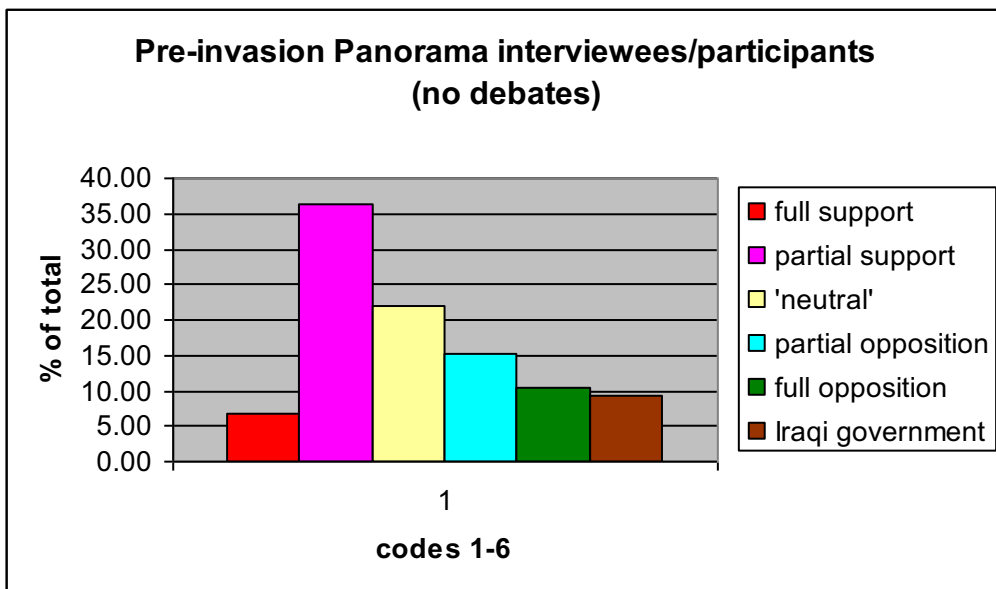
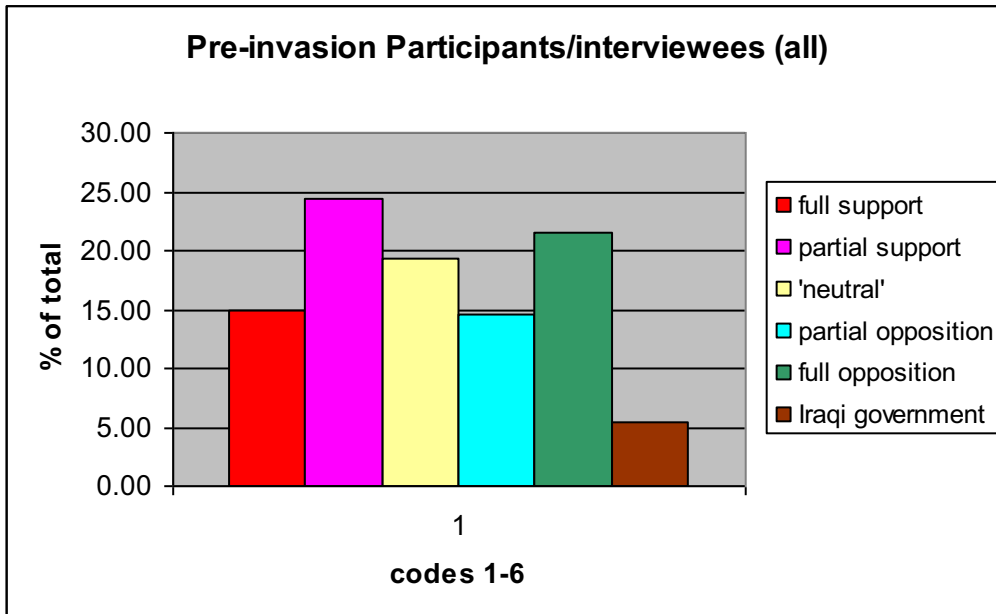
(coded 4, 5 or 6)
34.95 % 'anti-war'

DEBATES ONLY
total pre-invasion participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	2493	26.75
2	670	7.19
3	1413	15.16
4	1251	13.42
5	3492	37.47
6	0	0.00
total	9319	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
33.94 % 'pro-war'

(coded 4, 5 or 6)
50.90 % 'anti-war'



Invasion Period (Gulf 2)

2.8.3: PARTICIPANTS/INTERVIEWEES

BLAIR'S WAR tx: 23:03:03

1

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	1487	34.19
2	113	2.60
3	633	14.56
4	639	14.69
5	1477	33.96
6	0	0.00
total	4349	100

QUESTIONS FROM A DIVIDED WORLD tx: 30:03:03

2

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	2394	51.42
2	175	3.76
3	365	7.84
4	747	16.04
5	975	20.94
6	0	0.00
total	4656	100

THE RACE TO BAGHDAD tx: 06/04/03

3

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	670	24.27
2	429	15.54
3	218	7.90
4	941	34.08
5	477	17.28
6	26	0.94
total	2761	100

AFTER SADDAM tx: 13/04/03

4

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	127	11.96
2	100	9.42
3	71	6.69
4	532	50.09
5	232	21.85
6	0	0.00
total	1,062	100

THE BATTLE FOR BASRA tx: 27/04/03

5

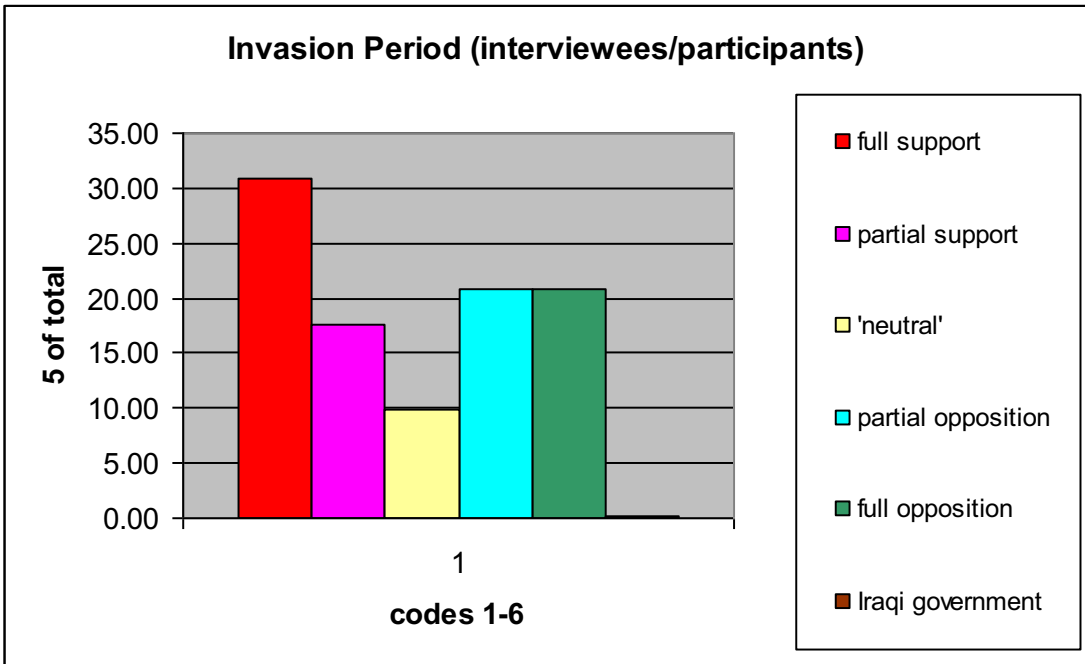
Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	1,855	79.21
3	201	8.58
4	286	12.21
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00
total	2,342	100.00

**participants/interviewees
total INVASION PERIOD**

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	4678	30.84
2	2672	17.61
3	1488	9.81
4	3145	20.73
5	3161	20.84
6	26	0.17
total	15170	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
48.45 % 'pro-war'

(coded 4, 5 or 6)
41.74 %'anti-war'



Post-invasion period (Gulf 2)

2.8.4: PARTICIPANTS/INTERVIEWEES

THE WAR PARTY tx: 18:05:03

1

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	1539	37.89
2	1225	30.16
3	360	8.86
4	654	16.10
5	284	6.99
6	0	0.00
total	4062	100

THE PRICE OF VICTORY tx: 28:09:03

2

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	923	25.41
2	1573	43.30
3	39	1.07
4	934	25.71
5	119	3.28
6	45	1.24
total	3633	100

STILL CHASING SADDAM'S WEAPONS tx: 23/11/03

3

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	478	13.41
2	1520	42.65
3	672	18.86
4	793	22.25
5	0	0.00
6	101	2.83
total	3564	100

A FIGHT TO THE DEATH tx: 21/01/04

4

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	270	5.22
2	1,064	20.57
3	2,532	48.95
4	1307	25.27
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00
total	5,173	100

SADDAM ON THE RUN tx: 28/03/04

5

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	88	2.97
2	2,027	68.48
3	534	18.04
4	56	1.89
5	0	0.00
6	255	8.61
total	2,960	100.00

SHAMED tx:
19/05/04

6

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	322	8.33
3	215	5.56
4	2,309	59.73
5	1020	26.38
6	0	0.00
total	3,866	100.00

A FAILURE OF INTELLIGENCE tx: 11/07/04

7

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	662	22.61
2	150	5.12
3	371	12.67
4	1,745	59.60
5	0	0.00
6	0	0.00
total	2,928	100.00

EXIT STRATEGY (SIMPSON IN IRAQ) tx: 30/01/05

8

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	682	28.91
2	710	30.10
3	301	12.76
4	447	18.95
5	28	1.19
6	191	8.10
total	2,359	100.00

IRAQ, TONY AND THE TRUTH tx: 20/03/05

9

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	984	28.18
2	311	8.91
3	369	10.57
4	1,815	51.98
5	13	0.37
6	0	0.00
total	3,492	100.00

TROOPS OUT? tx: 30/10/05

10

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	2175	32.72
2	1,526	22.95
3	38	0.57
4	2,718	40.88
5	191	2.87
6	0	0.00
total	6,648	100.00

A GOOD KICKING tx: /03/03

11

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	0	0.00
2	62	3.44
3	112	6.21
4	257	14.25
5	1372	76.10
6	0	0.00
total	1,803	100.00

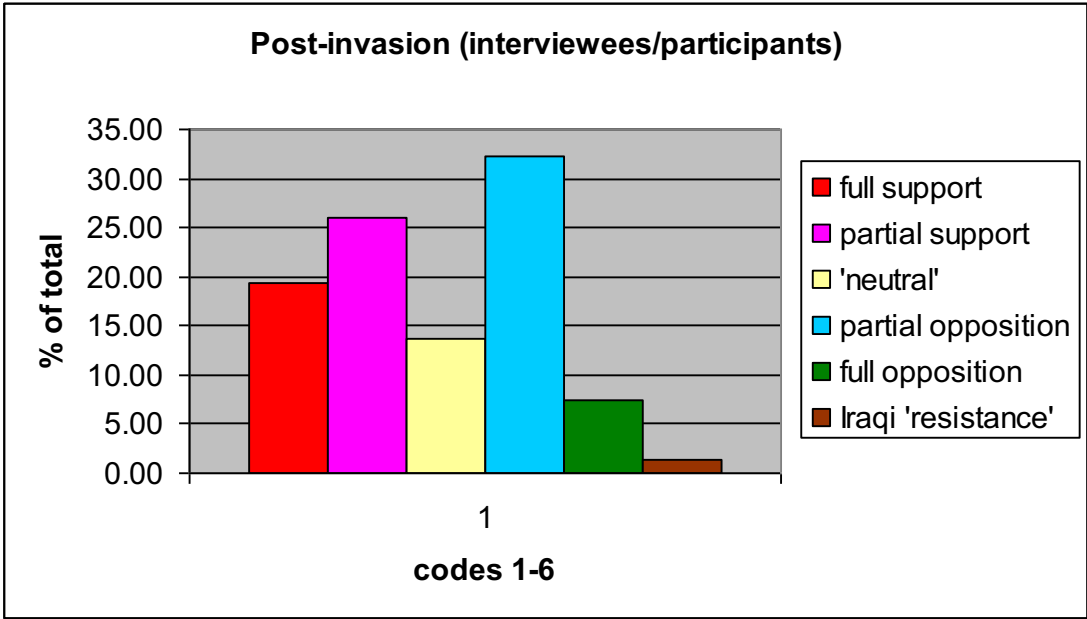


ALL
total post-
invasion participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage
1	7801	19.27
2	10490	25.91
3	5543	13.69
4	13035	32.19
5	3027	7.48
6	592	1.46
total	40488	100.00

(coded 1 or 2)
45.18 % 'pro-war'

(coded 4, 5 or 6)
41.13 % 'anti-war'



2.8.5: Results for all Periods Gulf 2

ALL
total pre-invasion participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	3387	14.87	(coded 1 or 2)
2	5553	24.39	39.26 % 'pro-war'
3	4386	19.26	
4	3309	14.53	
5	4891	21.48	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
6	1245	5.47	41.48 %'anti-war'
total	22771	100.00	

ALL
total invasion period participants/interviewees

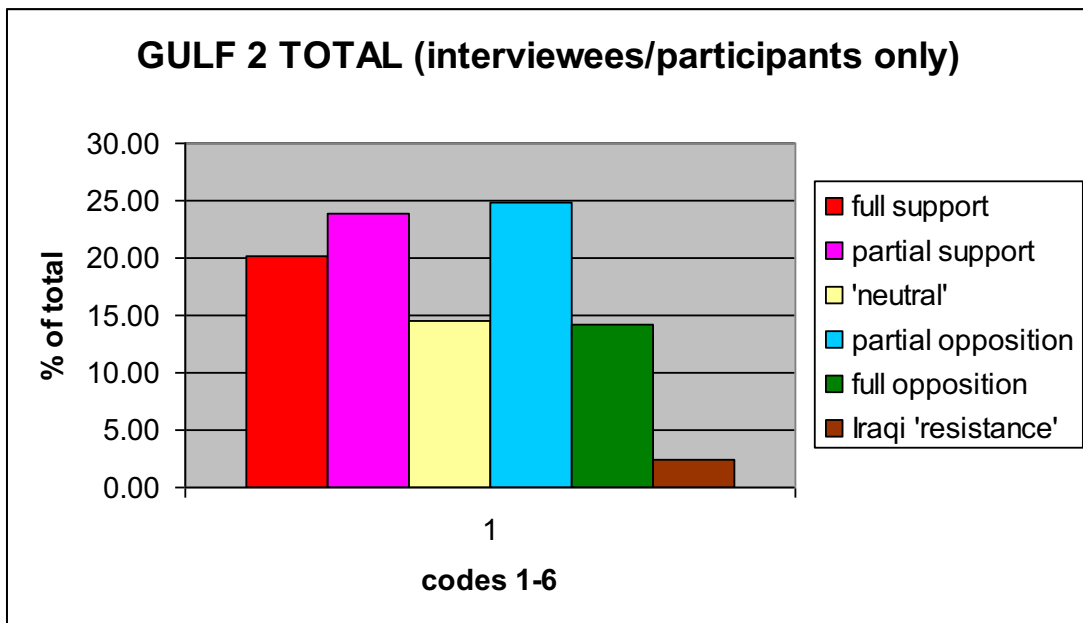
Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	4678	30.84	(coded 1 or 2)
2	2672	17.61	48.45089 % 'pro-war'
3	1488	9.81	
4	3145	20.73	
5	3161	20.84	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
6	26	0.17	41.74028 %'anti-war'
total	15170	100.00	

ALL
total post-invasion participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	7801	19.27	(coded 1 or 2)
2	10490	25.91	45.17 % 'pro-war'
3	5543	13.69	
4	13035	32.19	
5	3027	7.48	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
6	592	1.46	41.13 %'anti-war'
total	40488	100.00	

ALL
GULF 2 all periods participants/interviewees

Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	15866	20.23	(coded 1 or 2)
2	18715	23.86	44.09 % 'pro-war'
3	11417	14.56	
4	19489	24.85	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
5	11079	14.13	41.35 %'anti-war'
6	1863	2.38	
total	78429	100.00	



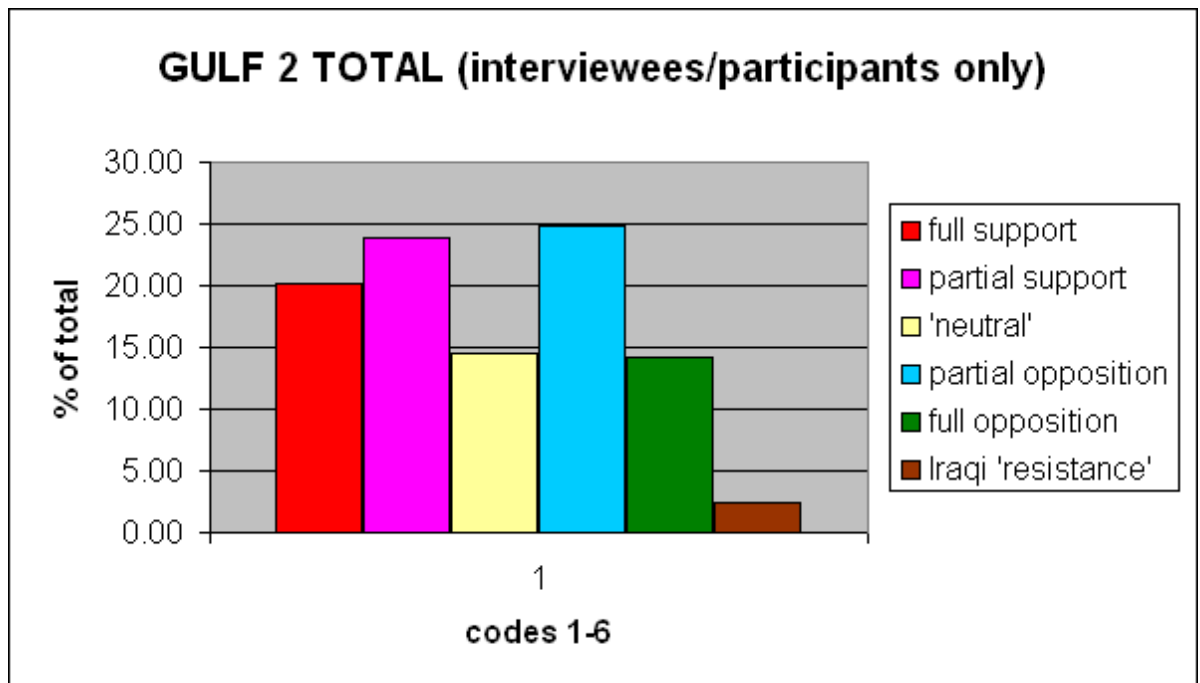
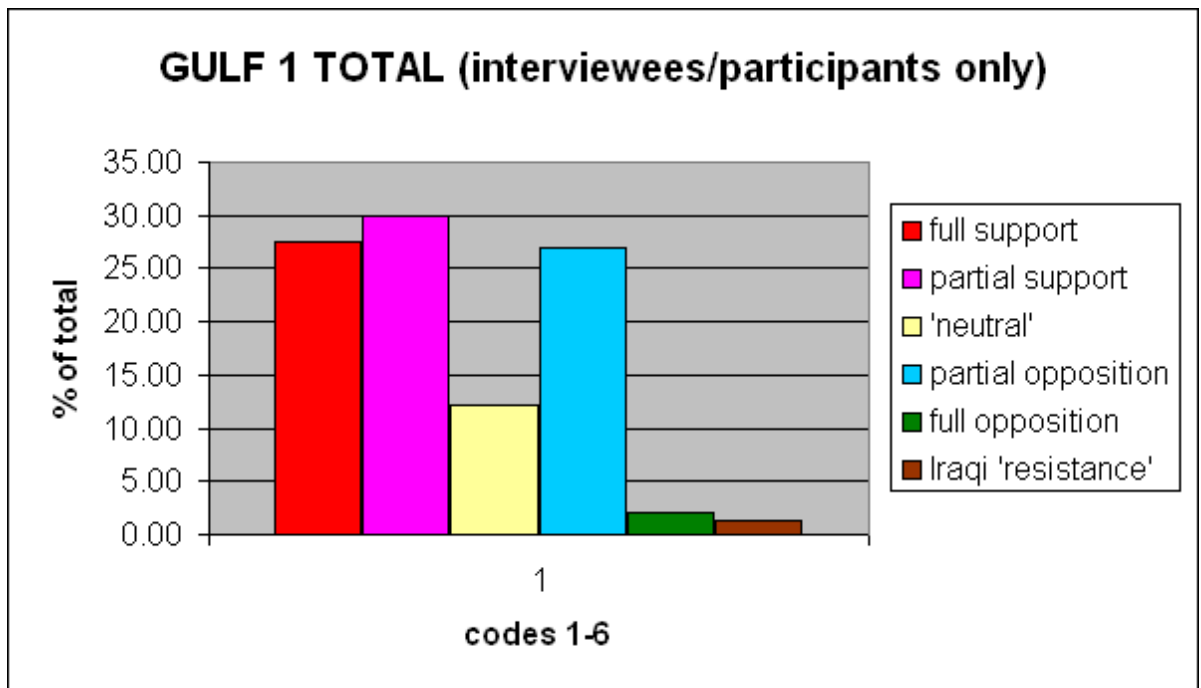
2.9 Comparison of Data and Graphs for Gulf 1 and 2

2.9.1: Comparison of Totals (Gulf 1 and 2)

ALL GULF 1 all periods participants/interviewees			
Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	13087	27.60	(coded 1 or 2)
2	14173	29.89	57.48 % 'pro-war'
3	5811	12.25	
4	12790	26.97	
5	935	1.97	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
6	629	1.33	28.94 %'anti-war'
total	47425	100.00	

ALL GULF 2 all periods participants/interviewees			
Code	No. of words	percentage	
1	15866	20.23	(coded 1 or 2)
2	18715	23.86	44.09 % 'pro-war'
3	11417	14.56	
4	19489	24.85	
5	11079	14.13	(coded 4, 5 or 6)
6	1863	2.38	41.35 %'anti-war'
total	78429	100.00	

2.9.2: Comparison of Graphs for all Periods (Gulf 1 and 2)



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Appendix 3

3.1 List of *Panorama* Editors and key developments

<i>Panorama</i> Editors	Key events	Director General
Dennis Bardens 1953-1954 WW2 – at the Press Office at The Ministry of Information where he was responsible for putting out propaganda material to confuse the enemy.	BBC Television management's desire to have a regular, informative "window on the world" first brought <i>Panorama</i> to the screen in November 1953. After a disastrous first night <i>Panorama</i> is re-launched as a fortnightly topical, general-interest magazine programme fronted by Max Robertson.	Sir Ian Jacob 1952-59
Michael Barsley 1954-1955 Educated: Oxford University	Hydrogen bomb debate on <i>Panorama</i> includes Bertrand Russell for CND and the Archbishop of York. Malcolm Muggeridge interviews Billy Graham. ITV is launched. Korean War, US Senate condemns McCarthy, Winston Churchill resigns and Anthony Eden becomes (Conservative) Prime Minister.	
Michael Peacock 1955-1958 Educated: London School of Economics	Leonard Miall gives Grace Wyndham Goldie the task of transforming <i>Panorama</i> into a more 'heavy-weight' current affairs programme presented by Richard Dimbleby. Programmes on a wide range of events and issues, including the Suez crisis, the Hungarian uprising and race and immigration in the UK. BBC's <i>Tonight</i> launched in 1956. On April Fool's Day, 1957, <i>Panorama</i> broadcast an apparently serious account of spaghetti harvesting from trees in Switzerland. <i>Panorama</i> is the most popular of the BBC's top 20 programmes. Eden resigns following Suez controversy, Harold Macmillan becomes (Conservative) PM.	
Rex Moorfoot 1958-1960 Rose through BBC's Youth in Training (YIT) scheme.	Competition from <i>Tonight</i> and <i>This Week</i> eroding <i>Panorama's</i> previously unrivalled reputation. Cuban revolution. John F Kennedy elected president.	Hugh Carleton Greene 1960-69
Michael Peacock 1960-1961	A revival of fortunes with Peacock's return.. In the early 1960s <i>Panorama</i> documents the passage of African decolonisation and the escalation of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall is built in 1961 and is visited several times by the team.	
Paul Fox 1961-1963	Soviets win space race. Alec Douglas-Home becomes (Conservative) PM.	
David Wheeler 1964-1965	BBC 2 launched. Robin Day reports from outside the court on the day Nelson Mandela and his co-defendants are sentenced. Harold Wilson becomes (Labour) PM.	

Jeremy Isaacs 1965-1967 Educated: Oxford University. Chief executive of Channel 4 1981-1987	Reports on unrest in the Middle East, Vietnam, the civil rights movement and the space race.	
David Webster 1967-1969	Israeli 6 day war. Tet offensive in Vietnam. Paris riots, anti-war protest in Grosvenor Square.	
Brian Wenham 1969-1971	Ian Smith declares Rhodesia a republic. Edward Heath wins in surprise election victory for Conservatives.	Charles Curran 1969-77
Frank Smith 1971-1975	Conflict in Northern Ireland, the fall-out from the oil crisis and continuing industrial conflict between the government and unions were recurring domestic themes. In 1974 Harold Wilson becomes (Labour) PM and David Dimbleby joins <i>Panorama</i> .	
Peter Pagnamenta 1975-1977	Reports on the drawn-out ending of the Vietnam War, Britain's involvement in the European Economic Community, Cold War espionage and the growth of international terrorist groups like the Red Army Faction. James Callaghan becomes (Labour) PM in 1976.	
Christopher Capron 1977-79	President Jimmy Carter elected. Israeli troops leave southern Lebanon. Margaret Thatcher elected (Conservative) PM in 1979.	Ian Trethowan 1977-82
Roger Bolton 1979-1981 Educated: Liverpool University	Flak over 'Carrickmore incident'. Sacking and then reinstatement of Bolton as Editor.	
George Carey 1981-1983	Domestic films on Mrs Thatcher's reforming economic and social policies, the Falklands War and the Miners' Strike. Flak over <i>Panorama's</i> Falkland's coverage.	Alasdair Milne 1982-87
Peter Ibbotson 1983-1985	<i>Panorama</i> charts the ongoing problems in the Middle East. 1982 saw the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Iran-Iraq war spanned almost the whole decade. <i>Panorama</i> addresses US covert operations in Central America.	
David Dickinson 1985-1987 Educated: Cambridge University. Born Dublin now an author	Mikhail Gorbachev Calls for Glasnost and Perestroika. Chernobyl Nuclear Accident, U.S. Bombs Libya.	

Tim Gardam 1987-1990 Educated Cambridge University. Head of Current Affairs 1993-96. Appointed to Ofcom Board 2008.	U.S shoots down Iranian jetliner. Lockerbie bombing. Fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the collapse of Communism in Europe. Tiananmen Square massacre.	Michael Checkland 1987-92
Mark Thompson 1990-1992 Educated: Oxford University. BBC Director General (2004-)	Mrs Thatcher resigns. John Major becomes (Conservative) PM. First Gulf War (Desert Storm), reunification of Germany, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Balkan wars, the release of Nelson Mandela, the end of South Africa's apartheid regime.	
Glenwyn Benson 1992-1994 Educated: Cambridge University, Harvard and the Charles University, Prague. Came from LWT with Birt. Controller, Factual Television 2003-2006	Black Wednesday. The Rwandan genocide. Anti-European Union wrangles and recession. Conservative Party voted out after 18 years, New Labour win landslide victory.	John Birt 1992-2000
Steve Hewlett 1994-1997 Educated: The University of Manchester	War in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Princess of Wales interview with Martin Bashir is watched by 22.8 million viewers in which she discusses her adultery, depression and bulimia, her children, the media and the future of the monarchy in candid detail.	
Peter Horrocks 1997-2000 Head of Television News 2005	The IRA ceasefire leading to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. U.S. President Clinton Impeached. NATO Attacks Serbia. John Ware reports from Northern Ireland in 'Who Bombed Omagh?' Devolution to Scotland and Wales.	Greg Dyke 2000-2004
Mike Robinson 2000-2006	9-11; Invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq; London bombings.	Mark Thompson 2004-
Sandy Smith March 2006 – 2009 formerly Watchdog	Move to Monday 8.30 primetime slot from 2007. Programme reduced to 30 minutes. Tony Blair steps down and Gordon Brown becomes (Labour) PM. Banking and financial crisis.	

Key events: sources BBC *Panorama* website; Lindley 2003a; BBC 'On this day' timeline; BUFVC *Panorama* Project Database.

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